

CHILD PROTECTION AS SUPPORT

by

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We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard




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ABSTRACT

This study explores the practice of child protection as it is accomplished in a particular Family and Children's Service office in Victoria, using institutional ethnography as the research method. Generally, both investigative and supportive services can be offered to families where there is a concern about children's well-being. In this office the claim is made that support service is the preferable way of working with families in most instances. In the current work setting of the Ministry of Social Services workers in this office find support practice very necessary but also very difficult. The research problematic explores this difficulty.


This study explores what workers actually do to be supportive to families in protecting children and how the difficulties in providing support arise as a feature of the work. Participant observation and other ethnographic methods provide the qualitative data for the study. Data about workers' experience was considered the entry point of the analysis, providing a window to the social organization of the practice of child protection within the institutional structure of the Ministry. Specific incidences of the difficulties of supportive child protection practice within this investigative environment are described and their origin traced through the social relations of the Ministry to locations outside the day to day experience of the workers to the extra-local sites where these experiences are determined.

I argue that workers do practice a supportive form of child protection which relies on a distinctive set of work practices. While attempting to carry out child protection with a supportive orientation within the existing Ministry organization, however, workers experience definite limitations in what they can do to be supportive. These limitations can undermine their support efforts and create frustration and stressful conditions for all workers. My analysis offers some insights into how the current environment in which the


team practices establishes investigation as the central way or expected way of doing child protection work. It appears that investigative work is privileged by the practices and organizational structures put in place by the official policy and legislation governing child protection work. To the extent that the policy and coordinating practices are general across Ministry offices, my conclusions about investigation versus support in this child protection office can also be claimed to be generalizable.

I conclude that for supportive child protection practice to occur, there are several important preconditions: a supportive team environment in which team members share a common vision and philosophy about the work, an awareness of power relations in the work, and a skilled, experienced and credible supervisor. These conclusions speak to the need for policy development processes within the Ministry which embrace the knowledge and experience of frontline child protection workers.

Examiners:



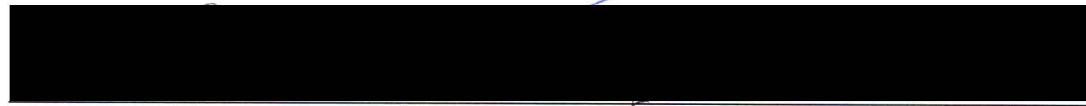
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And to my partner, Glen, for always being there, every minute, through it all - thank you.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Riley Hern.

INTRODUCTION

"...how do people feel so abused by an organization that tries to present such a benevolent face?" (Fieldnotes, p. vi)

The inquiry you are about to read is an exploration into the practice of child protection as it takes place in one particular Ministry of Social Services Office in Langford, B.C. In this office the above quote symbolizes the questioning which has stimulated the development of a distinctive form of practice. Within the investigative mandate of the Ministry, this child protection team claims to practice child protection with a support focus with the intent of offering help and support to families instead of just investigating them. This study will explore this form of practice as it takes place day to day from the perspective of the frontline child protection workers and their immediate supervisor, how this form of practice works within the Ministry and how it is limited. This study will show how the experiences described by the frontline workers are socially organized to occur in characteristic ways within the structure of the Ministry mandate.

Chapter I gives the background to the study, beginning with my own troubling experience in child protection work. This chapter describes a contradiction inherent in the work, as drawn from my experience and those of the workers in the study. The research problematic I identify focuses on this contradiction or line of fault between how protection work is structured to accomplish the mandate of protecting children and how Langford workers are attempting to do child protection work.

In Chapter II I discuss the methodology of the study. It is an interpretive research approach using an institutional ethnographic method of inquiry. Using qualitative data gathered during my participation in the research setting, I analyze the experiences of the frontline workers by tracing those experiences through the social relations of the Ministry

to the extra-local places where those experiences are determined. In this chapter I also discuss how the knowledge created through this analysis is valid and generalizable.

In Chapter III I review the relevant literature which I develop as the conceptual framework of the study. The major issues are empowerment, social support, community development, feminist perspectives on child protection and the social organization of frontline child protection practice.

In Chapter IV I begin my analysis by providing evidence that workers in Langford have developed a distinctive set of work practices which produce a supportive child protection mode of work. These practices rely on workers choosing to support at intake, practicing with a team approach to the work, participating in intensive and supportive supervisory relationships, documenting for client benefit and employing a community approach to the work. Although this form of practice has many benefits to workers, clients and the community, sometimes the social relations of child protection work constrain the workers' ability to practice in a supportive way and workers experience definite limitations in what they can do to be supportive.

In Chapter V, I argue that the current environment for child protection is created by a mandate and an organization that establishes investigation as the expected method of child protection work by focusing on the individual family as the problem, providing ample resources and services for investigation and apprehension work rather than prevention or supportive work, and distributing staff positions according to the number of investigations recorded in an office.

In Chapter VI, I conclude that workers in Langford can and do practice child protection in a supportive way within the existing investigative mandate of the Ministry. I conclude that

this is only possible at this time in Langford because of the presence of two key preconditions, a healthy and supportive team environment and skilled, experienced and credible local leadership. The thesis closes with a discussion of the policy implications of this knowledge about the social organization of support work for child protection practice.

I. THE TROUBLING EXPERIENCE OF PROTECTING CHILDREN

Introduction to My Inquiry

My interest in doing this study originates in my own experience as a child protection worker. In the summer of 1983 I spent four months, between my third and fourth year in the School of Social Work, employed by the provincial government as a child protection worker. Under the watchful eye of experienced child protection workers I carried out the investigative mandate of the organization as I was told, and observed and participated in traditional ministry child protection practices. I took my turn at intake, completed the necessary documents, visited clients, attended staff meetings and participated in supervision with the District Supervisor. Although I considered myself an intelligent and competent worker, the whole experience was troubling and uncomfortable.

After a very short time in this position I began to dread my interactions with those people referred to as my clients. Despite my internal desire to help them, I was always received with hostility. I felt very powerful, in that I could judge a parent's ability to protect a child, but I did not feel that what I was doing was very helpful. Judging parents put me in a very tense and awkward relationship with them, a relationship in which I was responsible for having all the answers and they were responsible for doing what I said. I was the expert and they were the problem. That was the way the workers, the clients and the general population I talked to seemed to understand and participate in the child protection process.

Acting in this position of expert I felt quite inadequate because I did not seem to have all the answers. Although I had spent the previous year learning about how to perform the role of social worker, I found myself in an environment where I was required to refer to a policy manual for answers. I felt like I had been trained to do the job but was not able to

carry it out in a way that resulted in success for clients and some sense of satisfaction for myself. Something felt wrong with what I was doing, but it was compatible with how things in the office were done. There was a clear and distinctive boundary between ourselves as workers and the group called clients and carrying out my daily work seemed to maintain that boundary. I was outside the families I was working with, passing judgment on them from a distance and referring to a policy manual to determine actions I would take to remedy their inadequacies as parents. I was praised by my peers when I acted authoritatively with a client and admonished for being a bleeding heart if I took the client's point of view. When I actually did make meaningful contact with a client, I could find limited means within my role to help them, other than referring them for personal counselling or parenting training.

The circumstances in which many of my clients lived overwhelmed me at times and often demanded very different solutions than what I had available to offer. I found myself spending the majority of my time with other workers, service providers and group home parents trying to avoid this feeling of unease that resulted from spending time with clients. I left the job with many questions. Why did this work feel so unhelpful? Why were clients so hostile to my actions? Why did I always feel internal conflict between what I felt like doing and what I was expected to do? Why was this job not a rewarding and enjoyable experience?

Unnamed Contradictions

At the end of the summer, I returned to school convinced I was not cut out to do child protection work. I could not verbalize the contradictions I felt, except that I attributed my inability as an outcome of my personality type and that was the reason I could not do such harsh and emotionally numbing work. Upon graduation, I secured employment in another area of the social service field. The questions and contradictions that had arisen for me the

previous summer lay dormant for many years, until I entered graduate school and once again encountered the questions and contradictions that troubled me a decade earlier. As a consequence of the thinking required to participate in the policy/practice debate in the curriculum and the feminist frameworks through which I began to see my experience, I began to draw connections between what I had experienced as a frontline child protection worker and the way in which the legislative mandate for protecting children is accomplished. During my course work I developed a keen interest in studying how the organization of the work of child protection created my frontline experience and the contradictions inherent in it.

Through initial inquiries into the possibility of studying the practice of child protection, I stumbled upon information about an office in the Victoria area where practice reportedly was different than what my experience had been. I made my first contact with the District Supervisor of the office in Langford in March 1993 and he confirmed that work was done differently in his office. He was interested in my research and agreed to open his office and staff to my inquiry. The District Supervisor described the work in his office as focussed on helping children grow up, supporting families and involving the community. My first discussion with him and my first encounter with his staff during an staff retreat looked different, sounded different and felt different than anything I had experienced within the child protection system. The retreat participants included a university professor, a policy analyst from Ministry headquarters, child protection workers, their supervisor and myself. The purpose of the retreat was to review what the team called the Support Project. The team had just completed its first year of providing child protection as a supportive form of practice and this retreat was an opportunity to look back, rethink and look forward. The atmosphere was positive and challenging and I found the discussion invigorating.

Amidst this optimistic scenario I did recognize some things that were familiar from my past experience. One worker asked "why can't we just do it? We go so far then you (the District Supervisor) close the door?". Although there was a sense of common purpose amongst the participants, stories alternated between descriptions of positive experiences of change and experiences of "hitting the wall". The image this created for me was that of people hitting a wall and bouncing off, getting up and trying to figure out another way of getting through to the other side. I felt such a sense of common purpose and solidarity amongst all the participants and such a strong commitment to do what they called "good work" that I decided I wanted to be part of this work in order to understand it. I wanted to understand how they carried this work out within the organization and also how frustration comes to be part of the frontline experience of the work. I was interested in seeing what good work was and how it was accomplished, and explicating how good work can produce the troubles and difficulties that workers described to me.

The Research Problematic

In reflecting upon my own experience and that expressed by the workers in Langford, I became aware of a line of fault between what workers felt needed to be done to assist families with raising their children and what was possible to do within the present practices of the child protection Ministry. Practices required by ministry policy seemed to require workers to participate with families in ways that did not feel helpful to either the family or the worker. What frontline workers know about what families need and what families tell them about what would be helpful cannot always be provided. What workers see as the problem often cannot be addressed through Ministry services. As a result, workers experience frustration and a sense of futility at times when what they know needs to be available to parents to help them take care of their children is not possible through the present child protection system.

Other people voiced similar concerns in the recent Community Panel Family and Children's Services Legislation Review (Community Panel Report, 1992), stating "Families told us of being frightened and threatened by a child welfare structure they thought should have provided help and support...Ministry staff, service providers and caregivers described to us the feelings of frustration and isolation. They said the 'system' is focused on symptoms, not on the underlying causes of the problems facing families and children." (p. 3)

Through the legislative review process, hundreds of people, around the province, from all levels of the child protection system, made their voices heard. The report of the review, Making Changes: A Place to Start, highlights numerous areas of inadequacy in the system and makes recommendations for change. In essence the report concludes that the processes through which the problem of child protection has been dealt with have been unsuccessful in helping parents raise their children in both the expressed opinion of those receiving service and those providing it.

The gap between the mandated work of child protection through investigation and what workers feel about what clients need is where my research questions originate. The contradiction for the workers exists in the obstacles they experience in their day to day work which limits their capacity to support families to protect children but allows them to investigate to protect. This contradiction is manifest in a line of fault between the service which the ministry provides for families to ensure the protection of children and the kind of service families express to workers needed to help them raise their children.

In the Langford office, over the last year, workers have been trying to organize their work to be primarily supportive and more helpful to their clients. They recognize the need for investigation as one means of protectioning children but question the it as the primary means of protection. Although they practice in ways which ensure the continued smooth

functioning of their Ministry office, within the larger organization, and they practice investigative child protection in cases that require it, they also feel they practice differently than offices where the primary mode of work is investigation. Many of these differences reflect recommendations for supportive practice outlined in the Community Panel Report. Foundations for support practice include a focus on client need as the determination of the work, an orientation to supporting families in providing mandated services and an overall community based approach to the work. Workers appear to be satisfied with their ability to do the work in this way, within the local office. They do, however, describe frustration when the work they do in their office requires them to access resources and support from the larger organization. They talk about spending a great deal of time and energy trying to access what clients say they need, from an organization with rules and guidelines for practice which make access to those resources often difficult or impossible to obtain. They experience the larger organization as policy maker and enforcer and feel the gap between their day to day frontline experience of child protection work and those locations distant from their practice where policy is determined. What workers actually do, day to day, to meet the needs of their clients, within the policy and structure of the Ministry, is of interest to me, particularly in Langford, where both local management and staff are attempting to carry out Ministry practices with a supportive orientation.

II. METHODOLOGY

My interest in studying child protection practice in Langford was centered in the experience of the frontline workers. I was interested in seeing how they practice child protection day to day and what they did to practice in a supportive way and also what they experienced as troubling about practicing in this way. I wanted to explore this experience by participating in the worker's day to day work and seeing their experience from their perspective. For this purpose I chose to employ an interpretive research approach.

The Interpretive Paradigm

I conducted this study using an interpretive research approach which is based on the premise that I, as the researcher, am a part of the social world I am studying (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). In using this paradigm, I acknowledged the non-neutrality (Maguire, 1987) of my research activity and sought to investigate the social experience of doing child protection work from within the context of that work rather than outside it. I did not pursue universal truths about child protection work that can be statistically generalized to other sample populations, rather, I investigated child protection work by taking the standpoint of those who practice it day to day in Langford and learned how this daily experience is organized.

I based my research paradigm choice on the assumption that what we know about the world is dynamic and people are social beings in constant interaction with their environment. This reflexive nature of the knowledge generated about the social world cannot be controlled and factored out of interpretive research. Reflexivity (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983) is an essential element of the interpretive paradigm and this form of research is a reflexive activity. Rather than control or discount the influence of elements surrounding my research endeavour, including myself as the researcher, I considered these

influences as an integral part of the social interaction I studied. Specifically I observed, listened, questioned and checked my perceptions ongoingly with informants in order to produce an account and knowledge about the work that captured their experience as they lived it and also how I as a researcher connected that experience to the conceptual framework of my study. This joint production of knowledge through this reflexive activity is characteristic of the interpretive approach.

Knowledge about child protection work in Langford has been constructed through this research activity as a product of this reflexive interaction between the researcher and the work being researched, within the context in which it was experienced. My research findings will be judged by their usefulness in accurately tracing the "how" of child protection in Langford, rather than the "what", and explicating the social organization of the everyday experience of the workers in Langford. By using the interpretive framework, my goal was to see how supportive approaches to child protection work are practiced day to day by frontline child protection workers. I came to know their practice through interaction with them as active knowers and used their talk (Jackson, 1984) as the entry point into the social relations (D. Smith, 1987) which organize their experience of the world and their standpoint within it.

The Method of Study

My research followed a method of inquiry Dorothy Smith (1987) employs to investigate the social world, how it works and "how things are actually put together" (p. 147). Seeing how the experience of frontline workers came to be within the organizational setting of the Ministry could best be investigated using institutional ethnography, a feminist research strategy which provides a basis on which to explicate institutional relations which determine the everyday world, in this case, of child protection practice. This strategy provided a way to explore the local organization of everyday life in child

protection, and make visible the relations that determine it. Ethnography placed the actuality of everyday experience at the centre of inquiry and moved to explore the "generalized and generalizing relations of the ruling apparatus" (p. 147) that organize that experience.

Using institutional ethnography (D. Smith, 1987, p. 160) I explored the social relations child protection work helps to bring into being, in and through the actual day to day practices of workers. The institution I refer to is a "complex of relations forming part of the ruling apparatus" (p. 160) organized around the function of providing child protection services, as organized by the Ministry of Social Services through the legislation and policies of the Family and Children's Services Act. The distinctive character of this strategy of research is that although everyday life experiences of child protection work can be expertly described by those experiencing it, its organization cannot be seen or understood completely by them from within that experience. It is the work of the social science researcher, to use investigative skills, to trace back and make visible the "extra-local" determinations (D. Smith, 1987, p. 161) of everyday life in child protection. I needed to investigate the trails that connected the individual experience with the larger social relations in which those concrete experiences are nested (G. Smith, 1990). The disjuncture between what is known by child protection workers on the frontline and what is conceptually practiced by those managing the administration of child protection work from a distance, shapes the problematic. In this case the Langford staff acted on what is known at the frontline and organized their work according to what they knew about the work and how it was governed. Through the use of institutional ethnography, I studied the day to day experience of child protection at the frontline and traced the organization of that experience within the institutional organization of the Ministry.

An ethnography or fieldwork (Reinharz, 1992), is a multi-method research approach including observation, participation, archival analysis and interviewing over a period of time. These methods relied on my immersion in the research setting and aimed for intersubjectivity between myself and those being studied (Reinharz, 1992, p. 46). This means understanding the talk between the two, seeing it in its context of social relations, (Jackson, 1992) and focusing on the "telling" of accounts as not just content but also a product based on "various levels of taken for granted understanding" (p. 122). The sense made of the accounts of child protection work are a joint production of both the speaker and the hearer (Jackson, 1992, p. 122).

In keeping with this approach I became part of the social relations of the Langford office, watching what was being done, listening to what was said and questioning in order to understand from the inside, the experience of child protection work and make visible the social relations which organized the workers' experience. By taking the standpoint of the worker, as a researcher I was able to make the socially organized properties of child protection work first observable, then problematic, then moved beyond what is experientially known to the social relations in which the child protection workers' experiences were embedded and ongoingly produced.

Sample

Sample is a somewhat misleading term in interpretive research. However, I can describe who I interviewed and/or observed and why I chose them. As well as my participant observation of the whole staff over several months, as they went about their work, I chose three workers, one District Supervisor and two management personnel for in-depth interviews. I used non-probability sampling (Merriam, 1988, p. 47) since I was attempting to discover what actually happens and not attempting to generalize my findings statistically to a larger similar population. The three subjects for the sample were chosen purposefully

(p. 48) based on their capacity to inform me about the research setting and the work (p. 48). I considered good informants as those who had in depth knowledge about the work in Langford and were thoughtful, articulate and insightful. These three workers had been employed by the Ministry for three and a half, five and sixteen years respectively. They had all worked in other offices first and had been in the Langford office for at least two years. I checked my initial perceptions about my choice of informants with the District Supervisor and he substantiated my choices regarding their ability to accurately inform about the work.

The reflexive nature of the interpretive approach allowed me to follow the path my data paved in search of other subjects who could broaden my understanding of the organization of work in the Langford office. My initial inquiries with the workers guided the development of questions in directions and to participants that informed about relations within and outside the setting. Later I interviewed the Area Manager and a Social Services Policy Analyst, who could inform about the management practices of the Ministry.

Data

Data in my study were anything that informed about the subject of inquiry. I recorded my data through words, or qualitatively (Merriam, 1988, p. 67). Qualitative data included: detailed descriptions, direct quotations and excerpts from documents, correspondence, records, case histories (Patton, 1980, p. 22 from Merriam, 1988, p. 68) and personal notes on my experience. What information was considered data in my study depended on my research question, my standpoint as the researcher, and on its usefulness in discovering how child protection work occurs.

Participant Observation

The practice of participant observation is the collection of data from observation of the phenomena being studied (Merriam, 1988, p. 87). I used participant observation as one of the research tools employed to see first hand what actually happens in the frontline experience of child protection work in the Langford office. Participant observation is a useful and effective data gathering technique for qualitative research, since the interpretive paradigm takes into account the standpoint, and subjectivity, of both the people being observed and the researcher.

The role I took in the Langford office was determined by both the purpose of my research and the research setting (Hammersly and Atkinson, 1983, p. 97). Access to the setting was initially assured by the District Supervisor of Family and Children's Services at the Langford office. My attendance at an all day staff retreat in June introduced my work to the staff. Through these initial stages, my role of "observer as participant" (Merriam, 1988, p. 93), whereby my research activities became known to the group and supported by them, developed. I continued in this role by attending regular and ad hoc office staff meetings, community social planning activities, chatting with staff informally at their work sites, and observing and interacting with staff. I conducted my participant observation over a period of seven months. (See Appendix #1) My primary role was information gatherer and my role of participant in the group was secondary (p. 93). I gathered data reflexively, observing and asking about what I observed, to ensure I was understanding the knower's point of view and keeping the subjects fundamental to the phenomena being studied.

I recorded data through fieldnotes, my journal and audio-taping. The content of my fieldnotes (Merriam, 1988, p. 98) included: direct quotations or paraphrasing what I considered to be the essence of what people had said, verbal descriptions of the people,

setting or activities of what I observed, and my own comments and insights about what I observed. Combined with interviewing and document analysis, participant observation, provided an holistic approach (Merriam, 1988, p. 102) to understanding how child protection work is organized in the Langford office.

Interviewing

The second method of data gathering was open ended, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, in which a dialogue between myself and the three subjects was guided by my interests and conceptual framework. I used the interview as a tool to more closely focus on what I had observed and to gather information more directly from those who have the more expert knowledge of the problematic. I prepared an interview schedule (Merriam, 1988, p. 78), or list of possible questions (See Appendix #2), to think through what information I wanted from the subjects. I made sure certain topics were covered but my inquiry was not constrained by those pre-determined specific questions. I acquired consent forms (See Appendix #3) from interviewees and then used notes and an audio tape recorder to record all the interviews. The interviews were then transcribed for future reference.

Interview questions covered a broad range of knowledge about the work. Out of the analysis of beginning interviews other topic areas surfaced, in line with my conceptual framework these topics directed me to other participants in the organization, the area manager and a policy analyst. Consistent with the notion of the everyday world as problematic, the interview process began with the experience of those individuals who provided the point of entry for looking at the everyday world of child protection, the workers and their immediate supervisor. Through their accounts of everyday experience, I constructed knowledge that explicated this social organization from the standpoint of the workers and their supervisor.

I am aware that data collection and analysis in this paradigm occur simultaneously, even during the interview, as well as after. Data gained influenced further questions to be asked, and the subject's own awareness of the problematic as the interviews proceeded. This reflexive activity allowed for clarification, probing and redirecting (Guba and Lincoln, 1981, p. 187 in Merriam, 1988, p. 86) of questions by the researcher and acknowledged the importance of the interaction between researcher and respondent in the success of the interview in gathering useful information. Although the six interviewees presented individual experiences of their child protection work, these experiences are not idiosyncratic. By tracing their individual stories into the institutional structure of the work I explicated how these experiences are socially organized to occur in characteristic ways within that structure.

Documentary Analysis

Documents provided another way of seeing how child protection work is organized by seeing how the work is transformed into text. Documentary processes are the means by which information about what happens on the frontline is communicated both to managers, administrators and others in positions of governing the work and back to line workers. This communication is organized in characteristic ways within the bureaucracy in order to articulate the work of child protection (Campbell, 1992) to the managing practices of the Ministry of Social Services. I examined what was being said in these documents and also saw them as constructing a reality of their own. I looked at both the content of documents as well as their organizing function within the social relations of which they are a part. In Langford, as in all Ministry of Social Services offices, documentation is required to provide accountability to the Ministry for the work being done. How documentation is done in Langford, what is included in documentation, where it goes and how it is used helped me to see, if and how, the actual practice in Langford

was reflected in the documentary process. Documents of my inquiry included: meeting minutes, organizational records, legislation/policy, Community Panel Review, management directives, agency forms, files, Interagency Manuals, Training Manuals, Office Vision Notes (computer communication systems), staff articles on process of work change.

Analysis of Data

The analysis was based on the experiential data I gathered as the basis of my account of child protection work in Langford. This work was expertly described to me and shown to me by workers in that setting. I moved beyond what any particular worker experienced, through my research, into the social relations of the Ministry as a context for that experience. This offers a basis for explicating how the frontline experience of child protection work is socially organized outside the experience of those who live it day to day. This analysis begins to show how the everyday experience of child protection work in Langford is both fulfilling and frustrating to workers. My analysis relied on my conceptual framework particularly the concept of social relations for determining where to look for the social organization of frontline experience and how to see beyond that experience to its extra local determinations. This analysis flows from the data. Rather than separating these two elements of the research, they have been integrated in the text to support one another in the development of the argument.

Validity

In the interpretive paradigm, the nature of knowledge rests on assumptions about the nature of social reality and how to study it. One of these assumptions is that "reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing." (Merriam, 1988, p. 167). Another assumption is that reality is constructed by people according to how they understand their world (p. 167). In studying the social reality of child protection work in Langford, in

essence I studied the constructions of that reality as described by the workers in that particular setting.

The question of what is valid knowledge may differ depending on the assumptions of the researcher. In interpretive research the purpose is understanding and assisting others to understand their social reality. The knowledge I created through this research must enhance and deepen understanding of how child protection processes work and the social reality of how child protection work is constructed, to be valid. Since I was finding out how a Ministry of Social Services office works, and how the social relations of a government bureaucracy generate various actual tasks to be done in characteristic ways, I sought validity through the accuracy of my description and analysis of the child protection worker's reality. The question I asked myself was "Does it really happen this way?". To test this validity, the workers and the District Supervisor were given copies of the first draft of this research to ensure the account of their work was accurate from their point of view. The District Supervisor described the research as "bang on" stating it accurately reflects what they are trying to do in the office.

As well as being valid to the subjects of the research my account of the work is valid to all readers if it makes sense in relation to the kind of evidence I put forward. What I argue must stand on its own and make sense to a reader given the data I have presented. I have not attempted to put forward a definitive truth, but have presented an argument, its cogency and usefulness being individually judged by readers themselves.

I relied upon confirmability (Sandelowski, 1986, p. 33) as a test of methodological rigor for my research. Findings meet the criteria of being confirmable if they can be recognized by those experiencing the phenomena under study, other researchers can follow the trail taken by the researcher and it makes sense, findings can fit outside the context of the study

situation and fit the data from which they were derived, and findings are "well grounded in the life experiences studied and reflect their typical and atypical elements" (p. 32).

Generalizability

The concept of generalizability is tied to methods and how they inform about the world. Although not statistically generalizable my research findings will be useful to understand other similar organizational settings. In researching the actual situation in Langford, some things can be learned and knowledge developed that can be useful in creating understandings that may be used to inquire into other similar organizational settings. While individual experiences may differ, similarities may be identified about the characteristic ways in which these experiences come out of the ruling practices of the Ministry. These experiences have some consistency to them as actions on the frontline are coordinated through text based forms of child protection practices. Some generalizations may be drawn from this unique study experience, as many similar offices, with similar practices embedded within similar bureaucratic structures, exist in the province. In the same way my experience in child protection reflects some of the experiences of the workers in Langford, the way in which the ruling structure of government organizes the work of its employees, may well illustrate that workers' experiences are not random, but organized by a set of social relations that also organize other child protection offices.

The interpretive paradigm provided a way for me to explore the work of child protection from the standpoint of the workers who are intimately involved in it. More specifically, institutional ethnography provided a framework for looking at the way individual experiences of workers are connected to the common institutional organizing practices of the Ministry. The individual stories were the entry into the world of child protection work in Langford and how the staff were attempting to practice in a different way within a traditional set of social relations.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDY

In trying to understand the work of child protection as it is practiced in Langford, I reflected on the way workers in the Langford office talked about their work in terms of the frameworks I had learned in my graduate course work. I began to develop my conceptual framework by reviewing the literature which seemed to speak about concepts related to the worker's talk and current thinking in the child protection research. I reviewed literature on social support, empowerment, and community development; the three consistent elements of practice that workers talked about as essential to their practice. I also reviewed literature on current thinking in child protection, predominantly from a feminist perspective, which is influencing thinking and practice. Central to my choice of methodology, I also reviewed the literature that discusses the organization of the frontline work experience, specifically using the concepts of social relations and ruling relations.

Support versus Investigation

One of the key elements in the Community Panel Report and the practice of the Langford team is the notion of support as a foundation for child protection practice. Presently the mode of practice which accomplishes the legislative mandate to protect children is the investigation of suspected abuse and neglect. Investigation, although necessary practice in some cases, is presently being challenged as a primary approach to all child protection reports. Child protection workers are trained to accomplish the investigation model, and the bureaucratic system and legal structures interacting with it have reinforced the work to be of an investigative nature, making support work difficult to do. It is difficult both in terms of the investigative volume of the work and as well as the lack of resources to provide support. Presently, child protection legislation requires suspected abuse or

neglect to be reported and public education programs are aimed at encouraging this reporting.

With the introduction of the Helpline for Children in 1978 phone reports of suspected abuse or neglect have risen from 800 in 1979 to 35,000 in 1989. Each phone report, according to the legislation, requires investigative follow up by workers (Berland, 1993). This volume consumes the worker's time and expertise is directed toward doing investigations well, rather than supporting the family. The introduction in legislation of a citizen's legal responsibility for reporting suspected abuse and neglect requires them to participate in the investigative process by reporting anonymously to a social worker, who then is required to carry out the investigation and to enforce child protection standards. Historically, the state response to child protection has been characterized by contradictory mandates, both to provide support to the family and to exercise control over abusive and neglectful parents (Swift, 1990). At this time, investigation prevails as the dominant mode of child protection practice in B.C.

Wharf (1993) takes the analysis further by identifying within investigation, a "distinction between systemic and parental neglect." (p. 8). He suggests systemic neglect is when government fails to provide adequate living standards to families and assesses parental neglect on the absence of those basic standards. He reiterates a pivotal point with respect to the support/investigation dilemma, made in *Liberating Our Children: Liberating Our Nations* (Community Panel, Report of the Aboriginal Committee, 1992), stating that the absence of adequate income and supports is not a sufficient basis for the apprehension of a child (Wharf, 1993, p. 10). This differentiation between parental responsibility and societal responsibility challenges the practice of investigating parents regardless of systemic deficiencies in their environment. It also points to the provision of support as an alternative to apprehension.

The Community Panel Report (1992) strongly recommends that the emphasis of family and children's services be "shifted towards support services and away from intervention" services (p. 62). This shift is based on the belief that the intervention emphasis has not been helpful to many families who have become involved in the child protection system and is only a band-aid solution to the family's problems. The intervention emphasis places the blame for problems on the shoulders of the family creating great disruption for the family without providing pathways out of the problem. The Report defines support services as "those that assist families to enhance their abilities" (p. 63).

Due to the primarily investigative role of child protection workers, over the last decade the role of support has largely been contracted out to private agencies. Social workers have become investigators and case managers to the family more than direct providers of support services. This has in some ways alleviated the stress of performing the seemingly contradictory roles of investigation and support, but has also distanced the social worker from the family with whom she is responsible. This has limited the development of a supportive relationship between workers and clients, through which accurate identification of client need and provision of effective support services can be determined. The case management role requires practice to be focused on completion of activities and documentation which will demonstrate in visible, namely textual ways, the management of the case. It does not require evidence of an effective relationship with a client or the successful meeting of client need. With support work contracted out, the child protection worker exclusively deals with crisis focused intervention (Community Panel Report, 1992), and completion of management tasks. Investigative practices are compatible with the conceptual definitions of the child protection problem and the management practices designed to regulate it (Campbell, 1992) but incompatible with the needs of the client as experienced by frontline workers. Although child protection workers cannot provide all

the support services clients require, the exclusively investigative role that now consumes their time limits the beneficial potential of supportive practices in accomplishing the protection of children.

Current literature (Cochran, 1991; Callaghan and Morrissey, 1993; and Miller and Whittaker, 1988) refers to the kind of support being suggested in the Community Panel Report, as social support. The current interest in social support as a professional intervention strategy is a result of a number of converging developments in child protection. Recent empirical evidence suggests social support may actually mediate environmental stress and personality deficits, strengthening the potential for solid parent-child bonds, increasing parental self esteem, nurturing healthy child development and preventing family breakdown (Miller and Whittaker, 1988). Also, continued financial and political pressures on child welfare services coupled with exponentially increasing abuse and neglect reports, is forcing professionals to utilize strategies, other than just the investigative approach, to help. Although investigation is practiced in Langford when necessary, these converging issues have raised the possibility that social support is an alternative and perhaps a more effective means of providing child protection services in many previously investigation only cases. Miller and Whittaker (1988) contend that there is simply no longer the time, resources or will to maintain a traditional, individualized casework intervention approach alone in helping families.

The processes of social support take place through social support networks consisting of "sets of interconnected relationships among groups of people that provide enduring patterns of nurturance in any or all forms and provide contingent reinforcement for effort to cope with life on a day-to-day basis." (Whittaker and Gabarino, 1983 in Miller and Whittaker, 1988, p. 162). Central to these social support exchanges are relationships that express feedback, mutuality and reciprocity, and informality. These elements imply

equality of standing in relationships that are of a spontaneous, non-professional nature (p. 162).

Cochran (1991) found that the content and extent of personal social support networks are a function of social position. Social position is organized by income level, gender, education and work, and neighbourhood. He suggests that public policy address these issues of social position more than individual child protection treatment (Cochran, 1991). Cochran suggests that the networks of poor families are largely constructed or destroyed for them by their life circumstances, where cultural and social forces organize the control individuals actually have over the content of their support network (p. 51). Given this analysis, Cochran asks if public policy can encourage personal support networks at all. Since many child protection clients are poor this analysis is useful in seeing the context of a client's life as essential to providing support. Both Cochran (1991) and Wharf (1993) identify a lack of control over circumstances which produce difficulties for poor families. The problem of child protection is defined as internal to the family in legislation, but in the above literature it could be seen as a contextual outcome, not solely within the power of the family to control. Enforcing the legislative definition of the problem, with investigative practices, by workers who see the problem in a systemic (Wharf, 1993) or contextual way may create some of the feelings of frustration and experiences of contradiction in the work.

Miller and Whittaker (1988) review four family support programs which demonstrate a number of common characteristics used to look at supportive child protection work. First, the programs integrated a blending of professional and non-professional roles for child protection workers, developing long term, intimate relationships with families and offering a range of individual and environmental services in collaboration with the community. Workers became a blend of confidante and institutional broker, basing their relationship

with families on trust, not authority, developing relationships over time and through a thorough understanding of the family's unique situation.

Second, an emphasis was placed on integrating prevention and early intervention strategies, cooperatively planned with community based parent education and support groups and child protection agencies. This cooperation reduced some of the effect of barriers public agencies face such as stigmatization of service use, inability to advocate politically for clients, limited community support and pressure internally to restrict time limits for service and effect of dual mandates of protection versus support in dealing with high risk families.

A third characteristic shared by all programs is careful assessment and intervention planning. Taking an environmental helping approach to child protection requires a thorough assessment of social resources, both formal and informal, as well as a thorough understanding of the social context of the family.

Finally, the agency and worker roles required specialized training in assessment and community resources. The role of the worker became "network/system consultant" or "broker of services and resources" and "advocate", with a specific aim of approaching informal helping more systematically (Miller and Whittaker, 1988, p. 172).

Current discussions in the Ministry about support reflect some of the current thinking about social support in the literature. Choosing to be supportive in approaching the work instead of only investigative requires changes in other inherent aspects of child protection work, one of those being the use of power.

Empowerment as a Principle in Child Protection Work

Shifting the orientation of practice from investigative to supportive involves a shift in the power balance between worker and client. Both the Community Panel and the Langford staff have addressed this issue by identifying empowerment as an essential element in forging new directions for practice. It is a manifestation of their belief that "clients need to take ownership and control of their lives." (Young, 1993) This involves a shift in worker role from telling the client what she must do, to assisting the client in identifying the problem and then sharing responsibility for solving it (Young, 1993, p. 2). The present child protection policy focussing on investigation of parents and rehabilitation to standardized norms reinforces the power differences between worker and client and is not considered to be empowering.

In the literature empowerment is viewed more contextually as a process which can only be truly analyzed as a political phenomena within the context of our paternalistic social structures (Hegar and Hunzeker, 1988). The literature stresses the need to study empowerment within the context of our society, where power differentials manifest themselves in ways that make empowerment for the individual and group very difficult. The literature on social support and empowerment both emphasize the influence of context in identifying the problems people experience. Current legislation makes no reference to the inclusion of context in identifying or addressing the problem of child protection.

Pinderhughes (1983) describes empowerment as "the capacity to influence the forces that affect one's life space for one's own benefit." (p. 332) She emphasizes the importance of understanding the power issues and systemic processes of power prevalent in our helping structures and argues for the need to base interventions on the knowledge of those power dynamics. To make client empowerment a fundamental goal of change efforts, requires

fundamental changes within the social structures themselves (p. 331). For workers, this means being aware of the power relations in which they participate (Pinderhughes, 1983, p. 333) and having the capacity to challenge safely the structure and processes that create the line up of clients at the door, as well as work within the bureaucratic structure to facilitate power shifts as much as possible. Support practice requires a shifting of power from the worker or expert to define the problem and create the solution alone, to a joint responsibility for this process between client and worker. Power is maintained securely in the workers' position when investigation is the dominant mode of practice.

Rose (1990) describes the individual's experience of power as arising from "producing or at the very least participating in determining how to produce one's activity." (p. 43). In child protection practice, the activity of workers is produced by their participation in accomplishing the goal of protecting children as defined by the ruling mandate of the legislation. By participating in the enforcement of the rules governing the protection of children, workers are limited in their control over the determination of the activities involved in that participation. These rules that govern child protection organize the activities throughout the organization, which fit into one another and ultimately organize the work at the frontline level, greatly limiting the individual worker's experience of power, as defined by Rose. Frontline practitioners in the child protection field, are limited in their capacity to produce or participate in determining how to produce their activity because the investigative mode of work requires them to participate in ways that ensure the smooth functioning of the bureaucratic machinery of government under the current mandate. Without this power, they are not able to produce activity which reflects the true experience of their clients.

Rose (1990) also identifies the structural contradiction inherent in the social welfare system. The same class and economic structure that funds the employment of social

workers, creates the conditions that produce poverty and the need for social services. Those needing social services are forced to internalize this social reality which confines them to the constructed reality of failure, inadequacy and the individual defect paradigm. In carrying out investigative practice workers construct clients in this way, judging them in isolation from their context within which their experience has been produced. Workers who want to try to work in a supportive way are without the power or legitimacy to challenge the structural realities that organize their work activity.

The individual focus of the work also conceals the contradiction of child protection practice being supported by a system that creates clients (Rose, 1990). This individual focus reinforces the division between private and public spheres of life, specifically for women who are the majority of consumers. Although child protection work is carried out by public agencies, the work is very private and restricts women to dealing with their problems individually (Callahan, 1992). This individualized treatment approach limits the client's awareness of other people in similar situations. Coupled with the individual focus, is the use of a pathological model for intervention, where negative aspects of client troubles are the focus as opposed to assessing needs and affirming competence in families (Kissman, 1991).

It seems in recent history, child protection work has developed by basing its practice on theories, strategies and methods that perpetuate this individualized, pathology based problem orientation, one which is not empowering. The literature suggests the foundations for change within the public agencies that deal with these social problems must begin with a shifting of principles to societal, public, process and problem-solving strategies for practice. Rose (1990) emphasizes the need to teach clients about their place in the structure and help clients externalize their problems accurately into their social

context. He places the focus on contextualizing or bringing to consciousness both the unique experience of the individual and the social basis for that experience.

A feminist perspective on empowerment suggests that practice must be reframed to function with shared decision making responsibility, mutual participatory planning and mutual interdependence at both the client and workers levels (Weil, 1988). Callahan (1992) emphasizes the need to be continually challenging, in every day practice, the theories and practices which "ignore a critique of power and gender" (p. 6) and to become ever conscious of the linkages and speak about them, attributing problems to their sources, rather than down the line to individuals. While acknowledging the contextual nature of child protection, the empowerment literature is lacking in what is actually done by workers to create an empowering experience for workers and clients in their daily practice. Empowerment is philosophically very convincing, but practically very difficult to put into practice.

Both the literature on social support and empowerment emphasize the social context of clients as integral to an accurate assessment of the problem, and that this perspective broadens the problem of child protection from a personal problem of individual families to a public concern common to many families, particularly poor families headed by females. Changing this perspective on the problem seems to require a sharing of the power between workers and clients in identifying the problem, making decisions and planning for resolution. It also requires those in the child protection system to question and challenge the existing societal context which creates not only their clients experiences, but their own as well. The literature also suggests if workers are to share power, they themselves must have some experience of it to share. They, too, need to be empowered.

Child Protection Through a Feminist Lens

Discussions of power and social support lend themselves well to the feminist perspective on child protection. New ways of thinking about child protection are largely growing from feminist analyses of the relationship between the family and the state (Swift, 1991 and Gordon, 1985 and Callahan, 1993). Since women are predominantly the givers and receivers of child protection work, these analyses place women's experience in the centre of their inquiries. A feminist analysis begins from the premise that women are oppressed by virtue of their gender and that this is a universal and enduring phenomena (Callahan, 1993). The source of this oppression is embedded in the patriarchal relations that characterize modern industrial societies.

There are varying feminist perspectives on women's relation to the family, but there is agreement that family is a core site of women's oppression. Family is clearly implicated at the very foundation of gender differentiation and power relations between the sexes because gender is created by social relations experienced first in the family, not determined or limited by biology (Pascall, 1986, p. 24). Abramovitz (1986) describes this social norm as the "family ethic". She suggests that "proper" (p. 212) women marry, bear and raise children while living in a subordinated, dependent relationship with a male breadwinner. Any other social roles women chose or have inflicted upon them brings penalties. The family ethic is reflected in social welfare policies and procedures that encourage women to choose traditional family roles. Women on income assistance are regularly scrutinized for their involvement with men, the assumption being that if a man is in the house he, not the state, should be supporting the woman. This is consistent with the family ethic. Like the work ethic, the family ethic is a form of social control (Abramovitz, 1986, p. 212).

Child protection practice has grown out of "an historical relationship between the state and the family" (Swift, 1991), originating in English law. This concept has been used to

both actively protect the child from parental abuse or neglect and as a rationale for intervention into the private domain of the family (Swift, 1991, p. 236). The first legislation that provided for intervention into the family reinforced the cultural ideology about appropriate family life, and child protection work functioned to both control adult behaviour and maintain this sexual division of labour (Gordon, 1985). This critical relationship between the state and the family manifest in law the notion of state enforcement of child protection through sanctions imposed on the parents, usually the mother, to ensure adherence to the standard expectations for caring for children within the family.

The problem of child protection as it is presently constructed, is an individual one, largely attributed to women as parents in single parenting roles. It focuses on the deficiencies of the parent in her role and inability to meet the socially constructed standards for effective parenting regardless of context or support. Treatment of the problem is individualized, targeting the individual as the medium for change, and is handled by an individual social worker, both of whom are usually women. The social support and empowerment literature seem to be consistent with feminist thinking here, in stating that child protection practice isolates the issue of parenting from the family's social, economic and cultural context and "encourages a sense of individual responsibility and obscures the impact of social conditions" (Callahan, 1993). The Carnegie Council's report (p. 253) identified economic conditions as a key determinant in parenting capacity, stating "that a family's economic position is still the single most powerful determinant of the opportunities open to families and children" (p. 253). The personalization of responsibility for child care ignores the context in which mothers are expected to maintain these standards of care, and the distant nature of those in positions of power to determine that context. From this feminist perspective, the problem has an individual defect focus and appears to be gender specific. The legislation and policy define the problem as a "family" problem, concealing

the actuality that women are predominantly responsible for child rearing, and accordingly are the vast majority of child protection service recipients.

This construction of child care in the private domain of family is reflected in the public domain of legislation which controls family relations. Presently the process of dealing with the problem of child protection is carried out through a large, provincial bureaucratic organization, within which the client work is organized individually. Legislation and policy, are translated through the ideological practices of the bureaucracy and then practiced at the frontline. The rational and objective principles upon which bureaucracies, such as our governmental organizations, are based, organize participation along gender lines where the supposedly neutral and impersonal rationality of the ruling apparatus (D. Smith, 1987) intends to represent the general. In other words, "what is human is considered male and what is female is considered other" (Abramovitz, 1986, p. 255). Carol Gilligan (1982), explicates this organization of participation in her analysis of the differing processes through which males and females make moral decisions. She contends the enduring version of moral development, as defined by Kohlberg's research, is "derived from the study of men's lives" (p. 18). She states that "When one begins with the study of women and derives developmental constructs from their lives, the outline of a moral conception different from that described by...Kohlberg begins to emerge." (p. 19). She argues that women construct the moral problem as arising from

... conflicting responsibilities rather than from competing rights and requires for its resolution a mode of thinking that is contextual and narrative rather than formal and abstract. This conception of morality as concerned with the activity of care centers moral development around the understanding of responsibility and relationships, just as the conception of morality as fairness ties moral development to the understanding of rights and rules. (p. 19).

With respect to child protection, rules based upon the ordering of competing rights, are written into social legislation governing the activities of parents and are enforced through the daily practices occurring throughout the child protection system. The rules reflect the moral decision making processes of men, but are applied predominantly to women.

Conceptual practices governing the protection of children, based on competing rights and the formal and abstract application of such, may produce contradictions in the experiences for women who make moral judgments based on responsibilities, within a context of relationships.

Women are excluded from the practices of power within the relations of ruling (D. Smith, 1987), where definitions which organize child protection work are created. This exclusion has affected the historical development of the roles and responsibilities of women in the family and the legislation and policy that now organizes the experiences of workers and clients within the child protection system.

A feminist analysis also connects child protection and poverty, with the critical link being gender. Single parent women are the largest social group living in poverty in Canada (National Council of Welfare, 1990) and are also the largest social group receiving service from the child protection system. Women are held accountable for the relationships they have with their children, while they have little control over the ruling structures which organize the context in which those relationships function, one of these contexts being a state of poverty. Although the Community Panel (1992) placed poverty front and centre in discussing child protection, it ignores that fact that most of those receiving service are poor women. The responsibilities for raising children almost guarantees they will remain poor (National Council of Welfare, 1990). A feminist analysis of current child protection practice clearly identifies gender and poverty as common characteristics of client status. The present social policy response to child protection has provided a diversionary

function, redirecting attention away from these social origins of child protection problems, organizing practice that personalizes and labels clients as deficient and unable to cope. Help is offered not according to the client's definition of need but with the aim of rehabilitation toward conventional norms of behaviour (Dominelli and McLeod, 1989). This individual problem construction focuses on the deficiencies of the parent in their role and their inability to meet socially constructed standards for effective parenting, ignoring the "systemic barriers which have resulted in discriminatory treatment based on gender, [and] class" (Wharf, 1993, p. 2). Social workers experience the face to face actuality of poor female parents daily but practice within a policy that ignores the contextual sources of child protection.

The feminist literature (Callahan, 1993, 1994; Dominelli and McLeod, 1989; Gordon, 1985; and Swift, 1991) suggests the main problems in current child protection practice arise from the fact that women are held responsible for child abuse and neglect but are powerless in our patriarchal society to change their circumstances which give rise to the need for child protection services. Feminist perspectives see child protection as an issue of power inequity, economically, socially, and emotionally.

Van der Burgh and Cooper (1986) see the feminist viewpoint as a politics of transformation, concerned with changing existing economic, social and political structures (p. 2), not only in the area designated as women's issues, but for all those groups not represented in the current patriarchal system. They suggest five feminist principles to guide this transformation in practice: 1) eliminating false dichotomies and artificial separations, 2) reconceptualizing power, 3) valuing process equally with product, 4) validating by renaming and 5) seeing the personal as political. These principles provide a framework through which to look at the work of child protection and measure its consistency with feminist practice. If the problem is reframed in this way, new directions

for practice would focus on the holistic and ecological nature of relationships, the integrative and collective decision making process, the concept of power as infinite and facilitative of empowerment to action, that processes used to make decisions are as important as the final outcome, that naming one's experience is critical to identity and sense of self, and that personal problems can be related to political realities. These feminist principles (p. 25) allow an analysis which integrates the individual experience of those in the child protection system with the larger society and helps trace the connection between personal troubles and institutional oppression.

Community Development as a Support Strategy

The concept of community development as a support strategy has some consistencies with the previous perspectives stated in the social support, empowerment and feminist literature with respect to child protection work. The need to assess and work with clients within their context is emphasized in all three areas of the literature. Despite varying definitions, community as a unit for reorganization of social and other ministry services, has gained almost universal acceptance and is firmly embedded in the Community Panel recommendations for change.

The literature has widely varying definitions and examples of community development as a concept. Community has traditionally been defined by geographic boundaries. John McKnight (N.D.) defines it as a "social space where citizens and their associations solve problems" (p. 7), Chavis and Florin (1990) describe community as "relational networks" (p. 16), where a community is defined to the extent that its social relations are organized by a sense of community. These definitions broaden the notion of community, but name rather than explain what is made evident by the term (Walker, G. in Ng, Walker and Mueller, 1990). Community is concerned with ways to replace or create connectedness and social cohesion that has been lost during the massive upheaval of changing economic

processes like the industrial revolution (Walker, G. in Ng, Walker and Mueller, 1990, p. 41). Providing human services not only manages dissent, but responds to calls for people to create their own connections and organize locally to meet their own needs. This reflects the contradiction of social welfare which at once provides services to improve social welfare and represses and controls people, adapting them to the norms required in our present order in society (Walker, G. in Ng, Walker and Mueller, 1990, p. 42).

Community development refers to "a process of citizen action in which citizens initiate and control activities" (Chavis and Florin, 1990, p. 2). The process goal is empowerment with a view to developing the community's capacity to manage and control change for well-being of the community and its members (p. 2). The Community Panel suggests community development as a process to empower citizens and families in shaping child protection services. The Ministry's draft Family Support Services Discussion Paper (Olson, 1993) suggests a shift in "client" from the individual to neighbourhoods (p. 8), suggesting interventions be focussed on structural changes in neighbourhoods that will result in the empowerment of parents. The notion of community development as a strategy for support practice seems to encompass empowerment and social support as integral elements in its implementation.

McKnight (1992) refers to community development as "associational community life" (p. 60) where inclusion is pursued. He stresses the necessity of developing trust through connections in the community and not through institutional authority as a means of developing community. His ideas seem to suggest community development is practiced by involving various groups in the community membership in various ways making explicit their participation in the child protection system, for example, with a vision to empowering community members and increasing community well-being.

Barr (1979), draws on his experience in the Regent Park Community Services Unit Project to describe this process of community development as forging partnerships between agencies and clients, thereby reducing the distinction between providers and consumers. According to Barr, the concept of partnership in practice breaks down social barriers which reduces social distance between professionals and clients, mediating a switch in peer group reference, increasing emotional and social supports and encouraging the development of relationships based on whole people (p. 36). This close community form of relationship actually "radicalized" some of the professional personnel in Barr's study by forcing them to rethink priorities and change dehumanizing policies and procedures in their own and other agencies.

Although not discussed specifically in the McKnight or Barr work, blocks to this practice are implicit in Barr's discussion of the instability of funding, recruitment and retention of professional employees and the difficulty in maintaining changes over time and personal transitions (Barr, 1979); although, Barr does not describe these as related to the extra-local exercising of power. The perspectives presented by McKnight and Barr are useful in understanding some present community development initiatives, but not in understanding how community development would actually work within the present social relations of child protection work. Walker's notions of community, tie these local efforts to the larger relations which organize the local experience and gives me a way to look at those blocks experienced by workers and the advisory group. The concept of community development implies a possibility of local control over social connections, community capacity, problem solving and the enhancement of well-being.

Organization of Frontline Practice

D. Smith (1987), G. Smith (1990) and M. Campbell (1992) describe the organization of frontline experience as determined elsewhere using the concepts of social relations and

ruling relations. Social relations (G. Smith, 1990) are reflexive courses of action within which various activities are dependent on one another through time. The concept of social relations is looking at how people organize themselves with respect to each other, where what people do is organized by what preceded their activities and how their present activities project organization into what comes after (D. Smith, 1987, p. 183). Through this web of sequences of activity, the work of a multiplicity of people, known and unknown to each other, is coordinated. The way to see how child protection work is articulated to the social organization of the Ministry of Social Services begins with the particular experiences of workers, to "their embedding in the generalizing social organization" (p. 183) of the Ministry. Using the concept of social relations analysis extends from the everyday work of child protection to the context within which that work process is embedded .

Ruling in this context identifies a complex of organized practices involving the "continual transformation of the local and particular actualities of our lives into abstracted and generalized forms"(D. Smith, 1987, p. 3), through organizational logic. The rules governing child protection, such as legislation and policy mandating certain kinds of service and criteria for receiving service, are created and enforced initially at a distance from the frontline. This extra-local mode of ruling requires standardized forms of knowledge about child protection, to be created in order to enter into the relations of ruling. Actual accounts of individual experiences cannot enter into this mode of ruling, although actual individual experiences are what frontline workers respond to daily in their practice. What is conceptualized as truth or knowledge about the work, and upon which ruling decisions are made, may not in fact be what actually happens in the daily interactions at the frontline.

Dorothy Smith (1990, p. 205/6) suggests "we are connected, through socially organized practices of knowing, into relations of ruling, as a member of the ruling apparatus or as one ruled." This helps us to see how what we know as child protection workers articulates to the relations of the society in which we live. At sites within each sphere of the ruling apparatus, child protection work is organized to articulate to the legislation and policies of the Ministry. The Ministry rule of law in child protection travels from site to site and through the hands and work of numerous people as it organizes activities at the frontline (Campbell, 1992).

According to G. Smith (1990), understanding ruling relations gives us a way of seeing how people's lives are regulated and governed by organizations sanctioned with authority (p. 7). Governing or ruling (p. 14) occurs through a complex of activities across many spheres, taking the form of managing, and administering, within a bureaucratic institution such as Social Services, and is accomplished through adherence to legislation, policy and management practices. Institutional practices, required in the carrying out of child protection work, are the practices through which ruling is accomplished and through which we as child protection workers participate in ruling (p. 14). This governing is carried on through the employment of abstract concepts about child protection, where the actualities of people's lives are transposed into "conceptual currency with which they can be governed" (p. 14). Ruling is constituted outside and not anchored in the experience of individuals and other personal relationships, but is constructed through texts, such as policy manuals, management directives and client information documents, where texts become the sites of action.

The literature has provided many concepts through which to look at child protection work, but little in the way of how it is accomplished day to day, and how it comes to be organized in that way, at the frontline. Emphasis is placed on the need to see the person in

their context to accurately assess and resolve child protection concerns. There seems to be an assumption that the social context of families is integral to understanding child protection problems although information about context is not required in child protection as presently practiced. The discussions of social connectedness, power sharing, and community development helped me to look at how the Langford staff tried to recreate their practice to be supportive. The literature on how the experience of frontline practice is organized helped me to explicate the blocks workers describe in practicing with a supportive focus within the institutional setting of the Ministry.

Research Questions

As a result of my review of the literature, my personal experience of child protection work and my involvement with the staff in the Langford Social Services office I was convinced of the need to study the way workers practiced child protection in Langford and how that is both rewarding and frustrating for them. My research project was concerned with the contradiction between the standard requirements and approach to the work and what workers experience as helpful to families in raising their children. Finding an office whose supervisor claimed that the practice was supportive and whose workers agreed, I asked the following questions. What are the Langford workers doing that they call "support" and how does this accomplish the mandate of protection? What helps and what hinders this type of practice?

IV. A DISTINCTIVE SET OF WORK PRACTICES

In this chapter I provide evidence of how the Langford staff take a primarily supportive approach to their child protection work rather than a primarily investigative approach. They have chosen to take this approach because it seems to be more helpful to families in raising their children than only applying the legislative mandate to investigate and apprehend. Over the past two years workers in the Langford office have rethought how practices of child protection must be carried out to meet the needs of clients as expressed by clients. What clients have been saying to workers is that they require support and resources to be effective parents. Workers have responded to this knowledge and carry out their supportive approach to child protection through a distinctive work process.

In this chapter I argue that the Langford team's distinctive work process is based on the a distinctive set of practices. In particular workers: choose to support rather than investigate at intake, practice with a team approach, participate in intensive and supportive supervision, document for client benefit and take a community approach to the work. Workers have come to see support practice as a choice and they make that choice in their day to day work through these alternate practices. Unless otherwise stated, this account relies on understandings gained through participant observations and discussion with the Langford staff.

Intake: Separating Reports into Support or Investigation

In child protection legislation citizens are responsible for reporting all suspicions of abuse or neglect and in Ministry policy child protection workers are required to investigate all reports of suspected abuse or neglect. As a result the child protection workers' time and resources have historically been almost totally consumed by the work of reception and investigation of reports. Beginning with the acceptance of the report into the office, the

intake, through a number of information gathering and documenting processes, the investigation is accomplished. In investigative practice, the completion of the investigation of a report was the point at which a determination was made as to whether to offer support services.

In Langford, intake is identified as the point at which it is determined whether to offer support services or initiate an investigation even though the expected way of dealing with child protection reports is investigation. Intake calls are made to the office either from the person experiencing the concern, the first person, or by a third party. The Langford team found, in their review of the work that the majority of intake calls did not result in the finding of children in need of protection after the investigation was complete. Instead, the outcome of most of these calls were requests for support and assistance. These had been traditionally documented as neglect cases on the Intake form and therefore were required to be investigated regardless of the likely outcome.

On the Intake form [Government Document S2320(92/08)] (See Appendix #13, p. 181, Line A) the nature of each intake call must be documented as either A: Voluntary Service Request or B: Report of Child Protection, in the Section Program/Nature of Call. This form constructs the incoming call into either a supportive or an investigative category for follow-up work: "Complete Section A or B Only". In textualizing each individual family experience onto the intake form, a worker has to make a forced choice to either support a family or investigate as the entry into the child protection process. The form structures at intake, the action that will be taken into "protection" (B) from various forms of abuse or neglect or a voluntary request for help (A). The tendency to consider all reports as falling into B can be traced to the Ministry documents which inform the worker's decision making at intake. First, this separation between support and investigation as the way of protecting originates in the legislation, (See Appendix #5, p. 152, Sec.8) where workers are required

to investigate all reports as delegated by the Superintendent of Family and Child Service. The requirement to investigate all reports is also documented in the Inter-Ministry Child Abuse Handbook, several times (Ministry of Social Services, 1979), stating "The Act requires that when the superintendent or his delegate receives a report he shall investigate the circumstances."(pp. 3, 10, 33) In the Ministry Policy and Procedures Manual (Ministry of Social Services, 1992), a worker evaluates the information given in a report to ensure the report involves a child under 19 years of age and "There are incidences or circumstances, i.e., specific behaviours, actions, conditions or omissions, which cause the social workers to suspect harm or risk of harm to a child." (See Appendix #8, p. 166, Line A). These interlocking rules about what is investigatable and what therefore remains to be done as support channel the worker's thinking and actions into ticking Section B on the intake form. There is no explanation or clear definition in any of the above documents describing the difference between a voluntary request for service and a report of child protection.

Once a worker has determined a report falls under B there are categories for information that the intake worker must collect. "Reasons for Reporting" must be identified during intake as required in policy #6.3.1 Guidelines for Accepting Reports of a Child Believed to be in Need of Protection (See Appendix #6, p. 162, Line A). Neglect is one of six designations that must be made and is considered to be an investigatable issue according to the intake form. Of those categories ticked off in Section B, neglect is the most commonly used category (Ministry of Social Services, 1992 and Ministry of Social Services, 1993). In the Social Worker on the Job Training Manual, (Ministry of Social Services, 1992) the worker is directed to consider neglect "deprived of necessary care through the death, absence or disability of his parent" (Section 2-5). Workers make a choice between offering support and imposing investigation when completing the intake form, however, it seems neglect, for which the above definition throws a wide net, is most

often the category workers use. Abuse seems to be relatively straightforward to identify but neglect can cover a large range of actions or omissions of action according to the informing documents. It appears that workers, in light of the majority of reports being designated as neglect, feel compelled to consider all reports investigatable, but those for which there is little concrete evidence which justifies the designation of abuse, they categorize as neglect. Most of these intakes do not result in a finding of a child in need of protection, but the social relations of child protection work shape the workers' decision to investigate first and determine if and when to offer support services, second.

Workers in Langford have decided to no longer consider neglect an investigation concern, but a support concern. Therefore, they offer support in the cases which in other offices they would have been required to consider neglect an issue needing investigation. The intake information they receive from the intake call more often appears in Section A on the form, as a voluntary request for service than in Section B as neglect. This choice is a reflection of the support orientation of the work in this office and is reflected in the Caseload Management Report (Ministry of Social Services, 1994) where the Langford support statistics are much higher (e.g. 2:1) than other offices in the same region. In this way workers in Langford choose to separate reports into support at intake, even though there is a strong influence in all the documents leading to the intake form, to choose investigation.

Reconstructing Investigation to Make it an Option

When the present District Supervisor and a long time co-worker moved to the Langford office, they brought with them their experience and commitment to support practice. They questioned what was happening for families and workers as a result of the investigation mode of work and initiated a rethinking process. Through an examination of the effect investigation work had on families and workers, and recent public support of

policy options to use discretion in investigating families, workers were able to start thinking about the work in new ways. During an interview with the District Supervisor I made some notes to capture his comments on this process,

.. he and Peter started this process of questioning the automatic trigger response of investigation. It is required in the legislation - Section 3 and 7 (See Appendix #5, pp. 150 & 151)- the superintendent has the authority to investigate reports of children in need of protection and citizens have the responsibility to report. The policy 6.3.1 (See Appendix #6, p. 162, Line B) states that all reports are to be recorded and assessed... all reports are to be confidential and the ministry must preserve the integrity of the family with a minimum of interference in the parent's responsibility to care for the child(ren). This is then translated into standards - the intake social worker shall receive and document all reports of child protection concerns immediately. This is the way the work was being done, all reports were being investigated according to policy and standards. This meant upwards of 90 investigations a month, often times in the same household. Peter asked "I've been to that home 7 times already, isn't there something else we can do for this family?" They began asking what are these families experiencing as a result of this trauma time after time. They decided to hire [two child care workers] to go in after the investigation and offer some support to help the family get back on track.

At the same time, the District Supervisor was [participating] on the regional standards committee, looking at the standards [of social work practice] and questioning the automatic investigation response to reports. On this committee the District Supervisor was instrumental in having a standard (See Appendix #7, p. 164, Line A) included which classified complaints into initial complaint, supplemental complaint or additional complaint. This reflects the reality of multiple complaints about the same family. The District Supervisor considers this a loophole through which discretion can be used by

workers to avoid putting the family through the investigation process (Fieldnotes, p. 60).

When the work is investigation, the time spent with families is conflictual, adversarial and focused on meeting investigative policy requirements. Workers talked of being tired, frustrated and eager to explore ways of working that would be more manageable and in tune with the client's needs as seen from their standpoint. Their experience told them of all the investigations completed, only a minority actually resulted in findings of a child in need of protection. This experience was validated by a statistical evaluation: Family and Child Services Intake Report (Ministry of Social Services, 1992) where only 16% of investigated reports actually resulted in the finding of a child in need of protection.

As they looked at their experience, the actuality of what intake decisions produced in terms of work, they realized by choosing to not investigate they exercised some control over the kind of work they were performing. Investigative work required extensive form completion, talk with other professionals and adherence to a rigid set of procedures which organized a relationship with the client that became uncomfortable and judgmental. Support work involved limited paperwork, no requirement for other professional contacts and a relationship defined by the interaction between the client and worker. By choosing to support, the investigative work load was reduced and the "laid back" atmosphere of support work prevailed in the office, more of the time.

Choosing to make a support entry into a family's life did not mean workers did not go and follow up on each report. It did mean however that workers went out with an offer of help and assistance to a family. They sought a relationship that would be helpful to the family which was consistent with their commitment to seeing the world from the client standpoint. Workers practicing support enter the relationship with a family talking quite

differently than ministry interviews organized by risk assessment lists (See Appendix #9, p. 168). To illustrate this difference the District Supervisor role-played an initial session with me as if I was a parent who had been reported to the Ministry,

...[instead of] coming into your house, investigating you and your child, talking to your child separately, talking to you and then reading you the list of your non-compliances and telling you must change and telling you we have these programs that would help you in all these areas and bringing in our therapist...we will say, how is it here, what can we do to help, we know that you're on your own with your son here, but we've heard from some people that things are not so great here and we would like to help, half the time you will tell me to bugger off - that's okay,...as long as we don't get a lot more calls about whether or not Sean is falling below minimum standards of care, but if we do, we will be back and if we come back it would be nice to come back and have a nice relationship with you rather than be pushing and shoving, so every family needs help just give me a call, I'd prefer to hear from you before your neighbours or school or whoever...(Interview)

Although skeptical as the reported parent, I felt a genuine concern from his words, more than judgment. The focus was not on me as wrong or bad, but it felt like an acknowledgment of me in a difficult context at that point in time. This role-played conversation contrasted the approach a client would experience in an investigation with an offer of support. The goal, to protect children, is the same, but the approach sounded and felt different. The supportive inquiry was an interaction organized by an offer of support rather than the gathering of evidence to complete the policy defined investigation procedure.

Workers talk about the difference between an investigative relationship with clients and a support relationship with clients. Entering the family with the intent to support the family

seems to produce a more accurate assessment of what would be helpful to the family, from their point of view. As one worker stated:

so going in with the premise of supporting the family helps me to get an assessment that is a lot clearer than going in with saying "this is not good, you've really gone out of the lines, you've done this, you've done that.", however going in the other way [support] I usually get more of the information ..see the good things and the bad things and that's been really helpful in terms of ...developing a clearer picture of what the family is and what will work or what won't work... (Interview)

By offering support to families, the worker is able to develop a more accurate picture of the whole situation of the family, the strengths and the weaknesses of the family within their context and is not restricted to only looking for parental deficits. In the investigative approach the workers sound, from both the words the worker uses above, and the District Supervisor's role-play, to be judgmental and controlling. The worker communicates from a position of power and tells the family what they have done wrong. The worker speaks from her standpoint within the organization, enforcing the mandate of the organization through a relationship of control, judgment and power over. In a small percentage of cases this kind of relationship is necessary, and the workers in Langford are capable of carrying it out. But in the majority of cases the workers enter the family with an offer of support in which they try to communicate in ways that will enlist the trust of the family so they can see clearly from the family's perspective and identify what the family needs. As one worker noted, parents are saying to her "provide me with the basics so I can parent better, rather than tell me what to do to be a better parent."(Fieldnotes, p. 83)

Acknowledging what clients say they need reorganizes the work away from a personal defect way of thinking to a provision of resources and support so parents are able to do the job of parenting.

Through their talk, it is evident workers feel an affinity with their clients more than the organization. They described clearly the difference between what the ministry supports them to do with clients and what clients are saying they need:

...what the ministry pays for is investigations and children in care, what clients say they want is support and resources to do it better, given in a way that is meaningful to them (Fieldnotes, p. 57)

They talk about the client as the reference point for their own seeing of the work and look back to the organization from that standpoint. When they talk about and interact with clients from their standpoint the contradiction between client need and investigative mandate is not as evident, at least at intake and in the initial contact stage. At this stage in the process workers speak and act as if they have some control over producing their activities (Rose, 1990) with clients and they feel positive and helpful in their interactions with clients. Workers in Langford say they feel they have a choice to produce support work instead of investigation work most of the time. They are able to choose between an investigative relationship or a supportive relationship with clients. These two kinds of relationships are produced by the worker taking either the standpoint of the client or the standpoint of the mandated organization in accomplishing the work. Workers feel they have some control over the development of these two kinds of relationships and choose to support families most of the time.

I contend that the investigative approach organizes a relationship with clients through which the ruling standpoint is maintained. This standpoint represents the assumption that protection is accomplished through the practice of investigation. The supportive approach assumes protection can also be accomplished through the provision of support to families. In all but the most severe reports of abuse and neglect, Langford workers offer support to families from the beginning of the relationship. This gives the family some power by

offering involvement with the Ministry as a choice allowing them to have some control over their activities with respect to the Ministry. This practice proceeds from the assumption that support is a way of protecting children and that it is empowering for families.

Supporting to Protect versus Investigating to Protect

Ministry policy outlines the steps to be taken to ensure a child is protected. The present practice is to complete the investigation process, thus ensuring protection, and then possibly offer support services. In order to make a decision about the protection needs of a child, an investigation must be completed and documented. The primacy of this process is emphasized by the lack of authority of workers to "not" investigate. To investigate a report is within the full authority of the worker whereas, to not investigate a report requires the approval of the District Supervisor (See Appendix #8, p. 166, Line B).

Workers in the Langford office believe that protection can be achieved in less intrusive ways than investigation by in particular providing effective support to a family. This belief is manifest in the practice of workers predominantly choosing to support at intake in most cases. When describing how they make this decision to investigate or support, workers in the Langford office identify themselves as being in support mode unless there is obvious evidence of violence or sexual abuse in that first assessment conversation. An intake worker described her decision making process in this way:

... I guess listening to what the caller is saying and trying to get a sense from the caller as to a) if they know what they want at all, like are they asking for something specific or tangible, are they just wanting someone to talk to briefly, are they feeling like they need somebody to talk to in more depth about something that's happening in their life, is it a crisis that needs to be dealt with immediately.. if there are issues which are fairly hard edged which makes me think that maybe a child has been physically

abused and that maybe it's an incident where it's not just a situation where a parent has momentarily lost control and been involved in over parenting or over disciplining on a single occasion. If it's a sexual abuse call, and if it's a sexual abuse complaint specifically where the offender is from within the home and the other parent is not showing the capacity to protect the child... Is this something that does require investigating or is this something the parents appear, like if given some support they might be able to effect a change and to do the thing that might create something positive in this child's life... (Interview)

This worker is suggesting that her stance is fundamentally to support, until the evidence is strong that there needs to be an investigation. By taking a position of support in the initial contact workers are not constrained in their interaction with the caller by the recording required in investigative documents and risk assessment check lists. They focus their attention and inquiry into the family's experience and how they can be helpful. This line of questioning produces options for support action as primary and investigation as secondary. With the objective of being helpful or supportive, the conversation is an inquiry into the client's perspective and understanding of their world, not the organizational need for certain types of information.

Minimum standards of care is one of the indicators through which workers assess the protection needs of a child. How workers interpret minimum standards is critical in making a decision to investigate or support. In investigative practice minimum standards are reflected in policy as a list of report types (See Appendix #10, p. 169, Guidelines 1 - 14) which trigger the investigation process when worker's identify a breach of one or more of those standards. In this office a breach of minimum standards is defined loosely as violence or sex being perpetrated on children. Minimum standards are considered contextual and there is an awareness of the difficulty middle class civil servants have in

attempting to judge minimum standards of those in poverty. Here are one worker's thoughts:

I guess my question around minimum standards is whose minimums standards are they? Like are we going to use the minimums standards as defined by Broadmead for the Western communities...we at some point have to say, this is not okay, this is fallen below the minimums standards but I don't know, that's a really hard question...There are some cases where I feel that people are doing the best they can given the resources that they've got at their disposal, so that even if they are a little bit below the minimum standards that it's not through lack of caring or lack of trying on their part, you know, so then maybe what I need to be looking at is not just saying well they fall below minimums standards so I'm going to deal with them in a different way, but rather maybe taking a look at if there's anything that I can do with them to try to give them a little bit richer resources or to help them improve their own situation so what they can provide can at least achieve a little bit more than minimum standards...(Interview)

The District Supervisor goes even further to say:

...I don't even think about minimum standards until it's a risk, I don't even think about it until it's a frightening thing, largely what I see here is a child needs support to grow up and they are not getting it, how can they get it?...(Interview)

From these comments we can see that "minimum standards" are interpreted in this office contextually, by workers who are deemed competent and supported by their supervisor to make these judgments. Workers interpret minimum standards individually for each family, taking into consideration other factors within the family's context. They do not confine themselves to choosing support or investigation solely on the presence or absence of minimum standards as defined in policy.

Contrary to the Langford work context, where workers' interpretations of the policy and how to operationalize it are major features of the work, in my child protection experience the decision to support or investigate was clear cut. This assumption arises from the documentation on the intake form of a case as either requiring support services or investigative services, not both. In Langford the workers treat the policy as offering a continuum of possible actions depending on their assessment of the situation. Even when a Langford worker develops a concern through the initial conversation with the reporter, her approach is still to keep the support perspective, interact with the reporter in a supportive manner, but move closer to policy guidelines as needed to prepare for an investigative stance. One worker explained her decision making this way:

so when you start talking about things that are a little bit farther down the continuum in family problems then I'm going to be a little bit more careful about going and checking to see what policy says and to see what my own obligations are and to see if there's anything that I do have to be guided by in a harder way by policy than maybe if it's just something that I'm looking at in terms of providing a support to a family. So depending upon how hard edged the problem or the identified issue is will determine how closely I might want to stick to policy...(Interview)

If the worker assesses that the child being identified is not at risk of violence or sexual assault, she will suggest the caller try to get the family to call in themselves. This approach posits that the request for help is accurate and meets the family's needs as they identify them. Self referrals are all treated as support requests and the assessment is focused on what the caller considers the problem and needs from the Ministry or other community resources. And, at Langford, what was traditionally documented as neglect when a first person report was received is now considered a request for support services. First person reports trigger the support response, not investigation.

The offer of support does not, however, eliminate the power imbalance inherent in child protection work. The reporter, worker and other community people can enter the relationship with an offer of support and find out that far more serious issues exist. A family is always exposed to the scrutiny of the worker, and the community at large for that matter, and the balance can tip at any point into a protection - investigation process if evidence of sexual abuse or violence come to the surface. The Langford workers steadfastly maintain the value of approaching the family with an offer of support as an entry into the family's life, arguing that it is a lot easier to move to investigation after you have established a support relationship rather than the other way round. Ministry statistics support this notion. Eighty-five percent (Ministry of Social Services, 1992) of the reports made to the Ministry, once investigated, are not found to be children in need of protection. The Langford staff contend the decision to offer support will be sufficient in about 85% of the reports made to their office. They suggest it is more helpful to families to begin with a supportive approach in protecting children and the statistics suggest children will not be at any more risk if they make this choice initially rather than after an investigation.

The Process of Decision Making: A Case Example

There are times when the decision of whether to investigate or offer support is sufficiently complex that a number of other elements of support practice come to bear in the worker's process. In the following case example, I argue that Langford workers make these difficult decisions through a process of identifying client need and assessing the client need in context. This case example is taken from a presentation by one of the staff team in the Langford office made at an intake meeting. This case is presented as I recorded it in field notes. It is analyzed later in this chapter.

[the worker] a relatively new worker (started in Langford office in September) received call on her intake day from teacher at private school on island. The teacher had received a letter from a female student, describing physical beatings by mother. Worker asked teacher about evidence of physical beatings, teacher has not seen any physical evidence of abuse, but child always in long sleeved shirts and thick tights. Worker asked about relationship with child and behaviour teacher had noticed. Teacher had noticed child has been depressed, nervous, marks are dropping. Teacher has taught student for last 1 1/2 years and has been concerned about her depressed attitude before but had not had any specific reason to report. She described her relationship with the student as trusting. Worker asked if teacher had ever met with parents. Teacher had not met parents.

Worker asked if teacher had discussed this with student. Teacher had talked to student and student begged her not to tell anyone. Teacher informed her she had to report abuse. She described the student as from a very tight cultural community, terrified she will be isolated from family if they find out she told. Worker arranged meeting with teacher and student (within protocol time to satisfy investigation requirements) after deciding that to inform the parents first would put the child at risk. Worker asked teacher to talk to student about interview and assisted teacher with how to present her call to MSS as concern for her and an attempt to help and provide support.

Worker described the interview with the child as slow and painful. The student was reluctant to speak and turned to teacher continually for permission to answer questions. Student appeared nervous and jumpy. Worker explained why she was concerned and student begged the worker not to tell her family.

The worker told the student she needed to talk to her supervisor about the situation and she would talk to her again before contacting her parents.

The worker presented the above information at the weekly intake meeting with the team. When the worker was asked what she planned to do with this particular case, she said she felt it was not an investigation situation and that she would offer support to the child until she was ready to talk to her parents voluntarily with the worker. This statement raised a number of questions from other staff and the District Supervisor "If the father was having sex with the girl, would you be making the same decision?". The worker's answer was "yes". The worker felt the overall protection concern needed to include the girl's self assessment of the long term effects of family isolation. The worker was relying on her assessment of the situation and the potential for her to develop a trusting relationship with the girl. She felt this young girl had reached out for help, but not reached out to be removed from her situation. She felt the girl would not accept help given in that way and would run from any resource provided to protect her from the abuse. She said she would deny her story of the abuse if she was forced to confront her parents. I asked if minimum standards was a "floating" concept, dependent on the situation or cultural context of the family. The District Supervisor said absolutely not and expressed his concern that minimum standards had been breached and that this girl should not be hit again.

The District Supervisor also brought up the evidence required in the court process, to uphold a decision to apprehend. Questions were asked about physical evidence of the abuse and the girl's ability to withstand hours of cross examination in testifying against her parents. The worker did not feel there

was sufficient physical evidence and did not believe the girl could withstand and would not maintain her original disclosure under, cross examination. If this turned out to be the case, apprehension would be a very short term solution to this child's protection needs, as the courts would return her home, where the family could refuse service and the child would be isolated from further help.

After much discussion, the presentation of many different perspectives on the case, the worker decided to go and talk to the girl again, but felt she would have to talk to her parents as well, soon, with an offering of support services. There was no final decision about action to be taken down the investigative path, but it appeared the time lines and procedures were being followed as an investigation. The worker seemed equipped with a broad perspective of the issues to be considered in making her decision, but there was no clear directive as to which way to go. She still seemed firmly entrenched in her believe that support was needed, and that was the best form of protection the Ministry could offer this child. The District Supervisor asked her to let him know what was happening throughout the process. Another worker offered to work with her and accompany her to talk to the parents. (Fieldnotes, p. 45)

The assessment of the protection needs of this child was conducted through a dialogue process, analyzing the child's current and future situation and the reality of extra local forces in shaping that child's situation. The depth and thoroughness of the process were valued as much as the decision produced as an outcome of the process. Each step taken thus far and each step to be taken is blended into that process and the dynamic nature of the process is taken into consideration in making the protection decisions.

Decision Making from Client Need

In the case described above the worker demonstrated some key elements of support practice in assessing the protection needs of this child. First, she gave validity to the child's experience and knowing. The girl named her experience in the full context of her family and community. Giving validity to that experience and identifying it as important in the process illustrated the inclusion of the actuality of the child's life consequences as an integral aspect of the decision, not in isolation from it. The worker's assessment was that she needed to connect with the child to know how the child understood her situation and what she identified as her need. In essence, she was trying to take the child's standpoint in order to effectively make a decision. The ability to take the client standpoint organizes the ability of workers to make decisions to support clients. The workers ability to choose support work is dependent upon their ability to connect effectively with the client. The District Supervisor emphasizes the point by saying:

in terms of decision making around whether a worker separates a case into investigation or support, depends on the worker's ability to connect and develop a relationship with the parent. This is a key issue. Investigators cannot develop that kind of relationship (Fieldnotes, p. 50).

The worker knew she needed to get close to the child in order to understand her world and her needs, from her perspective to be able to help her in any way at all. This meant engaging in a relationship with her, that did not involve interviewing procedures and risk assessments but emotional, context based interaction. To connect, the relationship needed to be interactive and reflexive. The worker needed to learn about the child and her world, integrate that learning into her professional knowledge and experience and practice with that knowledge within the mandate, rather than reacting to the behaviour the girl identified and carrying out an investigation.

Langford workers' priority of getting to know their clients is demonstrated by their commitment as a team to spend 50% of their week in face to face work with clients and spending this time in the client's world rather than the office world of the worker. This brings the worker closer to the perspective the client has of their world and the real and difficult struggles they experience daily. In the above example, the worker interviewed the child at her school, with her teacher present. The worker met the parents in their place of work, a small local retail business. The location of the first interaction with the worker on the client's turf has a balancing effect on the power the worker wields in that first contact. The worker realized she will always hold the ultimate power of apprehension, but her intent was to connect with the family in a way that would solicit their trust not exploit their fear. She was attempting to develop a relationship based on trust and not the exercising of authority (Miller and Whittaker, 1988). The ability to connect in this way to protect children is inspired by an attitude of caring and a skill in expressing that under difficult and power imbalanced interactions. Knowing how to be helpful or do the work comes from knowing the client and the real needs, issues and problems they express within this relationship. This exposure is not comfortable and not without its dilemmas for the worker. As one worker stated "getting to know how some of our clients live and how they think can be very scary".

Decision Making from the Client's Context

Secondly, the worker explored protection within the whole context of the child's life. She maintained that the protection concern raised by the letter to the teacher could not be separated from the student's self assessment of the long term effects of intervention in her family situation. The worker felt this was not an investigation situation but that she needed to offer support, and information to the student until she was ready to have her parents involved in the process. The worker was relying on her assessment of the safety of the current situation and her ability to develop a trusting relationship with the child.

She felt this young girl had reached out for help, but not reached out to be removed from her family. She said the student would deny her story of the abuse if she was forced to confront her parents. While acknowledging that minimum standards of care prohibit "excessive and unusual" methods of discipline,(See Appendix #10, p. 171, Guideline #6) the worker did not artificially separate the child from her familial and cultural context in assessing the breaching of those minimum standards.

This child could have been apprehended based on the evidence of the letter and the statement of the teacher. If the worker had felt limited by the authority of the investigation role in her work, with the apprehension being considered the best means of protecting this child, this would probably have happened. The worker, however, did not isolate the incident and trigger the investigation process on the basis of that incident alone. She integrated the incident and the child's life circumstances, as well as the legal process through which the case would have to pass through, in coming to her decision of whether or not to investigate. She also weighed the potential safety of the child in substitute care.

Considering the entry of the case into the court system also organized the way workers discussed the decision to investigate or support. The team questioned the worker on the strength of the evidence that she could gather to convince a judge of the need for apprehension. Given the initial evidence of the letter and first interview, in many offices, grounds for apprehension would have been found. Policy would support this finding, apprehension would have completed the process and the child would be considered protected. At least until the report to court, required within seven days of apprehension, this child would be safe from the breach of minimum standards by removal from her parent's care.

The team looked beyond the immediate policy triggered protection response to the overall legal backdrop and its consequences on the decision over time. Child protection practice is embedded in the adversarial arena of the courts once a child is found to be in need of protection. The decision to apprehend to protect a child can be based on many factors but these factors must be transformed into legal evidence that will satisfy the burden of proof in a court of law within seven days of the apprehension. This fact organized the way the team processed the child's situation and represented a powerful ruling perspective in the discussion. The worker weighed the influence of the legal system in the decision of how to proceed with this case. She considered the immediate response of apprehension and its implications for the child and the long term response of support and its implications.

The other important consideration in weighing whether or not to apprehend was that of the consequences of placing the child in substitute care. The assumption inherent in the process of apprehending is that substitute care is safer for the child than care in her own home. In this case the worker questioned this safety in light of the child's concerns. The worker believed the child when she said she would not stay at any resource provided. The consequences of her leaving a resource unsupervised could be more unsafe for the child than remaining in her home. The worker challenged the idea that apprehension would ensure protection for this child when the consequences of apprehension were explored. In this discussion the definition of protection included the overall safety of the child in all areas of her life not just between the child and her mother. She believed apprehension may be more detrimental to the child's overall safety, establishing an atmosphere of fear and distrust within the family. This may create an even greater risk to the child than presently exists.

However, the immediate response of apprehension would ensure, in the short term, that the child would not be hit. The worker would not be found negligent of not protecting the

child according to policy. The worker believed there would not be enough evidence to support the need for apprehension in court and the implications for the child and the family could be disastrous. The long term response to inquire into the situation and offer support to the family eliminates the entry of the court process including the adversarial and destructive impact it would probably have on relationships between the child, the family, the worker and the teacher. The worker was able, within policy, to act in either direction. The immediate apprehension response would be the safer, policy based route; and the long term support response riskier but based on the combined knowledge, and experience of the team and the relationship the worker had with the child. Having weighed the consequences of what could proceed from an investigation/apprehension approach, the worker felt the best interests of the child would not be served by proceeding down that path, despite the risk posed for the worker should anything happen to the child.

The worker was also assessing her ability to develop a relationship with the child and the family. She had in mind the information she needed to accurately do the investigation task but she also demonstrated a commitment to see, hear and feel the child's story from the child's point of view. Her predisposition to offer support to protect children pushed the boundaries of her thinking beyond the completion of an investigation interview into the process of building a relationship. She based her decision to relate to the child in this way on her professional knowledge, experience and judgment not only about children and families but also the social relations of the investigation and apprehension system.

The cultural context of this example is extremely significant in exploring the options for this child. Once the worker had understood the child's perspective, she needed to explore the capacity of the parents to protect the child. In this situation, the worker was faced with determining, within the family's cultural norms, the implications for the child in contacting the parents, with a case that would likely not proceed successfully through

court. This question brought into conflict the boundaries of minimum standards of care as practiced in British Columbia and the long term cultural relationships within which this child's life was embedded.

Getting to know what the parent needs to provide adequately the minimum standards of care for their children requires a relationship with the parent, as an adult with expertise on their own life and children. This form of practice involves risk, trial and error and trusting in a parent's choices. It requires skill and confidence on the part of the worker to know the limits of their own ability and judgment. In this case the worker did contact the parents and attempted to develop a relationship of trust and honesty. She offered support and assistance to the family in dealing with the concern that had come forward, but found the cohesiveness of the family's cultural community impenetrable.

The worker, with all these elements jostling around in her head and heart, was assessing the safety and well being of the child in the broader sense, eliminating the artificial separations (Van der Burgh and Cooper, 1986) between the child and her context, the facts of the case and the feelings of the people, the roles of client, reporter and worker and the provision of support work and investigation work. Through this process the worker was discovering the balance between what the child identified as her needs and what the ministry defines as the child's needs. Unfortunately there was not a good fit between the two. The worker, with the help of the team, weighed the risks to the child in pursuing different paths of work. She put herself at risk, in terms of not rigidly following policy, in order to give prominence to the child's perception rather than the ministry's. In the end, the policy to protect children through investigation was initiated, but the child was not apprehended. The process through which that decision was made and the means in which it was carried out, however, provided an illustration of support practice in Langford.

Participating in the emotional struggle brought home to me the naked reality of making these child protection decisions. It became clear as I watched workers challenge each other, argue their points and then offer support to each other to do the work, that making the decision to support is a difficult and taxing process. I was amazed at the depth of the exploration of the child's complex situation and the worker's thinking and the frankness of the questions posed. Many factors outside the worker's immediate relationship with the child influenced how the decision making process proceeded: the mandate to investigate all reports, the court system, and the consequences of apprehension on the child's world. Though the worker held fast to her support perspective I could feel the tension in the room and realized I had not experienced an assessment like this before. At the beginning of the process I felt convinced that investigation was the only option. By the end, I was no longer sure. I would not have considered support of this kind of intake a choice in my previous experience as a worker. Now I can see how through this process that support is a choice although the pressures to pursue an investigation are many and the stress of choosing support can be great.

A Team Approach to the Work

Many intake decisions are easily separated into investigation or support by the intake worker and can involve limited team consultation. Offering support instead of investigating becomes a risky alternative for workers when the boundaries of minimum standards are not quite so clear. The above case example illustrates the complexity of the decision making process when the clarity of minimum standards becomes fuzzy and illustrates the point at which support practice can be subordinated to the mandate to investigate to protect children. The Langford team practices support in a team approach by broadening the knowledge/experience base and responsibility for the decisions made and building strong and supportive team relationships within which to practice support.

Broadening the Base for the Decision

The process of rethinking the work and reorganizing the work to be supportive involved broadening the individualization of decision making to a collective process involving the whole team. New practice requires extensive knowledge and experience of child protection decisions that cannot always be found within one worker. Support practice as described in the above example is riskier for workers and the supervisor than investigative practice and workers require support in the form of ideas as well as questioning from team members if their support practice is to be successful. Making these difficult decisions, acting according to these decisions and facing the consequences of working in opposition to the investigative way of practicing can be very stressful. One worker recalls the early stages of change and the strength of team support:

...as we started this experience or experiment of whatever, that even at the beginning there was fear and each step even though small little steps, nobody hit us, nobody threatened us, nobody said we were going to be fired so I in my heart believe that as a group we have strength, as one person standing out fighting we'll never make it, but if we're all together as 7 of us, I really believe there's power in that and that's what we teach our clients, that one of you will not make a difference but 10 of you will and people will listen to that and I really believe that...(Interview)

These comments suggest one worker practicing in new ways alone within a traditional investigative based office runs the risk of alienation from co-workers and reprimands from supervisors. She emphasizes the strength in numbers and the power she feels in practicing with those numbers working together. It is through this sense of power that the work of change proceeded and workers took some control over the way they practiced. In essence, they felt empowered to "determine how to produce their activities" (Rose, 1990). This worker ties this sense of power to the team approach to the work.

The District Supervisor in this office recognized the need to develop a team of "friendly travellers", practitioners with a common vision of supporting families to raise their children, to actually carry out support practice. He believes workers need to be committed to the vision and have the capability of developing relationships with clients and each other. He also expressed a need for co-workers to see the world differently from how the policy sees it and be willing to practice day to day through that way of seeing the world. The case example discussion was an example of an alternate way of seeing child protection than what is presented in policy. This alternative produced a stronger, broader approach to the case and was evidence to me of the impact of a team approach to the work.

Team Relationships

Team relationships in the Langford office are characterized by strong emotional interactions, often overflowing from the work with clients. There is laughter, shouting, compliments, criticisms, teasing and joking. My initial contact with the team was nothing short of warm and welcoming. As individuals I perceived them as friendly, warm, interesting and happy human beings. Their office was quiet, comfortable and there was a sense of calm about the place. From my first reception at the front desk "can I get you a cup of coffee while you wait" and "or you're welcome to wander wherever you want around here." (Fieldnotes, p. 6) to involvement as a co-presenter with the team at a social work conference, I have been included as a team member, treated with respect, equality and humanness. My sense is that these people are professional, mature, fulfilled individuals with a strong sense of self that is not compromised by the work, but extended by it.

Taking control of the work through choosing to support rather than investigate at intake provides time and promotes an atmosphere in which workers can develop team

relationships that work well for them. The majority of the work is support work and that frame of mind overflows into the office environment. The District Supervisor describes that frame of mind as "To do investigations you need to be tense, to do support you need to be laid back." (Fieldnotes, p. 29). When the balance of the work in the office is support, the atmosphere is more relaxed and comfortable. Workers chat about individual cases when they need ideas, call case meetings when they are feeling anxious, offer to attend difficult interviews with other workers, request and offer help in ways determined by the workers. The workers seem to know each other well and I sensed a feeling of safety in sharing responsibility.

Supporting each other seems to be essential to doing support work as one worker explains, "I really believe when the stakes are down we really need to pick it up for each other that we need to support each other that if we don't that we're no good to anyone else out there." (Interview). This support takes many forms but what I observed workers doing was exchanging information and ideas, accompanying each other to difficult meetings and encouraging each other and praising each other for handling the work. Workers consistently described feeling positive about the team support and their access to other workers' knowledge and assistance. One worker compared her previous experience in a staff group with her Langford experience,

when I compare it then as a group to other groups of individuals I feel like I fit a lot better in a working relationship with them [Langford team] than I have in some other offices where workers are really rigid or really unyielding and there's really clear boundaries and definitions and not a lot of helping back and forth (Interview)

Support within the team is characterized by this helping back and forth approach. The boundaries between roles are not rigid and the rethinking process continually produces new and more effective ways of doing the work. Since the rethinking process is ongoing

and the work changes with the process, workers are not as set in their ways and the back and forth approach of supporting each other is possible.

The relationships may also be conflictual. As one worker put it "we've duked it out in the parking a lot a few times,". It appears that being supportive sometimes requires a battling through the issue first. Dissension occurred at times but did not, in my tenure of study, interfere with the team's ability to fundamentally stay committed to the vision of support. Within the support environment all individuals, including clients and workers, are encouraged to question and challenge and disagree. These disagreements did not seem to shake the foundational direction of the work, in fact it seemed to be integral to its evolution. Team relationships involved some conflict and although frustrating and energy consuming at times, it seemed to be considered healthy and expected. The internal health of the team was critical in effectively helping others, as one worker explains,

it's hard cause there's so many personalities and sometimes that creates problems because sometimes some of us work differently or think we have different values and there's that mix and it's frustrating. I realize that everybody gives their piece in their own way and may not be in the same way and that's good, that's normal...[but] if we're not healthy inside here that it really makes a difference on what goes on here and how we present ourselves and how we do [carry out] good work (Interview)

Workers talk about themselves and the internal processes they are going through as individual human beings and a team working in a highly emotional job. They talk about their fears, their vulnerabilities and their joys in practicing in this way. Through this process of talking together workers also give and receive support within an environment of empathy for each other amidst challenges of the work. These interactions are sanctioned through the supervisor as prerequisites for healthy, functioning team members, "my job is to keep six people healthy. They need to be working at full capacity or I have nothing to offer the community." (Fieldnotes, p. 24)

In providing support to clients, workers expressed the need to feel supported too, in order to be effective in their work. Setting aside time to talk together about the work and supporting each other in the actual accomplishment of the work reflects the priority of support based practice as an integrated element of practice at all levels. As with client work, one worker concluded at a staff meeting where team trust was the topic, it all starts with one to one relationships. If the relationships are healthy, the work can go forward with strength and the team can stand firm together. These kind of discussions are encouraged in this office and seen as essential to the overall support approach to the work.

Supervision In Support Practice

Practicing in a supportive way requires a different kind of supervision than practicing in an investigative way. The Langford team functions with a supervisory model derived from the knowledge, experience and vision of the District Supervisor. Although the responsibility for protecting children is fundamental to the work of a District Supervisor, it is generally acknowledged that there are areas of flexibility in how that work is actually accomplished within each district office. The Langford District Supervisor's supervisor described this use of flexibility as "each supervisor tends to bring their own stamp and interpretation of how things are done" (Interview). How different supervisors use that flexibility or push the boundaries around the work varies, as does their supervisory style. The District Supervisor in Langford has chosen to rely on his personal and professional experience with families, children and workers to determine his supervisory model, which he calls "supervision by anxiety". What is different about this kind of supervision is that it is based on intensive face to face, supervisory relationships with workers, safety as measured by supervisor anxiety and a redefinition of risk.

The Supervisory Relationship

Traditional worker-supervisor relationships are based on interactions characterized by different methods of accounting for the work. A worker in the Langford office explained his previous experience of supervision in a different office as:

..my experience in Vancouver, it was very policy driven, there was a lot of time spent by my supervisor making workers accountable for the recording and tracking and those kind of policy things, very rigid, like setting specific dates to talk about specific families three months from now...(Interview)

Another worker described a similar experience,

Other supervisors that I've worked for kept track of all the open files in the office and actually kept like a chart and if the worker didn't get the review recording done within a two week period they would be after the worker saying "I want to see this review recording.". I haven't had that experience with [the District Supervisor here] (Interview)

These workers' experiences demonstrate the supervisory style required in carrying out investigative practice. Investigative practice demands a rigid, policy following style of supervision. This responsibility to carry out the rule of law within a local district office organizes the relationship between the worker and supervisor. All District Supervisors "sign off" all the work that workers do within their office, either supporting a worker's decision or vetoing it. This means the supervisory style of the District Supervisor shapes the work in the office and what exits the office in the form of documents. The workers' comments highlight how, in investigative practice, accurate recording and tracking is evidence of accountability for the work. This evidence is communicated through documents which pass between the worker and the supervisor. The focus on accurate completion of the documents and attention to timelines organizes the relationship between the worker and the supervisor to be centered in the relationship between these documents.

In Langford the support-oriented form of practice offers the possibility for a different kind of supervision than is required in the investigative style of practice. In Langford supervision is a relational process. It is based in knowledge gained daily, and verbally in the worker supervisor relationship. It is a flexible process where the team and the supervisor participate in making decisions, normally made by the supervisor alone. Following are some ways workers describe supervision and the supervisory relationship in this office:

...supervision is not the proper name for what [the District Supervisor]does...

...we know he is the authority but the boundaries are fluid, ideas flow freely across those boundaries and we are constantly challenged to think and rethink our ideas and decisions.

...it would be easier to have a clear path and sometimes you really want clear direction, this style is scary but exciting.

He doesn't answer your questions he asks more questions (Fieldnotes)

Although the District Supervisor in Langford is required to be the authority figure and sign off all workers' work, he emphasizes the relational interaction between himself and the worker rather than the documentary interaction. He knows about each case through face to face conversations with workers, as he sees his main responsibility as direct practice supervision rather than the management of documentary processes. He explains this difference as:

being the boss or supervisor in talking about the work situation is different from being the boss in the managed setting, because in order to have status here in this current environment, I have to have thinking that's helpful, ideas and support to give people, and have to stick with them when things are tough and I have to think through and I have to make mistakes and I have to lose arguments, so it's a whole different thing, I'm

not always the intellectual and emotional leader in a well functioning team...(Interview)

His status on the team is based on his ability to be supportive and useful to the team members in their actual work with clients rather than monitoring the recording of this work. As an integral member of the team, workers expect him to be involved and interested in each family they are working with and be willing to get emotionally involved in the work, the way the rest of the team does. This requires a willingness to be in the worker's shoes and see things from the worker's standpoint. The supervisor's process with a worker is to question the worker's thinking about the situation of a family and how they have thought through their decisions. These discussions are very intense and involve struggles for both worker and supervisor. The District Supervisor describes how the struggles in this work arise and how he supervises to maintain the support orientation and help workers to decrease their tension:

...by following standards you could do away with a lot of that tension by doing the paper work correctly and apprehending and going to court, the cases you talk about here where there is such a struggle, you could in court justify very easily apprehension, in care, no problem, but it's a different way of thinking about the work that gets you to these struggles and this tension and working it out with the family and going over and over... what I am trying to do is develop a record of handling these cases, decreasing the tension and increasing our capability of supporting and caring for the contesting parent (Interview)

The tension the District Supervisor describes here is different from the tension in investigative work. The tension in support work arises from the intensity of the decision making process and of working closely with families and staying the course to support them when investigation and apprehension could easily be justified.

Supervision by anxiety demands an intimate relationship with each worker. The District Supervisor attempts to assess the effectiveness of the decisions workers are making with respect to their clients by monitoring his own level of anxiety in questioning workers about their thinking. His anxiety is the barometer for judging whether workers are making safe decisions about families in choosing to support rather than investigate. This tells him what he needs to know about how to monitor and direct the decisions they are making. Workers in turn learn to make decisions by participating in the questioning process and practicing it with clients. This practice centres their inquiry in their relationship with the client and they develop their own anxiety barometer. In this way, the relationship between worker and client is shaped by the intimate and supportive kind of supervision workers participate in.

Since the work is emotionally charged, the supervisor needs to know not only how workers think about the work, but also how they feel about the work and manage the intensity of the interactions they experience each day. Each worker is different, requiring different levels of support, monitoring and challenge. He makes a point of getting to know the details of most cases as well as getting to know his workers well. He believes success of a support strategy with a client, in protecting the children is in direct correlation to the ability the worker has to connect and develop a relationship with the parent. He believes that this particular way of supervising develops the workers ability to think about and provide support, and helps the worker to teach clients to think effectively as well.

Determining the safety of a child through the development of an ability to relate to families develops over time. New workers to the system have just completed core training in which the standard approach to child protection through investigation and documentation is thoroughly enforced. The District Supervisor feels this is a necessary step in the development of child protection workers with limited experience or knowledge of family

dynamics and child development. This type of training helps workers to learn how to do investigations well when they need to be done and the rigid rules and protocols are appropriate to be enforced when criminal activity, such as child abuse, is occurring. He has found that newer workers feel safer with the clear guidelines and steps involved in investigation, but as workers gain experience they begin to question the appropriateness of the traditional practice of investigation protection in all cases. The District Supervisor has experienced this process himself and describes it this way:

you have to get a certain number of this type of case under you belt before you feel comfortable with it, the first one you just want to go back to the old way of doing it where you hammer the parent and take the kid, second and third you start to trust a little more - you've seen workers struggling with trust, but after you get through a few of them you feel capable, but until you've been the route and lose a few pounds of blood over it, if you have never seen it, you've never seen someone crack right up and go stark raving mad it's a very frightening thing. Once you've been with people and they've cracked up at times and really lost personal control it's not that big a deal.

(Interview)

In his comments the District Supervisor makes a clear comparison between the clarity and power of the old way of doing it, e.g., hammer the parent and take the kid, and the new way, e.g., you trust a little more. In his view anxiety can be dealt with by acting quickly with investigation and apprehension or by developing experience over time, in which the painful and frightening experiences of working with families can become easier to deal with and the reactive approach of investigation can give way to the development of trust.

Experience and knowledge of how children grow up are critical elements to practicing in this way. But knowledge and experience can produce both investigation and support practice. In this office, the relationship with the District Supervisor is the medium through which workers process their knowledge and experience, building trust in their experience

and internal references for child protection decisions. The intimacy of the supervisor/worker relationship is necessary for this type of practice and provides a model for intimacy with clients. The emotional fabric of the work is acknowledged and considered in both kinds of relationships and in the decision making process. This kind of practice involves intense struggle and an ability to live daily with ambiguity and uncertainty. One worker notes the difference between ambiguous and "by the Book" practice or what she calls "clean practice":

clean practice brings the decisions to the judge's door - following policy and procedures, but in this office that is not seen as working effectively because best decisions cannot be made outside the relationship between workers and the family.
(interview)

Clean practice in this sense is accurately completing forms and following procedures which ongoingly produce the investigation form of work. It is clear and measurably completed and then presented to the court for an objective decision. The subjective knowledge of client feelings and the quality of relationship cannot be textualized in the same way. The outcome can be documented as investigation/non-investigation and/or apprehension but the decision making process based on anxiety produces different amounts of apprehensions and children in care. This way of processing decisions matches much more accurately the actuality of the work in Langford, keeping it based in relationship at least at the frontline level.

The supervisor, in choosing to support workers who decide not to apprehend children makes his decisions about what action to take based on his knowledge of what children need and his knowledge of his workers' ability and skill. Taking this position causes him anxiety, when the protection need is not clear and he is sandwiched between the worker's supportive stance and the organization's investigative stance.

In the case conference example in the previous section, the supervisor's anxiety was demonstrated by his direct confrontation questions, his description of his feelings - "my ass is in the pan", and his tense and aggressive stance with the worker's position. The supervisor's anxiety was evidence of the dual role he plays, of representing the rule of law by investigating to protect children and the practice of meeting client and community need. Although the discussion was free flowing on the surface, the powerful controlling force of the law was present in the supervisor's statements and actions. When the worker continued to insist on support as the best way to protect this child, the responsibility for carrying the ruling perspective was placed squarely in the supervisor's lap, and his anxiety level became the determining factor in directing the worker to investigative or support the family.

The District Supervisor explains what happens when he is in that position in the following comments:

every time I reach that juncture [the point of deciding whether to investigate or support] I have to think like that [like the policy], you notice I tense up, my voice gets static, I get quite serious and aggressive with the worker about the risks that are there and I dictate an order, the orders are not always followed, it's like bringing up teenagers it's very important to say what the rule is and what the deal is and I must represent the management concept of what the work is and what the standards are or I should resign. I have to represent those, although workers by in large represent them for themselves quite well..., so I accelerate my relationship with the workers and I want to know the workers' thinking in great detail and I want the worker to resolve my anxiety by me asking the worker questions. It's not the workers job to say "what am I supposed to do [the District Supervisor] is in the office and he's freaking out?" that's not their problem, their problem is to answer the questions as I articulate them and help me feel comfortable and if in fact I get to the point I do not feel comfortable I

will take the work away from that worker and give it to another worker before I will tell the worker to practice against their principles. It's not a question of ordering a worker to do something they don't agree with, I'll never do that, I'll do that myself, the worker can say I don't agree with that, I can say fine, I'm not comfortable with the kind of looseness you bring to this case at this time and I need somebody else to do this case... This is where you find the distinct difference between this office and other offices, I largely need to resolve my own anxiety as against meet policy, if I think that child is safe, I'm okay. (Interview)

When there is a question as to whether the child is actually safe, the supervision of the decision making process in the Langford office takes place through the process of anxiety reduction, rather than policy matching. Ultimately the ruling mandate, to protect children must be met, but in Langford the process to get to that end happens through an interactional supervision process.

In determining whether a child is in need of protection, the supervisor bases his decision on his affective reaction to the information presented by the worker, acquired through his twenty five years of experience in protection, his knowledge of policy, his knowledge about what children need to grow up and his knowledge of the skill level and expertise of the worker. He determines the safety of a child through the information gained in dialogue with the worker. The District Supervisor gains this information through a process of questioning the worker's thought processes in coming to their decision. The District Supervisor describes this as a dual purpose process:

so I have a dual relationship, yes I'm trying to protect that little girl, yes I'm trying to figure out how she can best have a family and not be beaten but I'm also trying to figure out how the worker can perform at a higher and more skilled level, how she can help the next little girl better. I'm kind of orchestrating the team to do this together and I hope the worker is doing that with everybody else too. (Interview)

It is the District Supervisor's responsibility to determine if a child is in need of protection. As stated earlier, he needs to know how the worker is assessing the child's safety in order to know whether in his experience that decision making is protecting the child.

Supportive protection practice requires a thorough knowledge of the people and the context in which the ministry is being asked to intervene. This is established through extensive questioning, first with the reporter in the intake by the worker and then with the worker in consultation with the supervisor. Extensive questioning of the worker gives the District Supervisor an accurate picture of the family within their context, and a picture of the relationship strength between worker and family. It is through this information the District Supervisor's internal anxiety barometer registers the safety level for the child, and not through completion of documentary evidence of abuse. Policy provides a way for workers to use their discretion (See Appendix #7, p. 164, Line A), but "The District Supervisor must approve the social worker's decision to not investigate. When there are any doubts regarding the safety of the child, the report shall be investigated" (See Appendix #8, p. 166, Line B). In Langford the District Supervisor bases his approval of the worker's decision to not investigate on his anxiety level derived from this questioning process with the worker, not on the presence of doubt.

This questioning activity is a supervisory function which organizes the worker's thinking about protection in a new way. Support practice is characterized by the active use of discretion in decision making. This requires a supervisor to be intimately aware of how workers are thinking and making decisions. Through questioning the District Supervisor monitors how a worker is using their discretion and if their process is producing decisions that do protect children through support practice. Some of the kinds of questions that the supervisor would ask include those in the case example: "Would you be at all considering apprehending this child with what you have in front of you?" "if this father was having sex with this child, would your decision be the same?" (Fieldnotes, p. 48)

The supervisor's anxiety level is correlated to the answers to these and more specific questions about age of children, severity of incident(s) and family situation. If after hearing the answers to all these questions the supervisor feels the children are safe in actuality, as measured by his knowledge and past experience, he will let the worker know he has limited anxiety about the case and investigation is not necessary, and direct the worker to offer support if the family wants to become connected. If the supervisor is still feeling anxious after these questions have been answered, he has a number of options to reduce the anxiety.

First, if the worker has not gathered enough information from the family/reporter to satisfy the supervisor's anxiety, the supervisor will send the worker back to the reporter or family to ask more questions, modelling the questions to be asked in his consultation with the worker. If the supervisor is still anxious but the worker is not, the supervisor may call together the team to discuss a case and broaden the scope of thinking to reduce his anxiety. If these two approaches do not work to bring the anxiety down, the supervisor may choose to approve the investigation process, at least the beginning steps. The priority is to involve the parent from the beginning and provide the parent with as much information as possible about what is happening when the worker makes contact, including the reporter if at all possible and ensuring the child is not in immediate danger. The case example demonstrated all three of these options, illustrating the serious nature of the protection concern in this case.

This way of practicing child protection, decision making through discretion based on anxiety may not be unusual but is seldom explicated or sanctioned to take place in this way. Child protection work is laden with feelings for everyone involved and yet feelings are not discussed as integral to or given validity in the decision making process in visible

ways. In this team the feeling aspect of the work is acknowledged and those feelings are connected to a continuum of anxiety-comfort in making child protection determinations. The acknowledgment of the feelings involved in the decision weight the decision on evidence from the material world of clients and workers more than on evidence that is generated to fulfill policy determined categories.

There is a risk involved in this kind of case supervision, but it is a different than what is normally considered to be risk in investigative practice. A child at risk in legislation is considered to be a child who is at risk of being abused or neglected in her present living situation, as evidenced by policy defined check lists of what constitutes abuse. When apprehended and placed in substitute care is then considered to no longer be at risk. The Langford definition of risk takes into account the feelings and relationships, including those with the worker, in which the family is embedded. These are not written in policy and involve the overall well being of the child and the family in the long term, not just in the immediate protection situation. The apprehension of a child from a family, even temporarily is believed to negatively affect that child's well being and poses a risk to the child that may be greater than remaining in the present living situation but with the addition of a relationship with a supportive and friendly worker. This is the risk the worker was weighing in the case conference example. In policy the risk is eliminated by investigation and apprehension. When the court procedures and documentary procedures are complete, there is no evidence of any risk to the child. But as the worker noted in the case example, the risk from the child's perspective may be greater and more long term if she was removed from her family and community. Supervising support practice requires a reframing of the definition of risk in order to make support based decisions. Risk from the perspective of the child may be identified quite differently than risk as defined by policy. Eliminating the risk to children happens by quite a different set of activities in support practice than investigative practice.

In choosing to carry out child protection with a support orientation, workers and the supervisor have developed, over time, supervision practices which enable a support orientation to the work. Within the local office, the supervisor is considered by the workers to be an equally contributing member of the team, in that workers challenge and disagree with him as they do with each other in sorting out the dilemmas in the work. At the same time, they recognize he is the authority in the office, representing the mandate of the organization in which they are employed. This means that at times he is able to authorize workers' initiatives to practice in supportive ways and sometimes he is not.

When there is clearly evidence of physical or sexual abuse the practice in this office is not unlike any other. Investigative practice takes precedence in those cases, but the number is small. The statistics generated in this office show that many more cases are "family support" cases, than in any other office in the Victoria area (e.g., In April 1994 Langford recorded 122 cases as Family Support and the other four offices recorded 65,65,33,2 respectively (Ministry of Social Services, 1994). Workers trust their ability to distinguish between those relationships needing investigative intervention and those requiring support. Through strong, supportive relationships with the team, and the clear supervision by the District Supervisor, they are able to practice on the edge of policy in accordance with their personal and professional discretion. Although these relationships are embedded in the social relations of the ministry, there seems to be a buffer zone, between the local office and the larger organization. This buffer zone seems to be located in the supervisory practices of the Langford office with the District Supervisor absorbing the risk.

Documenting for Client Benefit

As part of the shift to support practice, workers began looking at the documentary aspects of their work and how these constricted their ability to practice in a supportive way. The

investigation process itself is organized by the reading and writing of documents according to rigidly followed policy and procedure manuals. The completion of a case investigation requires the completion of Family and Child Service Act Forms: Intake Form, Intake Documentation Form, Initial Investigation Form, Collateral Information Form, Risk Assessment Form, Case Decision Form, and letters to reporters, letter to parents and possible court documents and warrant documents depending on how the investigation proceeds. In investigative practice documents play a significant role in shaping the work to match the mandate to protect through investigation activities thereby ongoingly reproducing the work as investigation.

While such documentation normally absorbs much of the time and energy of workers, a number of the Langford office workers describe documentation as at the bottom of the list of priorities. When the team chose the work to be support, they realized that there would be limited time to do that kind of work and complete documentary requirements as well.

well in intake, you do the front intake sheet and then there's approximately 10 other sheets and when we started to do the community work I looked at the District Supervisor and I remember saying, we can't do it, we don't want to write all this, there is no need to write every single page that is required there and the District Supervisor agreed and let us narrow down the pages to what was really needed in terms of what was relevant for the intake. So we were able to narrow down the pages to from two to three, which would do us just fine. (Interview)

This worker describes how in negotiation with the supervisor she was able to take control over the documentary process used with clients by decreasing the number of forms completed. The fewer forms used, the less time and focus on textualization of the client's situation. Documenting interactions with reporters and clients is deemed necessary in most situations in the office, but practicing with a support focus raises questions about

how many and which documents are actually necessary. This same worker describes her strong emotional reaction to completing documents,

well I'm not doing it for me or my clients, I feel I'm doing it for a higher system to protect myself and to protect [the District Supervisor] and that's why I hate picking up that pen, I'm really aware that when I'm doing it ...it's to respect the Ministry but it's not in any way respecting me or my clients so I'm blocked with it. I have a hard time doing it, I don't like it...there's a mean aspect to it that just bothers me... (Interview)

The worker's dilemma in completing the documentation as required and feeling its irrelevance to her or her client creates feelings of hatred and anger. She seems to be resigned to having to pick up that pen on occasion, but suffers the anguish each time of doing it for reasons that do not further her conception of the work. This anger motivated her to negotiate with the District Supervisor about form completion. As a result he agreed that some of the forms were not necessary in documenting support work. The worker notes further that newer workers still complete most of the forms but more experienced workers fill in fewer, and "that's okay" with the supervisor. Accurate knowledge about client situations does not rely on the passing of documents from the workers to the supervisor in this office.

In this office since almost all calls are considered calls for support services, the amount of documentation that must be done is controlled by the separation of service at the intake stage. A support intake includes the intake sheet, the additional information sheet and a review summary. These forms require only limited coded information and leave more room for narrative descriptions about the family. They do not require adherence to extensive interview question format, as in investigations, but have the potential to allow a client centred discussion. Recording is necessary in all child protection work but the workers have taken some control over its function and what form that recording takes.

In some instances, a support intake is not even recorded. Many calls to the intake worker are calls for information about community resources, the ministry's services and family related issues. Some calls are people in crisis, but not actually requesting intervention, just needing someone to talk to at that time. The team again rethought the purpose of recording all those kinds of calls when the call itself was all the intervention the person was requesting. As an intake worker explains:

a lot of calls do come in and people just call because they want information they just need to talk and what we felt comfortable with is not every single person that calls need to have a record on themselves, so it's left to the discretion of the person receiving the call. So I do take calls when the conversation has gone on for an hour or so and if I don't want to forget the name I'll just jot it down and then mention it at the intake meeting, so that if this woman calls again, just so you know I've had this conversation, but not necessarily get it on the computer and the name, assessment only, opened then closed. (Interview)

This way of recording or not recording diminishes the effect that the requirement to document the work normally exercises over child protection workers. Workers verbally pass on information about an intake without necessarily permanently recording that intake. Workers are able to experience the work as direct work with clients and respond to clients requests as to what is helpful and document accordingly.

At Langford, workers talk about documentation as it applies to the enhancement of the client relationship not as a function all on its own. Workers comment often that people should be able to access a government service without having a record. The electronic recording of a person's name and situation into the central computer system in the Ministry was a process designed to augment the investigation process of child protection. Workers feel that its purpose is questionable in terms of parents asking for support where workers do not deem the children to be at risk. In the above example the worker described

comfort level as a guiding force in determining whether to enter a person into the child protection electronic system. Despite the length of the call and the kind of help given, the worker still weighed the importance of recording that call in the ministry documentary system, against the benefit that recording would provide for the client.

Workers' accurate completion of documents does not, in this office, signify good work or an effective relationship with the client. All three workers interviewed and the District Supervisor described good work as the development of relationships with clients which facilitated their ability to assert themselves in their world and thereby help their children get what they need to grow up safely. Evidence of good work is happy, independent clients who no longer want or need or require services. Good work is solidly based in relationships not documents. An effective relationship with a clients as evidence of good work, is invisible in the documentary process as presently constructed. Documents do not predominantly inform the supervisor of the work being done in this office, the everyday interaction and consultation that are regular parts of the daily work are what inform the supervisor about the work. Monitoring of the work takes place within the relationship between worker and supervisor.

The Langford team has looked at the purpose of documentation from the perspective of the system and the perspective of the client. All of the workers interviewed disliked the paperwork requirements of the job, describing it separately from what they considered the work. As one worker describes:

I used to be really disciplined about doing the paperwork and it used to really freak me out if I didn't get it done, to the point where I would do it compulsively and in doing that I would not be seeing people or going out and *doing the work* and would spend more time recording what I was doing than doing *it* itself (Interview) (emphasis added)

This dilemma is evident in conversations with most workers, that the documentation comes last, but the necessity of completing it weighs on their minds. One worker describes how she limits the time spent on it by adhering to the usefulness it produces for clients.

if it's paperwork that I do that's going to achieve something tangible or result in a benefit to my client I'll do it right away, So if I need to write a letter to somebody in support of my client receiving something, I'll do it right away, but if it's just something for somebody else to read, like an auditor at some point in time to read or for another co-worker to read I'm not anywhere near as motivated to do it... (Interview)

The worker connects the importance of documenting to the direct benefit it will have for the client. That kind of documentation is integral to the day to day work of the worker. Documentation however that is simply taking place to meet policy guidelines for case recording is done much less enthusiastically. Workers described leaving long periods of time between recordings because the face to face work with clients took precedence over the recording of it. The relationships with clients are not based in the documentary process and therefore the information about those relationships are passed on verbally more than textually within the office. Workers recognize the importance of maintaining continuity of information about a family through records, but are discovering ways to document that do not interfere with their relationships with clients.

The supervisor supports the workers in this discovery. The District Supervisor in Langford sees his workers as conforming to the rules of documentation more than is necessary at times. He identifies the need to leave a paper trail of the work, but that trail should reflect the reality of what life is like for that client and whether there is excitement and change or boredom in the relationship. He does not see the traditional, ministry organized way of documenting as useful or even accurate for providing the information

needed to carry out support practice. He encourages workers not to conform unquestioningly to these requirements:

I'm amazed at how conforming the workers are and I wish they would conform less. My idea is that they tell me a story so that if a Mac truck hit them tonight, in the morning I could help the family in the way that they would want me to, instead of putting a whole bunch of BS on a file that forces you to write in a constricted and uninteresting manner...I think they should record the same way they do everything else. If it wasn't very interesting, say a boring little thing to say what it was like, and if it was interesting, make it really exciting - make it fun... (Interview)

Taking control of the separation of service into investigation or support work allows the workers to take some control over what documents are used and how they are used. Some recording is necessary but reorganizing most of the work to be support provides the workers with the opportunity to centre their work in relationships with clients and not documents. However, the importance of documentation to the organization of the work does not go away. Choosing to support produces lower investigative statistics in the Langford office. As we shall see later the lower statistics being produced from this form of work produce consequences.

Engaging with the Community

An integral element of the distinctive work process in Langford is the inclusion of the community as participant in protecting children through supportive practice. For the Langford team, support practice extends outside the immediate child protection team into the community. The team describes this process as "engaging with the community". Community work is unaccounted for in legislation, policy or documents as child protection work and therefore is not required to be practiced in the existing organization of Ministry work. The Langford team has determined the need to engage with their

community to advance their supportive efforts and their community practice reflects this determination.

The Langford team describes the children that come to their attention as the "community's children" and it is the conceptualization of children in this way which produces a need to be part of the community rather than a separate policing entity which some workers describe as their previous experiences in offices where investigation was the primary work orientation. In thinking and speaking about the work in this way, they have developed practices which involve the community in this work. The community approach challenges the individual responsibility focus of the child protection mandate and addresses the context in which child protection concerns arise, broadening the potential avenues for support and resources available for individuals to enhance the strength of their family. With community supports in place, community members have options for help and assistance before coming to the Ministry or being reported to the Ministry. When this takes place, workers consider their community work successful in that the community is taking care of its children.

As I shall now describe, workers employ this community approach to the work by connecting people to each other within the community, reorganizing relationships with those making reports to the Ministry, and bringing together groups of people with similar experiences to lobby for change.

Connecting Individuals to Each Other

The vague notion of engaging with community is really a step by step process of developing relationships with real people in real locations within the community. One worker in describing the community approach stated simply, "working in the community, - it's to try and reconnect people to each other" (Interview). In concrete ways the workers

in Langford extend their individual supportive practices with families out into the community by connecting people to each other with the goal being support. Too often our present child protection practices isolate parents to their individual parenting roles and hang the responsibility for problems in child rearing solely on the parent (Gordon, 1985). Current literature suggests this isolation hampers solid parent and child bonds and healthy child development (Miller and Whittaker, 1988). Traditional child protection practices such as maintaining confidentiality and an individualized casework approach reproduce this isolation and individual responsibility paradigm.

Workers in Langford try to practice confidentiality and individualized case work in ways that are consistent with their thinking about what families need to more effectively raise their children. Workers share client stories with the team, seeking support, ideas and solutions that reflect the practice of support through connection rather than isolation. One worker explains how she did this in one case:

...one of Carol's clients was having a difficult time and was going to have to leave her residence and I had one client that had an extra room that in the interim at least would have been okay to stay at, so we connected them, we asked both of them and connected them both up to see if she could sort of help it through this critical point instead of [expecting] them [to do it on their own], so sort of rethinking things and not being so afraid, that they're people and they're having a hard time but they're still normal people and each of us may be at that point in our lives sometime. I don't look at them as like clients or like I try not to look at it in that way, it's just a time in their life and it's not an easy time, and I think that's the way hopefully they start looking at themselves so when you sort of mention it, it's not looked at "excuse me, you're going to team me up with another client"...they don't look at it like that they look at it as something okay. So it's sort of I think how you approach it or how you think of it which makes it okay. (Interview)

The worker is seeing the work embedded in the community where support is produced by the practice of connecting people to each other to solve their problems rather than working individually with people to solve their own problems. Seeing the work in this way has a number of implications. First, the way of thinking about the work is far broader than what is possible when looking through an investigation lens. The worker here is identifying the client's need from what the client has said they need and is not interpreting her living arrangement problem as a parenting deficit. An investigative approach would not consider assisting a client with finding housing as part of child protection work. This worker, however recognized and acknowledged the normalcy of housing problems as a contextual issue not a reflection of poor parenting. Although the problem was not an abuse issue, the worker did not interpret it as a reason to not be involved, although it could easily be considered outside the jurisdiction of the worker. She considered it part of her role in helping this mom to raise her child.

Second, workers in Langford give clients the right to consent to the sharing of information about them with the goal of producing supportive relationships, rather than maintaining confidentiality as a practice where clients remain unknown to each other. The social worker's view of her clients is that they are normal people with strengths and weaknesses. They have real life problems as other people do, some of which affect their abilities to provide adequate levels of care for their children at certain times in their lives. In this example the worker focused her discussion on the difficult time the client was having in her life, not that the client was being difficult. She transformed the personal problem of accommodation to a contextual situation requiring a solution. Her rejection of the personal defect paradigm opened additional opportunities like the connection of client with client in ways that could be advantageous for both. She made no assumptions however, about what the client might feel about that, so she provided the option and gave the client the power to choose whether or not be connected. She considered this move to

be a supportive and empowering opportunity for the client, but did not assume the client would necessarily feel that way. In providing support, she gave the client full power to maintain the confidentiality of her circumstances. She did contend however that how she, the worker, presented the option, in this case as two normal people with complementary needs, made a difference as to what the client would feel about the choice she had. The rigid maintenance of confidentiality as a practice appears to be less of a priority than the client's right to choose the boundaries of its use. This priority seems to expand the opportunities for support.

Finally, the inter-team sharing of client information with the objective of meeting needs is characteristic of community practice. The support approach to the work, blended with the team approach to the work increases the possibilities for creative solutions to client problems. While investigation specifically targets the parent as the medium for change, support practice broadens the focus to the client's total context as a medium for change. Facilitating the connections between people, be they clients or not, expands that context, extending the opportunities for support.

Elsewhere, according to the worker quoted below, workers practice in isolation from one another, exercising a sense of "ownership" over their cases where they carry the full responsibility for case decisions alone. It appears that workers in Langford do not exhibit an ownership mentality to their cases, but look to each other for support and assistance to expand the supportive options for clients. One worker describes how he feels about this way of practice in contrast to his previous experience:

before I had a sense in other offices I worked in you're alone, you're out there doing it kind of like star trek, you're boldly going where no man has gone before and if you make a mistake you're going to hang for it. I don't feel that way here. I think there is a lot of support from [the District Supervisor] and ...the core team.... Sometimes we

come up against some really scary stuff.. and I feel I have a relationship with mostly anyone [on the team], that if I was feeling uncomfortable in addressing a particular issue with a family or whatever, I wouldn't have to do that alone... (Interview)

Workers routinely ask each other for advise and concrete assistance in providing support to their clients. Support work within the team expands the web of possibility, through ongoing discussions about the work, about common client problems and about creative ideas, for clients' needs to be met. Workers describe the sharing of information and ideas about what would be helpful to clients as supportive to each other and ultimately to the client. By listening to how clients identify their needs and sharing that information with the team, they initiate contact between those experiencing common problems and act as a bridge to the ruling apparatus through which resources may be accessed to meet client and community need. Practicing in a community reframes the individualized problems of one client to a collective process of problem solving by many. Problems are reframed to be circumstantial and the target for intervention is shifted to structural changes in those circumstances rather than just personal treatment.

Reorganizing Relationships with the Community

In addition to the legal responsibility for citizens to report suspicions of abuse or neglect, Inter-Ministry protocols (Ministries of Education, Health, Attorney General and Human Resources, 1979) outline requirements for other Ministries to report all suspicions of abuse or neglect to the Ministry of Social Services. In examining the statistics of where child protection reports originated in Langford, it became clear to the team that the vast majority of calls were being accepted from the school system, from teachers, counsellors and principals. Many of these calls described situations which the workers did not consider required Ministry intervention, as one worker explains:

Their complaints are often, the child only had a peanut butter sandwich. Well, what's the problem? You know that to me is just fine, and I'm not going to race out and

consider that an issue because that may be all the parent can afford and peanut butter's just fine...so with issues like that we try to re-educate people that it's okay and telling schools that's fine... (Interview)

The workers questioned the necessity of these calls both in terms of the work they created in the office and the kind of relationships they developed between families, the school and the Ministry. This practice of school personnel reporting all concerns to the Ministry instead of talking to families first and offering support directly seemed unnecessary to workers and motivated them to address this practice to try and change the reporting relationship to be more support oriented. The community development worker (Fieldnotes p. 38, 45 and 65) described to me what they did. He said each call that came in from the school would be followed up in person by the social worker or the district supervisor visiting the reporting school representative. According to the worker this visit had a number of purposes: one, was to get to know personally the person on the other end of the phone and develop a face to face, name to name relationship, rather than one institution to another. Secondly, to educate as to the role, responsibility and reality of Ministry intervention and what that looks like for the family on which the report is being made, and thirdly, to gather if necessary more detailed information on a report and establish a partnership in the process of investigation if in fact that was a required next step in the process.

In his experience getting to know the reporter personally gave workers a broadened base for the work in the community. He found that by being friendly, interested and appreciative of a community member's concern for a family shattered many of the myths associated with child protection work. The face to face relationship helped to equalize the power and therefore responsibility for the work of child protection, as not just a ministry responsibility, but a community responsibility. The District Supervisor describes this way of thinking as fundamental to community practice and frames the work in a way that

requires workers to develop relationships that will broaden the shoulders on which child protection work rests. The workers' learned that school personnel felt like they had to report all concerns as reports of abuse or neglect because that was how it was written up in the Inter-ministry Protocols. (See Appendix #11, p. 176, Sec. E:1-4)

This set of protocols formalizes and narrows the way other professionals engage with child protection workers. One worker identified the way the adherence to protocols had stopped a Public Health Nurse from asking for help:

A nurse called two weeks ago [with a concern about a family] and I said, "why didn't you contact us the first day when the child was born, just to sort of talk about it?" "Well I didn't think we'd be apprehending the child." and I said, "Whose talking apprehension? I'm talking supporting this family, who people in the community are going to become aware of and we're going to get tons of calls, so we want to divert that." She became very defensive and still regarded it as it needed to be a real issue of protection before I would even connect with her..that's all they really know, that this is the mandate so therefore this happens, that we can't connect with this agency unless we've got this particular concern...so I say stop waiting till its a protection concern, talk about it, call us, consult, talk to the family - tell them there's a nice duty worker ...give them a call - "but then you'll take the kid", "no we won't take the kid, there's a lot before we are going to take the kid." (Interview)

Through regular interactions like this one, workers rename the communication from reporting to consultation. They try and help other professionals see how they can be used in other ways to help professionals besides just investigating families. They try to offer support to professionals in exploring their concerns rather than transferring the concern from one location to another and handling it only as an investigation. This worker's experience illustrated the ruling power of the mandate to organize how people, even in other ministries engage in the social relations of child protection. The protocols outline

how and when to communicate with the child protection system and what action people can expect by entering the process at certain points. The public health nurse believed that calling the ministry would result in an investigation and possibly apprehension. She did not want that to happen so she did not call until the family situation was at a point where investigation was a necessary process. The worker on the other hand was seeing the need to support the family early on to avoid this situation and tried to communicate an alternate role for workers in this scenario. In trying to change their practice to be supportive and change reporting to consultations, workers face barriers in their interactions with professionals who are trained to participate in child protection practice in only certain ways.

As part of their community practice, workers educate reporters as to what needs to be investigated and what does not and therefore can be handled in other ways and by other community supports. Workers treat reports as a cry of concern and ask community professionals to phone and consult about their concerns instead of phoning to report a suspicion of abuse or neglect. This renaming provides the avenue for the concern to be voiced as a concern and a request for help from the reporter in assessing the situation, not a call for the investigation process to be launched. Workers encourage all professionals and community members to call and consult any time. By consulting first, those who would have reported a suspicion are often able to handle the situation directly within their own context, without the investigative intervention of the Ministry.

Thirdly, this relationship development paves the way for a cohesive working relationship should the report actually proceed to an investigation. A worker described how difficult it is for families to be approached by a child protection worker as a result of an anonymous complaint:

in terms of investigation, it was a very intrusive approach, talking to everyone but the family, that the parents would ultimately be the last ones to know [that there had been a complaint about them]. Now the approach is more inclusive and involves families from the onset, whenever possible, so I think that eliminates the mystery around the process and people wanting to know why this is happening to them. [They don't get caught] on who is this hidden caller or whose got this vendetta against them which often prevents people from moving to the next step which would be to look at what the situation is and what is actually happening for the family. (Interview)

In this worker's opinion, the initial anonymous reporting step of the process often snags the reported upon parent so deeply that it consumes their mind and energy in a futile and legally protected guessing game. The workers saw this as an unnecessary snag and asked reporters to participate in the process of support provision or investigation commencement by introducing the worker to the family. In other words, making themselves known to the family rather than hiding their identity. The legislation which protects the identity of the reporter organizes the relationship between the reporter and the family to be one of anonymity and secrecy, causing great distress to the family and hampering the process whichever route it takes. By soliciting the involvement of the reporter in the process, the true essence of concern that is generally at the root of a protection report could be capitalized on and the relationship between the reporter and the family could be developed and nurtured rather than hidden and not utilized. As demonstrated in the case example of the teacher and student, the teacher can present a positive image of support to the family and introduce the worker as helpful, a part of the community fabric and someone that can be called on in future by the family. The teacher becomes a facilitator of the community strengthening process, rather than an anonymous and uninvolved player.

Workers challenge all third party callers whether professionals, families or neighbours to participate in the child protection system in this way. Workers reframe the responsibility for intervention into the family onto the reporter, if the safety of the child is not in question and their initial assessment is not sexual abuse or violence. One intake worker describes how she reframes this responsibility during an intake call:

if a call comes in my first question is, "have you gone to your neighbour and spoken to them?" "why the hell should I do that?" is the usual response, and I say, "look, with what you're giving me, call back after you've gone and talked to the person, if they tell you to _____, then maybe we're into something, but give the person a little grace by not using the government bureaucracy to barge in and be the threat". So what I do is I put the onus back on people, so that one by one that they'll sort of start taking responsibility for their neighbours and start taking responsibility for the unhealthiness in their community. (Interview)

By reframing the report to be a concern and developing a relationship between reporter and worker and acknowledging the existence and value of the relationship between the reporter and the family, workers felt the majority of reports can introduce the Ministry as a positive force in the process and a supportive hand from government as opposed to a big stick. This sets the stage for a very different interaction with the client, should they actually become a client, and broadens the responsibility for the welfare of the family, from the ministry to the other participants in the initial reporting process. Workers told me they do this by offering assistance to reporters in talking directly to those they are concerned about by suggesting what they can say, offering to attend with the reporter and suggesting other local resources to offer support to the family.

Bringing Together People with Common Issues

The work of community development is more than only connecting one client to another and redefining the reporting relationship, it also includes bringing together and working

with groups of people with common needs and issues. The development of the Neighbourhood House illustrates one example of how the community approach is implemented with groups of clients. Through the identification of client need, workers took on a partnership stance with clients and lobbied within and outside their community to create the kind of resource that clients would consider helpful in raising their children. The Neighbourhood House has provided a way for workers to offer supportive services to parents before, during and after they may be clients. It is a place, although funded by Ministry dollars, that is more accessible to the community than the Ministry office because those who would most use the service were directly involved in its development. The Neighbourhood House and the other individual projects following its development originated in one to one contacts between clients and workers who then pulled people with common issues together and worked in partnership with them from inside the system and outside the system to create the necessary changes they were requesting. This partnership, similar to the one described by Barr (1979), involved action both from the worker and the client from their different locations in the community, as this worker describes:

...so saying to my client "okay this is what I can do from the inside ...but from the outside these are some forces that maybe you should think about bringing to bear that maybe if I'm doing some agitation on the inside and you're doing some agitation externally then maybe using that tactic some change will be created". Because I think that in some ways the external agitation if the person can do it effectively can be, can have more power than the internal agitation... (Interview)

The experience of working in partnership with a supportive worker may be all the intervention the client needs in creating personal change. Workers can then move on to identify and target community change. Telling clients what it takes to change the system and then figuring out what each of them can do to change it, creates a powerful bond that

can bridge the gap between the client and worker roles. Clients come to understand the real position of workers in creating change within their own organization and become aware of the power they have in "agitating" on the outside as well. Partnership implies equality and although the power imbalance of the worker's delegated authority still exists, the Langford team works hard to utilize every opportunity to support clients in their efforts to meet their needs before assuming that authority role.

The workers have also facilitated community meetings between people involved in areas of the community through which much of the investigation work arises: the military community, the transition house, groups of young mothers in housing projects and parents of teens. A worker expresses the essential need to bring people together and provide them with the opportunity to voice their reality and the concerns from their perspective,

they are the only people that can say what's right and wrong for them or good or bad, I don't believe, even though I'm there a lot, I can say it and I don't think I should, I think that when my client was there on Friday and looked at the three military people she was more eloquent than I ever could be because it came from her heart because she had lived it and that's where it needs to come from, otherwise it's not important.

(Interview)

The District Supervisor reiterated this point in a similar way saying "that if change does not come from the clients it is not enduring." (Fieldnotes) Workers practice the community approach to child protection by providing the opportunity and environment for people with common experiences to come together and talk about these things. From there workers say they take varying roles in keeping the process going or leaving the group to chart its own path.

Normally, since the state responsibility for protecting children is delegated to Ministry employees, all activity regarding protection is considered the responsibility of the ministry, the community becoming a helpless bystander with respect to child protection. The team in Langford has developed a distinctive set of practices which involve the community in the process of protecting children. These practices have connected people together to support each other, changed some relationships between the Ministry employees and community members to be more supportive and brought together groups of people with similar concerns to support each other in creating change. These practices have had the effect of reducing community reports to the Ministry office for investigations. The District Supervisor notes when the investigative work decreases the support work and community work can increase.

I realized from my time in the Langford office that my experience as a child protection worker was not unusual. Most of the workers could recall similar feelings and difficulties in past offices they had worked in as well as here. Participating in their day to day work I felt positive and relieved by the connection I saw between what I believed about families in need and what I saw workers doing and saying about them. They actually seemed to enjoy their clients, most of the time and seemed happy in their work. Yet some of the feelings and frustrations of the work that I was more familiar with remained. In this chapter I have described what support looks like as a set of practices which workers carry out. In the next chapter I relate how I explored frustration that arises even in this office committed to support instead of investigation as child protection.

V. PRACTICING SUPPORT WITHIN AN ORGANIZATION THAT MANDATES INVESTIGATION

In the previous chapter I argued that workers in Langford carry out some institutional practices of child protection with a decidedly supportive orientation. However, they do it in an environment created by a mandate and through an organization of the work that establishes investigation as the accepted mode to protect children. In this chapter I show how this is accomplished by focusing on the individual family as the problem to be solved, providing ample resources and services for investigation and apprehension work rather than prevention or support work, and distributing staff resources in accordance with the investigative priority of the work. Support work is not valued in the same way. It is in this less advantageous environment that the Langford team is practicing with a supportive orientation and that is, I argue, one reason why it is so difficult.

The Individual Family as the Problem

The current environment and organization of child protection in this province is established in the legislation governing how the protection of children will be accomplished: the Family and Child Service Act (1981). The rules for accomplishing the protection of children set out in this law, organize how individual citizens and ministry employees participate in this mode of protection. This participation is organized by the criteria for reporting abuse and neglect, the legal responsibility to report, and the requirement of delegates of the superintendent to investigate all reports. I argue that the practices which citizens and Ministry protection workers take up by their participation engage them in the relations of ruling (D. Smith, 1990) as members of the ruling apparatus. Families who are reported become the site in which the problem of child protection is located and therefore the target to which activities of intervention are directed. There are relatively few instances in which aggressive intervention is needed to

protect children and the legislation has been written to provide for those cases. My concern is how the legislation dictates practice that is rigid and unnecessarily intrusive.

The Criteria for Reporting Abuse and Neglect

In the current legislation governing child protection in this province, a child requiring protection is defined as "in need of protection" (Family and Child Service Act, 1981:Section 1) if:

he is a) abused or neglected so that his safety or well being is endangered, b) abandoned, c) deprived of necessary care through the death, absence or disability of his parent, d) deprived of necessary medical attention, or e) absent from his home in circumstances that endanger his safety or well being.

These criteria speak specifically to the person of the child, defined in the same section as "a person under 19 years old" and although only mentioned specifically in criteria c), the parent, defined in Section 1 also, is the person responsible for ensuring a child in their care does not meet any of the above criteria. The guiding principle in the administration and interpretation of this Act (Section 2) is that the "safety and well being of the child shall be the paramount considerations". The terminology used in the criteria: abuse; neglect, family etc. are not defined in the act. Various interpretations of these are manifest in the activities of citizens, protection workers and those in the legal system, through whom individual cases of child protection proceed.

A fundamental assumption upon which these criteria rest is that parents are responsible to provide an environment and raise their children in ways that prevent the child meeting any of these criteria. If the child's safety or well being are compromised in ways that can be included in this list of criteria, the parent is identified as the person responsible for the infraction without reference to the parent's larger context in which their task of raising the child is taking place. The parent and child are singled out of their context and the

measurement for determining in need of protection becomes centered in the relationship between the parent and the child. A more general term used to describe the location of this problem is the "the family". Although used in the title of the act, family is only mentioned once in the act. The operative term to identify the responsible person for protecting the child is the "the parent". Family is neither defined or explicitly implicated as participating in the responsibility for the child's protection. The responsibility is explicitly delegated to the parent.

Using the term parent to describe the one responsible for child raising in our society conceals the reality that women actually are performing this task of raising children in the vast majority of cases (Abramovitz, 1986; Callahan, 1993; and Gordon, 1985). This is true of the situation in Langford, according to the District Supervisor. Furthermore most of these single parents are women living in poverty. Because the social, economic and cultural context of the parent and child is not integral to the assessment of a child being in need of protection, those people in our society who are poor, female and carrying out parenting single handedly take up the position of being unable to protect their children more often than other parents. These criteria for in need of protection are overrepresented in this group in the population and by using these criteria to identify this group, the focus is on the individual deficit commonalities, not the contextual commonalities.

The absence of any reference in the legislation to the context in which the activity of raising children takes place suggests another assumption upon which these criteria for abuse and neglect rest. That assumption is that all parents' abilities to protect their children, according to the criteria, are equal. It assumes the deficiency of the capacity resides with the parent alone and assumes the parent is responsible for raising the child appropriately and responsible for the environmental conditions in which they raise their

children. In reality the predominant client group lives in environmental conditions over which they have little control. This separation of parenting from environmental conditions promotes a sense of individual responsibility (Callahan, 1993) for protecting children. In essence the whole family may be in need of protection from a class system that has placed them in poverty but the legislation organizes the problem to be a parenting one, not a contextual one. It may be said that the present social policy response provides a diversionary function, redirecting attention away from the social context of child protection as a problem and locating the problem with the parent who is then labeled as deficient and unable to cope. This problem definition ignores "systemic barriers which have resulted in discriminatory treatment based on gender, [and] class" (Wharf, 1993, p. 2). As noted earlier, this deficiency is often categorized as neglect, where the child is considered deprived of necessary care through "disability" of the parent.

Workers in Langford try to differentiate between parents not on the basis of deficiency or capability but on the basis of resources available to them. The District Supervisor explained it to me this way,

it's easy to take children away from people who are unwilling to help them, hard to take children away from people who haven't got the ability but want to. As you learn to understand what it's like to bring a child up and as you learn what it's like not to have the resources to bring a child up you then figure out there's almost nobody that is unwilling to... (Interview)

With this approach to understanding the problem parents face, the assessment of deficiency is centred in the context, or lack of resources in which the parent is trying to do the job of raising children. Workers' support efforts can then be aimed at enriching that context as well as assisting parents to increase their control over their situation. This way of seeing and addressing child protection concerns demands resources that support a client within their context. As noted the legislation does not describe the problem as located in

the context. Workers experience frustration when together with their clients they identify contextual deficiencies but have no authority to address those deficiencies. The differing origins of the problem, as evidenced by the criteria, continually produce differing means of intervention. Yet, interventions are organized by the legislation and a set of practices that say the responsibility lies with the parent, not the context.

The Legal Responsibility to Report

The practices of both citizens and child protection workers articulate to the legislation to which the "individual parent (mother) as the problem" definition is fundamental. The legislation itself organizes the social relations of child protection where participation by citizens is not only suggested, but legally enforced by the "Duty to Report":

7. (1) A person who has reasonable grounds to believe a child is in need of protection shall forthwith report the circumstances to the superintendent or a person designated by the superintendent to receive such reports.

(4) A person who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence. (Family and Child Service Act, 1981, Section 7).

This legal responsibility to report has created a practice of private citizens reporting anonymously any suspicions of child abuse or neglect directly to the Ministry. The increase in the practice of this reporting activity can be traced from the creation of the Help Line for Children in 1978, when only 800 reports were received, to 1989 when the number of reports reached 35,000 (Berland, 1993). Although no one has ever been convicted of the offence of not reporting (Berland, 1993), citizens have taken up the practice of reporting, thereby participating in the ruling relations of child protection by identifying the problem parents in the community.

The legal responsibility to report suspicions of abuse or neglect has organized the social relations between citizens to not actively support each other to protect children but to

report to a Ministry armed with the legal mandate to investigate and apprehend children to protect. Further, the practice of reporting to the Ministry can be done in confidence. This means the identity of the reporter can remain unknown to the Ministry and the parent, about whom the report is made. This practice organizes citizens to make judgments about each other without any responsibility for being involved in the resolution of those judgments. As reporters, citizens take up a ruling position over those they report about. Thus, the practice of reporting, which is legally required, incorporates the individual citizen into the ruling relations of child protection.

In Langford, where the majority of reporters are from the school system, the extension of the legislation into Inter-Ministry policies and protocols (Ministries of Education, Health, Attorney General and Human Resources, 1979) extends the ruling relations into other systems such as the school system and organizes the practices of individual professionals to articulate to the Ministry practices. Teachers, principals and counsellors actively carry out the activities specified in the protocols, identifying children about whom they have protection concerns and communicating those to the Ministry. Traditionally then, the Ministry takes up the task of following through on those reports. Even though school personnel are intimately involved with these children they have concerns about each day, the protocols they carry out organize their relationship away from one of support, to one of reporting. Their relationship with these children becomes separated out into the educational function and the child protection function by the practice of following Inter-Ministry protocols. Their stance becomes an outside stance to the child and parent relationship, reporting it to be dealt with by someone else. Reporting in this way, they participate in the ruling relations, taking up the ruling standpoint instead of the client standpoint. This practice maintains the parent as the problem and reporting is reinforced as the means by which to identify the problem. The report, from wherever it originates, articulates to the Ministry practice of investigation.

Langford workers extend their support practice by re-educating reporters and involving them in the process. This practice meets with resistance, as described in the interaction with the public health nurse, when the ongoing training and monitoring of Ministry of Social Services and Inter-Ministry protocols educates government and community professionals to function within the investigative mode. Workers in Langford spend a great deal of time and energy re-educating to try and counteract the traditional way of doing the work.

The Delegated Responsibility to Investigate

Workers have been delegated the authority to investigate all reports of child protection in a standard way. Langford workers find this authoritative interaction with families painful and often unnecessary particularly when the worker sees that individual parents are rarely to blame for the difficulties they are having in raising their children. Regardless of personal philosophy about families, workers feel the influence of their delegated responsibility to investigate even when they choose to support parents.

The practice of reporting suspicion of abuse or neglect initiates the practice of investigation as outlined in the legislation.

Section 3 (3) The Superintendent shall direct the investigation of reports that children may be in need of protection and the keeping of records of the reports and investigations.

(4) The Superintendent may delegate any of his powers, duties, functions and capacities under this Act to any person or class of person and that person or class of person shall be subject to his direction. (Family and Child Service Act, 1981, Section 3)

When a citizen reports a suspicion of abuse or neglect to a Ministry office, a set of practices first set out in the legislation above and then elaborated in the Family and Child Services Policy Manual are put into motion. Child protection practice relies on a set of practices being carried out in sequence. The accepted means for determining a "child in need of protection" is an investigation. Investigation in turn relies on the individual family as the subject of inquiry and all activities required in the investigative process articulate to that form of inquiry. The Superintendent, in the legislation, has delegated the authority to carry out this investigation to the frontline child protection worker.

This investigative process is further organized by the assessment of the criteria for abuse, "when there are any doubts regarding the safety of the child, the report shall be investigated" (See Appendix #8, p. 166, Line B). Evidence proving the absence of doubt is much more difficult to produce than evidence proving the presence of suspicion. The criteria for determining a child "in need of protection", relies on a worker having suspicion from the story related to her by the reporter. This suspicion then commences the investigative process, pulling the family into the social relations of child protection as the focal point for the coming work. The family/parent is suspected of meeting the criteria of having a child in need of protection, and the family then becomes the focus of scrutiny for its behaviours or omissions in meeting this criteria. The contextual backdrop of the family is peripheral, if visible at all in the suspicion on which the decision to investigate is made.

The mandate and procedures through which child protection is presently accomplished takes the whole picture of a child's life and funnels it, through documentation into a set of criteria upon which a set of practices are initiated. The completion of these practices are constructed to be protection. The legislation and policy assign this responsibility for ensuring that protection to one social worker in a local office. Workers feel the responsibility for the lives of those children who are reported to them. They feel the

pressure to handle that responsibility in ways that are sanctioned as providing protection. It is risky and stressful to try to practice in a way which relies on very different ideas about protection based on relationships with children and their parents.

Through the legislative mandate to protect children, the practices of individual citizens and ministry employees reproduce the problem definition as the parent. Through the criteria for determining a child in need of protection, legal responsibility to report, and the delegated authority the workers have to investigate all reports, the problem definition is reinforced. By taking up these practices, each citizen and worker actively participates in the child protection process reproducing the social relations through which parents are identified as the problem and investigation the means of resolving the problem. Workers' frustration at being part of this systemic construction of culpability is only partly offset by working in an office that mediates such practices and offers some alternatives.

The Allocation of Resources for Investigation and Apprehension

A stronger concern the Langford workers and District Supervisor live with is the way in which resources are allocated to deal with the problem of protecting children. Because resources are articulated to the investigative mandate of the legislation, this creates further frustration in the work of support. It is my contention that the authority to allocate resources and services is organized by the legislation and policy according to the ruling definition of the problem and the investigative mode of dealing with it. This emphasis can be most clearly seen by examining the distribution of resources between preventative and treatment services, and the process by which the Ministry contracts for services.

The Distribution of Resources Between "Front End" and "Rear End" Services

Resource allocation originates in the legislation itself where twenty of the twenty four sections of the act deal directly with the investigative, apprehension and custodial care of

children. In the legislation, detailed explanations for the apprehension and after apprehension care of children organize the work to be heavily located in the foster care, group home, and treatment models of child protection. This is known in the field as "rear end" service. Under this act the financial capacity of a worker to provide resources to families is exponentially greater once the child is apprehended and in care than before apprehension. Preventative or "front end" services are not directly referred to in the Family and Child Service Act except by way of the superintendent's power to create these services:

Section 3. (2) The powers of the Superintendent, for the purposes of this Act and the regulations, include the power, subject to this Act and the regulations,

- a) to enter into an agreement with a person for the development or provision, or both, of services to children and their families in the Province, and ...

a person who enters into an agreement with the superintendent under this subsection is an independent contractor and is not an employee of the government.

This subsection provides for the government to contract out the provision of services to families, but does not require the government to do so. This is the only reference to support or preventative services in the Act, although other financial resources are available through the income assistance branch of the Ministry.

The Langford team in trying to provide supportive or front end service to families, has come up against the practices of the income assistance (IA) system where support practice is considered to be "enabling" clients rather than facilitating independence. Speaking about Ministry policy, one worker says:

they are operating from a belief system that says to me that if you try to assist people that are poor and in trying to get a better life for themselves and their children that you are creating a dependency, enabling them to stay stuck in places...so if you operate

against a system that has a set agenda, set philosophy, that is supported by the supervisor and by the area manager and by the mandate, you're losing before you even get out of the start gates. I think people should not be penalized for trying to want for their children what everyone else has, whereas the income assistance system they see that as a luxury, not adults trying to fit into society. (Interview)

Through the team's philosophy of supporting families by basing action on helping families get what they need, the worker thinks his capacity to access resources even within the same Ministry, is limited by the philosophy of other branches of the Ministry and informed by different legislation. Although the team can perform some tasks with families that assist with raising their children, access to financial resources is often a frustrating barrier to get through. Workers are cognizant of the context in which their clients experience their private troubles and that context is often female headed single parent families living in poverty. Those providing access to financial support often see the provision of additional money to families as in direct opposition to the goal of their agency which is client financial independence. In trying to share power with clients by supporting them in getting what they need the Langford team is limited when access to resources to meet client identified need is blocked by the practices of other agencies entrenched in the traditional "power over" paradigm. The District Supervisor pointed out an example of this difference in philosophy one day when he showed me a three foot high safe that had unexpectedly arrived in his office, "it's so ironic, that we are down the hall (IA office) arguing for more infant formula and this arrives in my office." (Fieldnotes, p. 36)

The Income Assistance Branch was responsible for both experiences of the safe and the formula. It seemed the security of money was a high priority and expenditures on that could be arranged without the Supervisor's knowledge whereas provision of money to provide more infant formula was a contentious and arguable issue. I remember seeing the

same arguments when parents in my office would run out of money by mid-month and be in asking for money to buy diapers. The Financial Worker's responsibility was to ensure they spent within their entitlement and thus she determined they had used their money unwisely. Access to resources, which usually means money, for client needs must come through the IA branch of the Ministry. Infant formula would be deemed an essential item by the child protection worker in raising a child, but for the IA worker, staying within the allotted monthly allowance was a greater priority. Arguments between workers motivated by adherence to the two different philosophies are common.

Even the resources over which workers have some control, such as Special Services to Children (SSC) and Support for Social Work Planning (SSWP) budgets have strict guidelines for use which require a family to be at risk of the child needing protection as determined by the completion of an investigation, before authorization can be granted. Although the amount of money available at the district office for social work planning has recently been increased, its use is tied to traditional concepts of the work. Families must be involved in the investigation process of intervention to be considered eligible for SSWP. In interviews with team members they agreed doing an investigation just to access a pool of funds does not constitute supportive service to a family. As one informant explains:

we had developed a lot of notions around how to use support to social work [planning] money with families [who kept] returning to us - somewhat preventative [use] but also [recognized the] foreseeable danger [in the family], but of course you can't use it unless you are doing so following theoretically investigation and you can only use it for certain things. The thought that there was budget there that one could not access [was very frustrating] (Interview)

Similar problems are attached to the use of SSC money. I discovered that the SSC budget is the only pot of money whose boundaries were being stretched to actively provide support services. The Langford team has been using the SSC budget to provide support services (e.g. child care workers, response worker, Youth Outreach worker) amongst many clients for front end service. Workers are making decisions about the use of locally controlled monies according to support practice, although this is not considered to be actually following the policy. Having to practice on the edge of policy this way feels unnecessary to workers and creates frustration and a sense of tension.

In using SSC money for front end service, workers run the risk of non-compliance with the policy governing its use. Non-compliance is measured by the statistical exit of information from the local office. The District Supervisor authorizes expenditures from this budget and has to take any repercussions from management for use of these funds in ways that do not comply with policy. Workers speak as if they can use these resources as they see fit, but they are also aware of the impact this may have on the District Supervisor. If he is convinced of the effectiveness the resource use will have on helping a family to raise their kids, he is prepared to advocate its use to the management system should non-compliance accusations be made. The District Supervisor walks a fine line in determining this balance between compliance and non-compliance and at times the workers express frustration at his reluctance to support their request. One worker expresses the mixed feelings they have about this:

even though sometimes I get very frustrated with him, and I think we need to do more, "you're our Lord here and you're the one that can take us a step further", I still trust him, I haven't lost that trust, I still believe that if it's us or them, that it will be us and that he'll make that choice...so I feel that if I fail, he will take part of that on with me, that he won't let me go alone. (Interview)

At the same time they express an understanding of the District Supervisor's position and usually choose to trust his ability to gauge the long term repercussions of risking non-compliance in certain cases. This trust exists because they believe he will stay with them when things get tough. They seem to respect his judgment of the larger picture and feel the freedom to "harass" him with their case, but believe he is the best judge of when to push the system for resources or wait for another, more appropriate moment. But in the day to day work, they live with continual frustration of not having the means to support clients as they see fit. As one worker notes, even when it is more economical and makes sense to do so:

I don't see why, when the service isn't working for you we don't have the ability to just say, "okay we're going to go and look for someone else, which would make sense and I think that there is a lot of waste of money going out there and it's really frustrating.. Use S---- example of quadriplegic mother that we're spending \$10,000 [a month] on homemaker fees for her, it's taken [the worker] months and months and months to the get to point where she could get her a nanny, [which is what this mother has wanted all along], for [\$1,500 a month].. there are a lot of things that we could do that would make sense that would save a lot of money that we don't have the time to do...

(Interview)

The frustrations arise not only from working with clients to identify what they need and then not being able to access it, but also from seeing the logic and common sense of doing things in more economical ways, and still being rejected. As outlined in the following section, resources are heavily weighted in the areas of service which perpetuate the predominant investigative mode of the work.

Contracting for Support Work

This section explores how contracted services have become a point of difficulty for workers instead of an extension of their support practice. Much of the long term support

work with families is contracted out to community agencies by the Ministry. In Langford, with the shift to support work within the team, the work expected of contractors has changed. Traditional child protection with a "family as the problem" focus required contractors to provide personal therapy and parenting rehabilitation. Although this is professionally and organizationally recognized as valid work and is the substance of the main contract Langford staff have with their contractor, this is no longer the kind of help that workers find their clients want or need. This long standing contracting relationship based on a traditional child protection model has become another source of difficulty for workers who are advocating for services which are more client defined.

A common phrase I heard in the Langford office was "Why can't we just do it?" (Fieldnotes, p. vi). This was in reference to the long term support traditionally done not by Ministry employees but through service contractors. Workers were dissatisfied with what was happening and wanted to change the way the contracting work was being done. In an interview with a worker, I asked:

Researcher: Why can't you just do it?

Worker: I think it points to the bureaucracy that we work for and the whole contracting process, the fact that it's out of our hands and out of our control in that it's usually the area manager that contracts [directly] with the people that do the [contracted] work, somehow the expectations that I have for [those] people that we contract to [provide] the service, are lost somehow from [when they] leave this office to when they get contracted (written up into contracts). We have a liaison function [with contractors] but they are ultimately accountable to the area manager and not to us...it just doesn't work for me. (Interview)

The contracting relationship is a legal relationship. It comes about through a legal agreement between the Ministry and the contractor, as set out in Section 3.(2) (a) in the legislation (See Appendix #5, p. 151). The contractor is accountable to the Area Manager

for the fulfillment of the contractual obligations. The worker's experience is that despite expectations expressed to the Area Manager as to what kind of service clients need in the Langford community, these expectations are not reflected in the service provided. The worker's conclusion is that they "get lost" somehow between the Langford office and the Area Manager's office. Later on however, he offers another explanation which is based in the differing knowledge levels of client need, the further one gets from the frontline:

because we do not know the area manager well, he is around but he's not a presence here. His ability to usurp anything that you decide is quite great. If you don't have a relationship it's certainly easier for him to [be objective], he's not as invested in the outcome, it certainly hasn't become personal to him so his decision is based purely on being objective, there's no passion or anything else.. the higher you get up, the less information the individual has to make the decision, the less control you have over the outcome of that situation... (Interview)

The worker here identifies how having first hand experience with clients affects the decisions he makes, as opposed to an area manager makes, in determining what needs to be done to provide service. The way the Ministry is organized, the further one gets from the frontline the more power and control, through delegated authority, one has to decide how to distribute resources at the frontline. The further one gets away from the frontline also means the more objective one is able to be because it is not a personal or passionate knowledge of client lives that one is dealing with. The worker quoted above sees this as a difference in investment. Being subjectively involved in client lives, he becomes invested in the outcome for clients. The Area Manager making decisions, has a greater investment in the accountability of that process than in the outcome for a particular client. This worker is struggling to express the frustration he feels about the lack of coherence in standpoints. Although the worker may be taking a client perspective on service provision, from the Area manager's location in the organization, the perspective seems to be very different. This difference in perspective is manifest in Ministry practices, such as

contracting and creates frustration for workers who are trying to base their work in the client world when services are being organized in places far from that world.

The District Supervisor is caught in the middle of these two perspectives. His frustration comes, as well, from being the point of delivery for a service that is not wanted by its intended consumers: "all people are asking for is oranges and I'm purchasing apples" (Fieldnotes, p57). Here the Langford District Supervisor expresses the conflict he feels, arising from the two standpoints, that of the consumers of service and that of the organization. I understand his comment to mean that clients are requesting support services or oranges, but the traditional contracted service available is apples. The long established contracting relationship between the ministry and local contractors has been based on beliefs about client need as seen from the "family as the problem" paradigm. Investigative work by child protection workers produced requests for clinical treatment from professionals with a clinical therapeutic approach. The provision of individual counselling and parent education administered to clients as a prescription for them to re-secure the care of their apprehended children stands in stark contrast to the client request model of hands on, down on the floor with kids, pre-apprehension support. At present the requests for this kind of support work with clients do not fit with the skills or inclinations of the clinically trained contracted staff and these requests are treated as unprofessional and inappropriate by some contracting organizations. Unfortunately for Langford office needs, the vast majority of the contracting budget is tied up in organizations that provide traditional clinical services. The Langford team is requesting service of a supportive, community based orientation from agencies who have traditionally provided service from an investigative, personal treatment orientation.

Workers talk about contracting agencies as partners in the support practice process and believe they can extend the initial support relationship with the child protection team, into

the community. Workers, however, have no direct control over the choices made about the agencies receiving the contracts and their plans can be continually negated by the lack of appropriate contractors to supply clients the support services they need. The lack of control over resources which are so fundamental in furthering the support practice of the team creates a great deal of stress within the team. Lobbying the Area Manager for change and continuing to work with the contractors to educate them as to client needs consumes energy that could be spent elsewhere. Feeling frustrated and disempowered in this aspect of the work limits the workers' capacity to empower clients to make choices about the services that would be helpful to them.

Although workers have been trying to access more client oriented services by developing relationships with newer, community based organizations and assisting them in applying for contract funding, they experience difficulties in assisting these agencies saying they are much less known to the Ministry and have difficulty translating the everyday work (vs. professional counselling) into the documentary world through which contracts are acquired. In a staff meeting the District Supervisor provided an example of this difficulty. He said the Neighbourhood House wanted funding to hire what they described as a "gopher", someone to provide transportation, do child minding, help with special events, do errands, be a friend and support to parents. He said in order to make the position valid and credible they described it as a counsellor position in their application. Although clients requested someone who could do all the support activities needed to assist them in their day to day lives, the system to which the application was being directed needed the position to match the individual rehabilitation paradigm in the form of a counsellor. Filling this position with a trained counsellor organizes quite a different relationship between the parents and the staff person than if the position was filled by someone committed to providing the basic supports parents were requesting. A request for services must be made to a system which understands the problem of child protection in the traditional way.

This shaping of the proposal changes what parents requested into what the Ministry provides and the counsellor as the expert through which the problem resolution takes place. A gopher position articulates to the paradigm where the family defines the problem to be solved.

The disjuncture between support needed and that which is provided is experienced as a dilemma elsewhere in the organization according to a policy analyst with a community development orientation:

we asked the [Native Housing] Board also to sponsor a social service program [proposal]. We proposed this to the regional manager and directors. [we told them] we had this project and wanted a modest sum of , \$15,000, which would allow local women to hire someone they liked [to develop a program with them] and the hiring would happen through the [Native Housing Board] agency but the women would control the person - community development approach right? Of course you can't do that because money had to be tendered out - it had to go in the paper. In the process the people who wrote the ad wrote things like - person hired to deliver parent education, mothers to be counselled, dysfunctional families...I felt sick to think that these people that thought they were going to have some help to organize their parents group had turned into a therapist doing counselling. (Interview)

Although the workers, the community and the Regional Manager were in agreement in this case as to the principle of taking a community development approach to the provision of a client defined parent group, the process for contracting service required the service to be tendered out to the public in the local newspaper. This tendering process organized the definition of the service to be delivered according to the current paradigm of the individual as the problem to be fixed, not the community definition of the problem. The parent

group became constructed as a group of dysfunctional people needing pre-defined, treatment services.

The difficulty workers experience in trying to provide support services to their clients can be traced to the way in which resources are allocated by those in ruling positions of the Ministry. The largest amount of money available for services is spent on rear end services, after investigation/apprehension treatment. These services articulate to the current problem paradigm of the legislation and the investigative mode of child protection work. Workers have limited access to money to provide preventative or front end services to clients. The money that is available for prevention is restricted in its use by the requirement to investigate the family before providing support. The options open to workers to either lobby their District Supervisor to approve spending outside these requirements or to work individually with contractors to provide more appropriate service, take time and energy to carry out. Dealing with these contradictions day to day can be very stressful as well.

Barriers to Support Created by Distribution of Staff Resources

Support practice is also limited by the policy and practices in place for staffing the Child and Family Services Division within the Ministry. Although support work can take just as much time as investigation work, investigation work is what determines the level of staffing in a District office. Langford workers, the District Supervisor, Area Manager and the policy analyst all pointed to the Basic Staff Entitlement Calculation (RAC) (See Appendix #12, p. 179) as a stumbling block to the advancement of support practice in the Ministry. The policy analyst expressed her concern about the negative relation between support work and staffing this way:

another policy, which is very telling, is the RAC. It will be a major stumbling block, (to doing support) because [according to the RAC] if I do too much family support

work and don't investigate before [I do the support work], I can investigate then do it, but the idea is you want to start with [support work], If I do too much of that I'm apt to lose staff, so you have to weigh the pros and cons of [doing the support work first] (emphasis added) (Interview)

The RAC formula is a statistical calculation which transforms the work in the local office into decision-making figures about staff distribution. The documents workers complete to record their work, such as intake forms, are sent for data processing and compilation. The work on these documents is counted and categorized and returned to the office in the form of monthly case management reports. The statistics in these reports are plugged into the RAC formula and determine the distribution of frontline workers in the local offices.

According to all my informants, the numbers of investigations and the numbers of children in care are what increase or decrease the number of full time equivalents (FTEs) in an office. District Supervisors who maintain an investigative practice in their offices lobby hard for adherence to the RAC formula distribution of staff to handle their high numbers of investigations and children in care. Although the legislation and policy are in transition, the bottom line is the enduring rules of the present legislation. The Area Manager describes the dilemma in trying to do support practice within the rules of the current legislation which is represented in the use of the RAC formula to determine staffing:

if you want us to do apprehensions, we'll go back to doing a whole bunch of apprehensions if that's what you're going to count and that is what some offices have done. If you can't get control of the work you're always going to be in position of having numbers. So it's a risk to go the route that the [District Supervisor in Langford] has presented to his staff, I think it's much more rewarding for staff and community go that route, but it's much more risky in terms of a bureaucracy that counts numbers and how do you measure the other [support work]... (Interview)

According to this informant, some workers and their District Supervisor may not consider doing the work in supportive ways, if what is "counted" is investigation and apprehensions. The use of the RAC formula organizes what is counted as valid work and reinforces the investigative priority of the work.

Knowing the RAC formula is in use influences the way workers determine what is valid work. The Langford team in deciding to do more support work and community work runs the risk of losing staff to those offices which maintain the status quo form of work. Support work can be statistically identified as work, but is not translated into the formula for staffing as it is not mandated work to be carried out in each district, although it is an option. Community work is entirely absent from the act and policy, and is therefore not counted at all as work. If the RAC formula were to be rigidly applied, Langford's staffing would be decreased.

Although workers are aware of the potential for the RAC policy to affect staffing levels in the Langford office, to this point in time no staff have been moved. The catchment area the Langford team is responsible for, however, has recently been increased to include the neighbourhood of View Royal.¹ This in effect, "reduced" staffing, has happened, by spreading available workers over an increased caseload. It can be argued therefore that staffing is restricted for supportive work. Each informant I spoke to viewed the RAC as a barrier to support practice and yet none were prepared to adjust their practice or their documentation of their support work to avoid that barrier. They did describe the RAC as an ever present threat to their ability to maintain adequate staffing levels to do the work of support and that threat was troubling.

Another aspect of staff distribution which affects the capacity to provide support in Langford is the personnel policies of the Ministry. Support practice requires a different

kind of worker than investigative practice. The following comments by the District Supervisor identify some of the problems he faces in recruiting competent staff for the kind of work done in the Langford office

I see the team like a sports team, I get people off the team if they're not helping families and if there's someone out there who can really help a family I'm supposed to figure out how to get them on the team and that I can't do very easily...for example I'm pretty pleased with Brenda (temporary worker). If Brenda wants to do this (job permanently) there is a lot that Brenda can do and I don't see an end to Brenda's ability here and my ability to help Brenda increase her performance. If Brenda chooses this job, can she have it? probably not. It's circulated and everyone whose a permanent person can apply for that job,...if there are no applicants of the 100 people in the region that can apply then it would be an inservice competition and unless they had been doing poorly recently ...and the onus is on me to prove that the person couldn't do the job, the job as it's done anywhere in the province, not what I think should be done, I have to prove somebody can't do it....people that came last time - very nice people struggling with how tough you have to be and how much you have to give, it's very hard to find the ideal person. (Interview)

Following the spirit of the District Supervisor's comments we see that although Brenda has worked in this office as an auxiliary for the last 8 months and has fit into the team and the work well, it is unlikely she will be successful in securing a permanent position in the office given the organizing process of personnel in the ministry. In order to ensure fairness for those working with the organization presently, to adhere to union guidelines about seniority and to conform to the management practices of established interview questions and point grading assessments of applicants, the chance of the team acquiring her as a proven and effective support practitioner are slim.

The District Supervisor says in his experience government personnel practices of recruitment, screening and hiring produce a certain kind of successful applicant. The screening and interview process focuses heavily on the ministry policy to investigate and accurate knowledge of the steps involved in carrying out investigations. Having participated on numerous interview panels, he says successful applicants for child protection positions have a solid grounding in ministry policy and demonstrate the cause and effect relationship of reports to protection criteria. The qualities he is looking for in his workers, necessary to effectively support families, are not evaluated in the existing personnel system of hiring.

In order to carry out support practice as practiced in Langford, workers need to possess additional skills, abilities and knowledge that are different than those needed to carry out investigative practices. The demands of the job and the way of seeing family and community troubles are quite different. From my observations and discussions with the staff, support practice requires workers to know their clients well, know their community well, know themselves well and be willing to ongoingly critique their own practice. Personally they must be creative, sensitive, willing to take risks and be open to practicing in an environment of ongoing change. Brenda has the capacity, in the District Supervisor's opinion to carry out child protection in a supportive way and if the District Supervisor had his choice he would keep Brenda on "the team". However, the rules that organize how workers are recruited, hired and distributed interfere with his ability to make that choice.

The team has dealt with this limitation by talking individually to interested applicants about what the work actually is in Langford as opposed what the standard ministry position is.

...several people wanted to come to this team and when I said the job would involve largely spending your day helping and supporting women having trouble bringing their

children up from an emotional point of view - you'd be with the women helping.

Several people decided that's not what they wanted to do, they wanted to work with children in care, not with families, didn't want to work to get children back home, they didn't want to spend time with parents. If I can continue to redescribe the job in that fashion, I have a pretty good chance (Interview).

The team is making efforts to augment their staff with people of similar practice convictions but ultimately, the current personnel practices and training practices for all new workers, limit their legitimate ability to have some power over their staff choices. As noted earlier it is important for workers to know the investigative mode of work because they will have to perform that function on occasion. The District Supervisor in Langford has found that if the right kind of person is hired, their supportive skills evolve and they overcome the tendency to see everything as an investigation. To this point, staffing has been a hit and miss experience for Langford and therefore workers have come and gone according to their fit or lack of fit with the support model.

In this chapter I have argued the current environment in which the Langford team practices is created by a mandate and an organization of the work that establishes investigation as the accepted mode of child protection practice. Practicing in a supportive way within an organization which privileges the investigative mode of work produces contradictions for the workers and often results in frustration and stress. The Langford team continues to practice support, however, despite the difficulties it engenders.

VI. SUPPORT WORK IS POSSIBLE WITHIN THE ORGANIZATIONAL SETTING

I have shown how workers in the local district office of Family and Child Services in Langford practice child protection. I am convinced that their commitment to practice support primarily makes their work different from that in offices where investigation is the primary mode of child protection. I have argued that although the current mandate and the organization of child protection work establishes investigation as the accepted way of protecting children, it is possible to practice with a supportive orientation within this mandate and organization. The following will explain my understanding of how this orientation can exist in the local district setting. I do not propose specific policy statements or recommendations to align the legislation with the support model I have just explored. The knowledge needed to propose those kind of recommendations was not the focus in this study and could not, I contend, be produced adequately without active involvement of child protection workers. Instead, the knowledge created about the social organization of child protection work leads me to recommendations about the process of policy development and implementation rather than the policy content.

Support practice is not a natural outcome of the mandate and organization of child protection work in B.C. Although many workers may be uncomfortable with the authoritative and judgmental role they play as child protection workers, as I was, the social organization of the child protection structure appears to offer workers little choice. They participate in the accepted system of protecting when they learn and follow diligently the rules and regulations of their jobs. Unintentionally, they are reproducing social relations of ruling rather than really protecting children by their participation. Although workers agree that investigation and apprehension are necessary on occasion, they question the efficacy of rule-bound investigations as if they always protect children.

Workers in Langford have been able to do child protection somewhat differently within this same social organization. Although they experience frustration and disappointment when their support efforts are blocked, they remain undaunted in their commitment to choosing support over investigation in most cases. Workers can and do provide support to families and to each other whenever possible. Support practice takes place within the local office environment on a consistent basis but when support practices require the engagement of the larger Ministry apparatus, sometimes they can be carried out and sometimes they cannot. I also found that the District Supervisor position in this local office was the gatekeeping position through which the decisions to support or not support were weighed. At times the District Supervisor sanctioned support practices which provided for solutions to client problems outside the legitimate policy definitions of service and at times he more closely followed Ministry policy despite the dissatisfaction of the worker. From these findings, I have concluded that support practice relies on the presence of a healthy team of practitioners who are able to see and commit to a different vision of the work and skilled, and experienced and credible leadership through which the coordinating power of the Ministry organization is mediated. This combination of factors in the Langford office, has made a strong but not exclusive supportive orientation to the work possible. To the extent that workers believe the decisions made are in line with their orientation they feel positive and satisfied in their work.

A Healthy, Supportive Team

The Langford team members, despite differences in personality, background and experience, work together toward their vision. My analysis showed that they consider supporting each other essential to having the ability to support clients. This support is necessary because practicing in a supportive way within the Ministry involves risk. Practicing support requires challenging the traditional ways of doing the work and

sometimes acting on the edge of policy. This is risky for workers should they be looking to move up in the organization, transfer to another office or even move into another job. Generally speaking, they are not compliant rule-followers. They might even be characterized as shit disturbers, as one worker described herself. Another worker in the office was described as a "loose cannon". These appear to be rather derogatory terms, but the Langford District Supervisor considers those kinds of behaviour necessary in the community development process. He contends that people who think differently and act on that thinking have essential requirements for being members of this kind of team. A healthy team is able to use those qualities to progress toward its vision. As noted earlier there is dissension within the team at times, but the recognition of the emotional elements of the work and the process of problem solving the team undertakes illustrate the healthy ways in which that dissension is used to strengthen the team not fragment it. Admittedly some workers have left the team, I was told, over the course of this support practice transition. Not every worker can or wants to practice in this way. It appears, however, that the solidarity of the team's fundamental commitment to support families and each other allows support practice to go forward.

The functioning of a supportive team also relies on a commonly shared philosophy of the problem of child protection and a common vision of how to resolve the problem. This vision incorporates the concepts of community development and social support. As noted, workers attempt to see the problem as much as possible from the client's perspective. This perspective directs their attention and change efforts to the context in which the client lives more than just the client as an individual. Taking this perspective forces them to question the system in which they work that normally would direct their change efforts toward the client more than the context. If there were too much disagreement and complete lack of understanding about this vision within the office, change efforts would be negated and energy would be spent on arguing and convincing workers of the contextual

nature of client problems. Although workers do argue amongst themselves about whether to support or investigate individual cases, the fundamental vision of supporting families within the community is a foundation upon which those arguments come to resolution. Acting in keeping with a common philosophy sometimes puts the workers in the position of acting outside the accepted limits of behaviour in the child protection system. The struggle workers have with being in this position was evident in the case conference example where some workers challenged another worker who was advocating support. They took on the organizational mandate perspective, as did the District Supervisor, in trying to explore fully the consequences of maintaining their support philosophy. Being conscious of the philosophy they commonly hold about the work, however, allowed this exploration to take place, where it may not have without the philosophical orientation to support.

The vision the Langford team describes is that of the community taking care of the community's kids. This means involving community members, parents, children and families of those using the service, in determining practice and in assessing how supportive it is for families. This vision of community involvement has meant that workers join with community members to try and gain some control over the resources that are available. The development of the Neighbourhood House is an example of this. Even though they must participate in the somewhat alienating contracting processes required to access resources to provide these services the act of working in partnership with the community and often clients to develop these services provides empowering experiences for workers and clients alike.

Without a common philosophy or vision of what they, as a team are trying to accomplish, it seems unlikely they would have any success in reaching their goals in the community. The philosophy and vision are the springboards which launch the problem solving

discussions in directions that produce supportive interactions and activities with clients rather than investigative ones. Each problem a client presents and each block that workers experience is explored, discussed and argued through from a common understanding the workers are themselves developing, of what is acceptable and not acceptable to do based on that philosophy. Actions chosen by workers and the way they carry out those actions are shaped by this developing understanding. Workers apply this philosophy in making decisions and try as best they can to make their actions consistent with it. This is not always possible, but without this common way of looking at the work, investigative practice would more "naturally" prevail. Child protection work is normally constructed of familiar practices that weave workers' actions into the larger organizational mandate. To practice differently, in this case in a supportive way, requires a questioning and oppositional approach that builds into a vision for all team members.

A supportive team is more than a group of practitioners who hold a common vision about the work, however. In Langford I saw a group of individuals who are more prepared to risk to provide practice in a helpful way, than are worried about the long term consequences that risk may have on their careers. There may be different reasons for their choice in risking. Some feel confident they can always get work, should their non-compliance result in dismissal. Some are long term unionized employees and they are unlikely to be dismissed at this stage of their careers. Ultimately they all believe in what they are doing and are convinced it is helpful as well as safe for children. I believe they all feel confident that as a group they have strength and power to challenge the status quo. They trust each other to be there for each other when the going gets tough. They also trust in the leadership of their supervisor and count on his direction and his support of the team. They choose to practice support and choose to take on that risk because he instills in them over time the confidence to trust their knowledge, experience and ability to make decisions that will be safe for children. As a group their commitment to protecting

children by supporting families and their trust in the District Supervisor and each other is stronger than the fear of repercussions for doing the work around the margins of policy.

A Skilled, Experienced and Credible Supervisor

The supervisor in a child protection office is a critical factor in how practice is developed in that office. District Supervisor is the position through which the mandate of the organization is maintained by his role of monitoring and adjusting the activities of the workers to meet mandated requirements. The Supervisor in Langford is committed to the legislative mandate of protecting children, but his means to this end is to facilitate support rather than investigation of troubled families. This approach means that his office produces statistics that look different than other offices and these statistics produce consequences from whatever organizational sanctions may apply to him. His position appears to be essential to maintaining the supportive focus of the team.

The Langford District Supervisor has made a conscious choice to practice in this way. The capacity for a District Supervisor to be successful in providing support to families relies on the presence of certain characteristics. I conclude, using the Langford District Supervisor as an example, that these characteristics are: a high level of skill in making child protection decisions, an ability to teach others how to make those decisions, an ability to effectively use awareness of the power relations in which the work is embedded and credibility within the Ministry structure.

A fundamental element in the supervision of support practice is the ability to make effective child protection decisions so children are safe. The ability is developed over time and through years of experience in making and evaluating those kinds of decisions. It requires a working knowledge of troubled family situations and an ability to acquire the information needed to make a decision from the worker handling each family case. The

supervisor in Langford has developed a high level of skill in working with families and workers through twenty five years of working with troubled children and their families over twenty years experience working in the Ministry supervising staff. He has made thousands of child protection decisions and has come to be very skilled at assessing the safety of a child in a troubled family situation without using investigations to do so. The skill is in making decisions that are safe for children but also helpful to families. In Langford the District Supervisor has developed this skill over time and through his commitment to a supportive vision of the work.

The ability to teach this decision making skill to workers is also an essential characteristic of successful support practice. Investigative practice decision making occurs through the procedures which workers are taught in core training and by the day to day work practices the policy facilitates. A District Supervisor with a support orientation must be able to explain his support vision, inspire workers to see that vision and then teach workers the skills to make decisions consistent with that vision. This requires an intimate knowledge of each workers' thinking and supervisory practices which emphasize the supervisory relationship as the medium for learning. In Langford the District Supervisor sees supervision of workers as his main role in the office and clearly chooses to be involved intimately in the work along side workers rather than monitor it textually from his office. He would rather be in the office than outside it at management oriented meetings. He appears to believe that he can be most helpful to families by being helpful to the workers in sharing his skills and experience in working with families. In developing his staff as both practitioners and individuals, he is teaching them how to be with clients, in ways that will be helpful rather than investigative. In essence he knows what he believes and he practices what he preaches. In terms of the Ministry, however, he has maintained the mandate of protecting children during his tenure.

The skill of making safe child protection decisions with a supportive process requires a thorough knowledge of policy and the workings of the Ministry. That knowing when seen through a commitment to helping families through support, allows a District Supervisor to use policy in the practice of support. Policy is open to interpretation and its implementation is influenced by the standpoint of the person interpreting it. Having reframed the work from protecting children to helping children grow up, the supervisor in Langford interprets policy through that objective for the work. This way of doing it is not right or wrong, and there may be many other ways of reframing the work so that the primary orientation is supportive. This way of seeing though has produced a career of correct child protection decisions, according to the mandate, as well as providing support to families instead of investigation.

Practicing in this way requires not only a knowledge of the policy but also knowledge of the power relations in which the work of child protection is embedded. The District Supervisor position is the location within those power relations where frontline practice is organized to closely match policy or push the boundaries of it. In this office, the District Supervisor mediates the power those coordinating relations have over his workers' practice by taking on the responsibility for support practice in his office. He does this by assessing, with the worker, what is helpful to a family and then gauging the consequences of his decisions on the overall movement toward the team vision. This mediation of power is evident in his actions and also evident in the actions of his workers who are able to practice support freely within the office until the District Supervisor "closes the door". Although the District Supervisor is ultimately responsible and therefore needs to be acutely aware of the power paradigm in which he functions, workers demonstrated to me also an awareness of this paradigm in the way they worked toward making practice decisions. The District Supervisor provides a role model for the exercising of this understanding and although they push him to sanction their requests they appear to accept

the Supervisor's decisions and acknowledge his accountability in the larger organization of the Ministry.

Although workers are not fully aware of the way in which their frontline experiences come to be organized, they can differentiate between what the client needs and what the organization needs. They have brought to consciousness through daily discussions the contradictions between these two things. Although they have not always traced the path of their experience back to specific policies or protocols, they know fundamentally they are employed by an organization that exercises power through their activities in responding to the mandate to protect children. They feel they do have some control over certain activities where the power inherent in the mandate is more general and open to interpretation of policy, such as in choosing to support at intake. As Pinderhughes (1981) noted, knowing the organization has power and being conscious of how they as workers exercise that power in their daily tasks, provides an opportunity to use it differently. From this awareness, they consistently make decisions to be supportive. In choosing to practice in this way, workers consistently push the responsibility for policy compliance to the Supervisor. It is through these choices workers practice empowerment in the work. Using his knowledge of policy and the Ministry the Supervisor in Langford mediates the power of the organization for workers most of the time, allowing them to make practice decisions consistent with their supportive philosophy. He buffers them from the organizing power of the policy by being responsible to the Ministry for their practice decisions. Langford is special in its consistent attempts to practice from the client's perspective, giving the client some power over their interactions with the Ministry. It would be very hard to do this work unless workers themselves felt empowered. I believe because workers in Langford have a knowledge of the use of power in their roles and are given the freedom to use it to support, they are empowered.

The frustration and futility Langford workers feel at times, when their efforts run up against the wall seem to be directly correlated to the times they are forced to adhere to organizational needs rather than the client's needs through the Supervisor's decisions. They feel these blocks and restrictions to their work because they are standing in the client's shoes facing the organization rather than supporting the organizational mandate by speaking to the client through the policy. Their reactions to blocks and restrictions is emotional. From their perspective the restrictions create painful and stressful situations for clients and dealing with that pain and stress daily is emotionally draining for workers. They continue, however, to choose to be in the client's shoes and take a supportive stance. I believe this is possible because they can differentiate between their support efforts and the organization's control over their efforts. Their frustration is not turned inward as mine was when I practiced child protection. They do not take on the sense of inadequacy and confusion that I did, giving up their power to be helpful. They also do not give up the job the way I did because they don't understand the internal conflict they experience. Instead they are able to hit the wall and then are encouraged to get back up and look for a way around it, another way to be supportive. The Supervisor has helped them to externalize the problem to its rightful source and though they take on the standpoint of the client in understanding their needs, they do not take on the identity of failure and inadequacy so prevalent in the client experience and often also that of workers. They feel good about what they are doing more of the time than not. Support practice feels more positive and rewarding most of the time. They feel successful and satisfied with their ability to support more than they feel disappointed with the times they cannot support. Their experience of the blocks and restrictions is not strong enough to overwhelm their commitment to practice with a supportive orientation. They feel so confident that what they are doing in supporting families is more helpful than investigating them, that they are able to handle the disappointments and carry on. The Supervisor's awareness of power relations and ability to successfully mediate that power gives workers a measure of freedom and control over

their work. It has also helped them develop a working knowledge of those relations and from that a respect for the Supervisor's difficult and risky role.

Credibility within the Ministry structure also allows a supervisor some freedom to practice support as a means of protection. Credibility or reliability is gained through a record of good work (e.g., no tragedies), in making child protection decisions and by complying with Ministry policy in ways which do not bring undue attention to the local office. A support orientated supervisor needs to evaluate adherence to policy according to how it helps families as well as how it maintains the smooth functioning of the Ministry bureaucracy. He needs to be able to see the work from both sides and judge the consequences of supportive actions from both standpoints. Again, I believe that ability is developed over time and through experience, if the commitment to a support visit exists. In describing the Langford supervisor, one colleague summed it up this way,

he knows the roof, [that's the] value of experience, he knows how far he can push - it's still a risk...[the supervisor] knows when he's asked for too many favours or he's hit the top, he's a seasoned decision maker...it helps to feel your record is secure and firing you would be difficult combined with the fact you're happy as a District Supervisor and don't want anything else. People who are ambitious have to keep on eye on where they want to be so they have to conform to systems above. You don't need to be in a higher position to do something valid, when you don't have ambition that leads you to [take]more genuine risks, if you are satisfied with your present position (Interview).

These comments capture what I conclude makes it possible for the District Supervisor in Langford to practice in a supportive way. He has learned through his experience the value of being credible and the need to stay conscious and alert all the time of the difference between what can be changed or challenged at any point in time and what cannot be. The supervisor in Langford has learned to read his environment and the people through which

his direction comes. He has established successful working relationships with those who have been responsible for supervising him and has not given the Ministry cause to be embarrassed or caught in politically damaging situations. A seasoned decision maker's skill is developed over time and through experience and spans all kinds decisions about the work. His decision to allow me to research and write up what his team was doing came after refusals to others for this same opportunity. In making his decisions he needed to feel convinced that my work was consistent with the team's philosophy and goals, and would be an integral part of their process, whatever form the final product took. The supervisor is happy where he is in the organization. He often asks "where else in the organization is the work this exciting?" Having no further ambitions to promote himself in the organization he has less concern for meeting management demands and more concern for being helpful to families and workers, even though that involves taking risks.

A support oriented supervisor must be able to distinguish the difference between adhering to the management demands of the job and responding in ways that are helpful to families. He strives to maintain the mandate of protecting children without subjecting families to the trauma of investigation. He must be able to take the management perspective in order to keep his team functioning as part of the bureaucratic machinery. In Langford I have seen that as long as a supervisor complies with the essential bureaucratic requirements, such as attendance at and participation in meetings and submission of minimum bureaucratic documentation, he is able to practice in a supportive manner within the organization.

Practicing in a supportive way also requires staying out of the limelight. Being different in any situation makes a person stand out and that means attention is directed toward your difference. The team in Langford must stay within policy to some extent, in order to not stick out. They can practice supportively in ways that do not show up blatantly in management systems as extreme. I believe they do this by meeting minimum documentary

requirements for audit purposes, by attending organizational meetings as required, by keeping statistics within reason (although stats show more support work than investigation), by making sure performance appraisals are completed, the team stays out of the limelight. As long as the organization's needs for efficiency and standardization are seen to have been met, the rest of the work is open to team influence. The skill is in knowing exactly how to meet those standards with a minimum of effort and energy so the real work of helping children grow up, can carry on.

From my point of view, these elements of the work in Langford explain how support work is possible within the bureaucratic structure of the Ministry. The presence of a strong team, with a conscious awareness of power in the work and a common vision of what they want to accomplish, under the leadership of a knowledgeable and experienced supervisor are all necessary for support practice to occur. In my experience in child protection all those ingredients were not present in the office I worked in. I believe the potential for them to be in any office is there. Within the present practices of the Ministry the chance of this combination of elements uniting is small, but the Langford team has shown me that it is possible to be supportive to families, as a child protection worker.

Policy Implications

What I have learned from my time in Langford confirms in actuality what I had learned conceptually in my graduate studies with respect to the interplay between policy and practice. That is that policy, as a necessary part of a bureaucratic society, must be informed by those most directly affected by its implementation. This is necessary to address and moderate the contradictions inherent in policy and its implementation. In reading this thesis, policy makers, theorists and workers may be helped to see and understand the way policy organizes frontline experience and how these experiences may

be contrary to the intended purpose of the policy statement. In this way I believe my analysis will be useful to policy makers as it stands.

Following from that understanding this thesis has shown me that frontline workers must be consulted, regularly and in an ongoing way in the development of policy. Those responsible for writing and renovating policy must engage in a dialogue with workers in the worker's context. There must be a mechanism, determined by workers, established within the Ministry for this dialogue to take place in a meaningful and productive way. In essence policy makers must be more accountable to the frontline practitioner for the relevance and usefulness of policies they write. The first step in this process is the development of face to face relationships between workers and policy makers. The Langford staff have attempted to develop these relationships with those working in Ministry headquarters by inviting them to any and all meetings or community events in which the team is involved. Some Ministry staff have accepted the offers, many have not. I believe the requirement to meet workers face to face on a regular basis should become as critical to the work and be considered as much a priority by Ministry staff as regular meetings with Deputy Ministers. I have no doubt that through this process each of the specific policies I have identified in my thesis would be thoroughly discussed and positive changes could potentially be made quite simply.

I believe my thesis shows the need to have this dialogue and the need for workers to be integral if not dominant players in that dialogue. Recruitment and hiring policies, training and supervisory policies and procedures, and resource distribution policies must be discussed within the context of the workers' day to day experience, where the actual consequences of policy implementation occur.

In closing, I have had a very unique and special experience working with the Langford staff on this project. The uncharacteristically positive picture I have painted of their world reflects my experience in researching with them. It also reflects the specific nature of the team over the study period and this transitional time in history of child protection practice in B.C. In this specific time period I have experienced how one Ministry office works to support families to protect children.

In keeping with the team's small scale approach to change, I suggest people who are intrigued and interested in how support work happens within the Ministry, call the office and talk to a worker or the District Supervisor. You will most likely be asked to come to the office and just hang around or participate in a community meeting. Support practice is not easily written up and I have done my best to do it justice. It seems to be best understood and passed on by being part of it. I feel grateful for the privilege of having been part of that experience. I have been transformed by that experience.

FOOTNOTES

1. The neighbourhood of View Royal was added to the Langford or Western Communities Family and Child Services office responsibility as a result of increasing pressure from offices in the East side of the Victoria to redistribute the work (Investigation and Children in Care) to the West. In talking to the District Supervisor about this he has found that cases which have been transferred over have often been assessed and closed. In essence what the East side offices consider the work to be, is found by the Langford office to be support or referral. Although the Langford office has not lost staff directly, increasing the area for which the workers are responsible indirectly has reduced staff capacity to provide support.

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SCHEDULE OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX #1	Schedule of Participant Observation
APPENDIX #2	Schedule of Interview Questions
APPENDIX #3	Consent Form
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APPENDIX #12	Basic Staff Entitlement Calculation
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APPENDIX # 1

SCHEDULE OF PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION ACTIVITIES

<u>DATE</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>
September 17, 1993	Meeting with District Supervisor
October 6	Staff / Intake / Children in Care Meetings Ethnic Lunch at Neighbourhood House
October 13	Meeting with District Supervisor Staff Meeting with Contractor
October 14	Review Documentation Community Social Planning Meeting Informal Chats with Workers
October 19	Informal Chats with Workers Documentary Review District Supervisor's Meeting
October 20	Staff / Intake / CIC Meeting Meeting with District Supervisor
October 26	Local Child and Youth Committee Meeting Meeting with District Supervisor
October 27	Staff / Intake / CIC Meeting
October 28	Meeting with staff regarding my research
November 2	Informal chats with workers
November 3	Staff / Intake / CIC Meetings
November 10	Staff Meeting/ Case Conference
November 22	Conversation on phone with District Supervisor
November 23	Informal Discussions with Workers/Documentary Review Staff / Intake / CIC Meetings
December 1	Attendance at Report to Court Informal Discussions with Workers
December 2	Informal Meetings with District Supervisor and Workers
December 6	Staff / Intake / CIC Meetings

December 7	Attendance at Report to Court
January 18, 1994	Phone conversation with District Supervisor
January 26	Staff / Intake / CIC Meeting Meeting with Empowering Women Project
March 9	Meeting Saanich Child Protection Staff in Langford
March 30	Staff / Intake / CIC Meetings
April 13	Staff Meeting

APPENDIX # 2

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**SAMPLE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE OF TOPICS
DISTRICT SUPERVISOR**

1. How long have you worked in child protection and in what capacities?
2. How do you think about and organize the work in this office?
3. What direction do you give your workers?
4. How is documentation of the work carried out and monitored?
5. What makes the work go well in this office? What makes it difficult?
6. How would you describe good work and how do you make sure it's done?
7. What organizes your own work and how does that fit with the frontline work?

**SAMPLE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE OF TOPICS
CHILD PROTECTION WORKERS**

1. How long have you worked in child protection and where?
2. Tell me what you do in a typical day as a child protection worker in this office?
3. How does the work here compare with other offices you have worked in?
4. What makes the work go well? What makes it difficult?
5. What would you describe as good work, and how do you know when you are doing good work?
6. What problems do you experience in your work and how do you go about solving them?
7. How do you document your work?
8. What do you like most about working here? What do you like least?

APPENDIX # 3

CONSENT FORMS

**LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT
AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE: CHILD PROTECTION WORKER**

This research is being conducted as part of a graduate level thesis in the Faculty of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria. The purpose is to understand how child protection work is carried out in your office, from your point of view.

Agreeing to participate in this study means you are willing to have me participate in and observe the activities of the team, be interviewed by myself about your work, and have me review some of the documents associated with your work. My goal in seeking your agreement to participate is to develop a picture of child protection work in this office, from your experience of it.

The interviews will take place at a time and place convenient to you during work hours and will last approximately 1 1/2 hours. You will be asked in the interview about your daily work activities, your feelings about the work, and your interactions with clients and colleagues. I will audio-tape the interviews and provide you with a transcript for you verification. The tape and transcript will be destroyed upon completion of the thesis. All information you share with me will be kept strictly confidential and your name will not appear on any of my records. If I have occasion to quote from you remarks, your name will never be used.

Your participation is voluntary and has no influence on your employment. You may withdraw at any time. Should you have any questions or concerns about any part of this study, please contact Riley Hurn at 478-1341 or myself, Sheila Wallace at 595-3541.

Your signature below will indicate that you understand and agree to the terms of participation outlined here. Please sign both copies and keep one for yourself.

NAME _____ SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Sheila Wallace, B.S.W.
Graduate Student, University of Victoria

**LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT
AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE: DISTRICT SUPERVISOR**

This research is being conducted as part of a graduate level thesis in the Faculty of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria. The purpose is to understand how child protection work is carried out in your office.

Agreeing to participate in this study means you are willing to have me participate in and observe the activities of the team, be interviewed by myself about your work supervising child protection work, and have me review some of the documents associated with that work. My goal in seeking your agreement to participate is to develop a picture of child protection work in this office, from your experience coordinating and supervising the work. It is understood that workers are not required to participate in this research and that neither you nor I consider participation a condition of employment.

The interviews will take place at a time and place convenient to you during work hours and will last approximately 1 1/2 hours. You will be asked in the interview about your daily work activities, your feelings about the work, and your interactions with clients and colleagues. I will audio-tape the interviews and provide you with a transcript for you verification. The tape and transcript will be destroyed upon completion of the thesis. All information you share with me will be kept strictly confidential and if I have occasion to quote from you remarks, your name will never be used.

Your participation is voluntary and has no influence on your employment. You may withdraw at any time. Should you have any questions or concerns about any part of this study, please contact Francis Ricks 721-8689 or myself, Sheila Wallace at 595-3541.

Your signature below will indicate that you understand and agree to the terms of participation outlined here. Please sign both copies and keep one for yourself.

NAME _____ SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Sheila Wallace, B.S.W.
Graduate Student, University of Victoria

APPENDIX # 4

SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS

November 2, 1993	Workers # 1
November 7, 1993	Workers # 2
November 9, 1993	Workers # 3
January 13, 1994	Area Manager
January 25, 1994	Policy Analyst
January 28, 1994	District Supervisor

APPENDIX #5

FAMILY AND CHILD SERVICE ACT

FAMILY AND CHILD SERVICE ACT

CHAPTER 11

[Assented to August 22, 1980.]

HER MAJESTY, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of British Columbia, enacts as follows:

Interpretation

1. In this Act

- “apprehend” means to take a child into custody under this Act;
- “child” means a person under 19 years old;
- “child care resource” means
 - (a) a foster home,
 - (b) a group living home,
 - (c) a facility, or
 - (d) a child’s own home
 - approved by the superintendent for the care of a child or children;
- “court” means the Provincial Court;
- “foster home” means a private home approved by the superintendent for the placement of a child, whether or not payment is made for maintenance of the child;
- “guardian” has the same meaning as in the *Family Relations Act*;
- “guardian of the person of a child” has the same meaning as in the *Family Relations Act*;
- “in need of protection” means, in relation to a child, that he is
 - (a) abused or neglected so that his safety or well being is endangered,
 - (b) abandoned,
 - (c) deprived of necessary care through the death, absence or disability of his parent,
 - (d) deprived of necessary medical attention, or
 - (e) absent from his home in circumstances that endanger his safety or well being;
- “judge” means a judge of the Provincial Court;
- “parent” does not include the superintendent but includes
 - (a) the mother or father of a child,
 - (b) the guardian or guardian of the person of a child,
 - (c) the step-parent of a child, where a step-parent relationship is established by marriage between the step-parent and the mother or father of the child,
 - (d) a person who is under a legal duty to support or maintain a child under an order of a court or under a written agreement,
 - (e) a person who has been granted custody of or access to the child, and
 - (f) a person who, having acknowledged a parental relationship to the child, has supported, maintained or cared for the child;
- “permanent order” means a permanent order made under section 14;
- “superintendent” means the person designated under this Act as the Superintendent of Family and Child Service and, in relation to any power, duty or function that the superintendent has delegated to another person, includes that other person.

Principles

2. In the administration and interpretation of this Act the safety and well being of a child shall be the paramount considerations.

Officials

3. (1) The minister shall designate as Superintendent of Family and Child Service a person appointed under the *Public Service Act*, and the superintendent shall be responsible to the minister for the administration of this Act and the regulations and be the Superintendent of Child Welfare.

(2) The powers of the superintendent, for the purposes of this Act and the regulations, include the power, subject to this Act and the regulations,

- (a) to enter into an agreement with a person for the development or provision, or both, of services to children or their families in the Province, and
- (b) to enter into an agreement with a person for the custody of a child of whom the superintendent is guardian, or of whom the superintendent has custody, but it is an implied term of the agreement that the superintendent may retake custody of the child at any time,

but a person who enters into an agreement with the superintendent under this subsection is an independent contractor and is not an employee of the government.

(3) The superintendent shall direct the investigation of reports that children may be in need of protection and the keeping of records of the reports and investigations.

(4) The superintendent may delegate any of his powers, duties, functions and capacities under this Act to any person or class of person, and that person or class of person shall be subject to his direction.

Short term custody agreements

4. Where a parent requires temporary assistance in caring for his child, the superintendent may enter into a short term care agreement with the parent providing for

- (a) care and custody or intermittent care and custody of the child during a period that does not exceed 3 months,
- (b) emergency medical treatment of the child in the absence of the parent,
- (c) resumption of care and custody of the child by the parent, and
- (d) other matters agreed between the parent and superintendent.

Special care agreements

5. Where the superintendent and a parent agree that the parent's child is in need of special care, the superintendent may enter into a special care and custody agreement with the parent providing for

- (a) care and custody or intermittent care and custody of the child during a period that does not exceed 6 months,
- (b) the nature of the care to be provided to the child,
- (c) emergency medical treatment of the child in the absence of the parent,
- (d) renewal of the agreement for further periods of not more than 12 months each, and
- (e) other matters agreed between the parent and superintendent.

General provisions respecting agreements

6. (1) Where a short term care or special care agreement has been made,
- (a) the parent may on notice to the superintendent terminate the agreement and retake custody of his child at any time during the term of the agreement,
 - (b) the parent is not relieved of his obligation to maintain the child,
 - (c) the agreement does not limit the power of a court to hear an application or make an order respecting the child, and
 - (d) the superintendent may terminate the agreement by giving the parent 7 days' notice of termination.
- (2) Where a short term care or special care agreement expires or is terminated and the parent neglects, refuses or is unable to resume custody of the child, the term of the agreement is extended for a period of 30 days.
- (3) If within the 30 days referred to in subsection (2) the parent does not resume custody of the child, the child shall be deemed to be abandoned, and the superintendent may proceed under this Act as though he had apprehended the child.

Duty to report

7. (1) A person who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child is in need of protection shall forthwith report the circumstances to the superintendent or a person designated by the superintendent to receive such reports.
- (2) The duty under subsection (1) overrides a claim of confidentiality or privilege by a person following any occupation or profession, except a claim founded on a solicitor and client relationship.
- (3) No action lies against a person making a report under this section unless he makes it maliciously or without reasonable grounds for his belief.
- (4) A person who contravenes subsection (1) commits an offence.

Right of entry to investigate certain complaints

8. Where the superintendent has received a report that a child is in need of protection he shall investigate the circumstances, and if the parent or any other person refuses to allow the superintendent to have access to the child, the superintendent may apply ex parte to a judge in person or by telephone for a warrant authorizing him to enter and search a place specified in the warrant in order to investigate whether the child is in need of protection, and the judge may issue the warrant on being satisfied that access to the child is necessary to the investigation.

Apprehending a child

9. (1) Where the superintendent considers that a child is in need of protection, he may, without warrant, apprehend the child.
- (2) Where any person refuses to allow the superintendent to enter the property to apprehend a child under subsection (1), the superintendent may apply ex parte in person or by telephone to a judge for a warrant authorizing the superintendent to enter the property, and the judge may issue the warrant on being satisfied that a request to enter the property for the purpose of apprehending the child was denied, and the superintendent may, on receipt of the warrant, enter the property and apprehend the child.

(3) Where the superintendent or a police officer has reason to believe that

- (a) a child is in need of protection, and
- (b) the child is in immediate physical danger,

he may, without warrant, enter any premises, using force if necessary and, where he considers it necessary to do so, apprehend the child and remove him to a place of safety.

(4) Where a police officer apprehends a child under subsection (3), he shall immediately report the matter to the superintendent, and the superintendent shall assume custody of the child.

(5) Where a child has been apprehended and before a report is presented to the court under section 11, the superintendent may, if satisfied that continued custody is unnecessary, return the child to the parent apparently entitled to custody.

Custody and guardianship by superintendent

- 10.** (1) Where a child is apprehended, the superintendent
- (a) has, subject to section 15, the right to custody of the child until
 - (i) the child is returned, in accordance with this Act, to the parent apparently entitled to custody of the child, or
 - (ii) an order terminating the superintendent's custody of the child is made under this Act, and
 - (b) may authorize emergency medical care and treatment of the child prescribed by a medical practitioner.
- (2) Where a child is apprehended and an order that the child be or remain in the custody of the superintendent is made under this Act by a court, the superintendent is, subject to subsection (3), the guardian of the person of the child until
- (a) the child is returned, in accordance with this Act, to the parent apparently entitled to custody of the child,
 - (b) another guardian or guardian of the person of the child is appointed under an enactment, or
 - (c) an adoption order is made in respect of the child under the *Adoption Act*.
- (3) The powers of the superintendent as guardian of the person of a child under this section do not, except where a permanent order is made, include the power to consent to the adoption of the child.
- (4) Where a child is committed by order of a court under the *Juvenile Delinquents Act* (Canada) to the charge of the superintendent, the child shall thereafter be dealt with as though an order had been made respecting him under section 13 (1) (c) committing him to the custody of the superintendent for a period of 12 months, unless the court specifies a shorter period, and subsections (2) and (3) of this section apply.

Procedure following apprehension

- 11.** (1) Where a child is apprehended, the superintendent shall, not later than 7 days after the apprehension and whether or not the child is still in his custody, present a written report to the court.
- (2) On presentation of a report under subsection (1), the court may order that the child be brought before the court and shall do one of the following:
- (a) make an order approving the superintendent's action in returning the child under section 9 (5) where he has done so;
 - (b) order the superintendent to return the child to the parent apparently entitled to custody;

(c) order that custody of the child be retaken or retained by the superintendent until a further order is made under section 13;

(d) make an order under section 13 (1),

but the court shall not act under paragraph (d) of this subsection unless the persons referred to in section 12 (2) (a), (b) and (c) consent to an immediate hearing to determine whether the child is in need of protection.

(3) Where the court makes an order under subsection (2) (a) or (b) of this section it may order the superintendent to supervise the care of the child until a hearing is held to determine whether the child is in need of protection.

(4) An order under subsection (2) (c) may include provision for access to the child by his parents.

Arranging a hearing

12. (1) Where the court makes an order under

(a) section 11 (2) (a) or (b) it may, or

(b) section 11 (2) (c) it shall

fix a date, not later than 45 days after the date of the order, for commencement of a hearing to determine if the child is in need of protection.

(2) Notice of the hearing fixed under subsection (1) shall be in writing and served, at least seven clear days before the hearing,

(a) on the parents of the child and any person who had custody of the child when the child was apprehended,

(b) on the superintendent, or the person designated to act for him in the locality where the hearing will take place,

(c) if the superintendent believes the child is registered, or is entitled to be registered, as an Indian under the *Indian Act* (Canada), on the band manager or band social development officer of the Indian band to which the child belongs, and

(d) on other persons the court considers appropriate,

and the court may direct

(e) that notice on any person referred to in paragraphs (a) to (c) be dispensed with, and

(f) how a notice shall be served, or that there shall be substituted service, and when a direction under paragraph (f) is complied with the notice shall be conclusively deemed to have been sufficiently served, but where a person consents, service of written notice on him is not necessary.

(3) A hearing under this section shall be

(a) summary and civil in nature, and

(b) held at a different time or at a different place from the usual time or place for sittings of the court when dealing with criminal matters.

(4) Where a notice is served on a person under this section, he or his agent has a right to be heard at the hearing to which the notice relates.

Temporary custody orders

13. (1) Where, after holding a hearing to determine whether a child is in need of protection, the court finds that the child is in need of protection, it shall

(a) order that the child remain in the custody of the parent apparently entitled to custody,

- (b) order the superintendent to return the child to the parent apparently entitled to custody,
- (c) order the superintendent to retain or retake custody of the child for a period the court considers appropriate, not exceeding 12 months, and that during that time a parent pay periodically to the superintendent a sum of money for the child's maintenance, or
- (d) proceed with the matter as if an application had been made under section 14 (1), except that for this purpose, section 14 (2) (a) shall be read as permissive,

but where the court finds that the child is not in need of protection, it shall order the superintendent to relinquish custody of him as soon as reasonably possible.

(2) An order made under subsection (1) (a) or (b) must include a provision that the superintendent may supervise the care of the child for a period the court considers appropriate, not exceeding 6 months.

(3) An order under subsection (1) (c) may include provision for a parent to have access to the child.

(4) Where an order for contribution to maintenance is made under this section it shall be enforced and varied in the same way as a maintenance order made under Part 4 of the *Family Relations Act*.

(5) Where a child is in the custody of the superintendent the court may, on application by the superintendent and on notice to the Public Trustee, appoint the Public Trustee to be the sole guardian of the estate of the child, and the Public Trustee shall, on receipt of notice of the appointment given to him by the superintendent, be the guardian of the estate of the child for a period the court orders.

(6) The superintendent or a parent of the child may, subject to the giving of notices in the same way as under section 12 (2), apply to the court for rescission or variation of an order made under subsection (1) or (5) of this section, on the grounds that the circumstances have significantly changed.

(7) The superintendent may, subject to the giving of notices in the same way as under section 12 (2), apply to the court for extensions, for periods not exceeding 6 months each, of an order made under subsection (1) (c) of this section where he considers it likely that the conditions that led to the taking of the child into custody will be remedied so that the child can be returned to the parent apparently entitled to custody of him.

Permanent order

14. (1) Where an order has been made under section 13 (1) (c) the superintendent may, by application to be brought on for hearing not sooner than 30 days before the expiration of the order, apply to the court for a permanent order.

(2) The court

- (a) shall make a permanent order where
 - (i) the child's parent cannot or refuses to resume custody of the child, or
 - (ii) the identity or whereabouts of the parents are unknown and have not been ascertained after a diligent search, and
- (b) may make a permanent order where
 - (i) the superintendent considers that the child ought not to be or cannot be returned to his parent, and

- (ii) the conditions that led to the child's apprehension or similar potentially harmful conditions still persist or exist and there is little likelihood that those conditions will soon be remedied.
- (3) The court shall, in deciding whether to make the permanent order, consider
 - (a) a parent's emotional condition, mental condition, mental deficiency or use of alcohol or drugs and whether these factors make the parent consistently or repeatedly unable to care adequately for the child,
 - (b) abuse or neglect by the parent of any child in the family,
 - (c) the child's feelings towards and emotional ties with his parents,
 - (d) efforts made by the parents to adjust their circumstances, conduct or conditions to make it in the child's best interest to return home, including
 - (i) the extent to which the parents have maintained contact with the child and with the person who has had custody of him, and
 - (ii) the extent to which the parents, if able to do so, have contributed to the child's maintenance, and
 - (e) any other factor that the court considers relevant.
- (4) A permanent order shall appoint the superintendent guardian of the person of the child and a parent shall, subject to subsection (11) and section 21, not thereafter resume guardianship of the child.
- (5) Where the court makes a permanent order, it shall order that the Public Trustee be the guardian of the estate of the child and shall cause a copy of the order to be sent to the Public Trustee.
- (6) Section 12 (2) and (3) applies to a hearing of an application under this section.
- (7) Where the court does not make a permanent order, it shall order that
 - (a) the child be returned to the parent apparently entitled to custody, or
 - (b) the child remain in the custody of the superintendent for a further period not exceeding 6 months, and may include provision for the parent to have access to the child.
- (8) On expiry of an order referred to in subsection (7) (b), the court shall
 - (a) make a permanent order, or
 - (b) order that the child be returned to the parent apparently entitled to custody.
- (9) An order made under this section in respect of a child does not affect his rights respecting inheritance of or succession to property.
- (10) Subsection (9) does not affect the operation of the *Adoption Act*.
- (11) Where a permanent order has been made, the superintendent may apply to the court for rescission or variation of the permanent order, and the court may make an order under this Act it considers appropriate.
- (12) A permanent order made pursuant to section 13 (1) (d) shall not, unless
 - (a) the application for the order is not opposed, or
 - (b) the consent of the parents or guardian, if any, to permanent committal is obtained,

be effective or operative until 6 months have elapsed from the day an order was made in respect of the child under section 11 (2) (c), but shall, in the meantime, operate as an order under section 13 (1) (c).

When superintendent's duties cease

15. Where the superintendent is guardian of the person of a child or has the right to custody of him under this Act, the superintendent ceases to have guardianship or the right to custody where the child

- (a) becomes 19 years old,
- (b) becomes adopted, or
- (c) marries and the court approves termination of the guardianship.

Placement of children

16. (1) Where a child is in the custody of the superintendent, the superintendent shall, subject to section 9 (5), arrange, as soon as possible, for the child to be placed in a child care resource.

(2) Where custody of a child is awarded to the superintendent by an order made or enforceable under this Act and the superintendent is denied the exercise of custody, a court may, on ex parte application, order that the child be apprehended by a peace officer and taken to the superintendent.

(3) A person who refuses or neglects to relinquish custody of a child in compliance with an order under subsection (2) commits an offence.

(4) Where a court makes an order under which the superintendent has a right to custody of a child, or where a custody order is enforceable by a court, the court may order that a person

- (a) shall not enter premises where the child resides from time to time, or
- (b) shall not contact or endeavour to contact or otherwise interfere with either the child or any person having custody of or access to the child,

and the court may make an order under both paragraphs (a) and (b).

Visiting and inspecting

17. (1) A person who has custody of a child under an order or agreement under this Act shall

- (a) allow the superintendent to visit the child and to inspect the place where the child lives,
- (b) give the superintendent on request full information and particulars about the child, and
- (c) allow the superintendent on request to inspect the person's records about the care and maintenance of the child.

(2) Where a person neglects or refuses to comply with subsection (1) (a) or (c), the superintendent may apply ex parte to a court for a warrant authorizing him to enter the premises where the child lives or where the records are kept and to inspect the premises or the records, and the court may issue the warrant on being satisfied that the request was made and that there was no or inadequate compliance, and the superintendent may, on receipt of the warrant, enter the premises, visit the child and inspect the premises and records.

Public investigations

18. Where under this Act or by an arrangement with a child's parent a child lives apart from his parent in the custody of another person, and the superintendent considers that the custody or the place where the child lives is not in the child's best interest and should be publicly investigated, he shall report the circumstances to the minister, and the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, on the recommendation of the minister, appoint a person to inquire into and report on the matter and may direct the nature, extent and manner of the inquiry, and sections 12, 15 and 16 of the *Inquiry Act* apply.

Procedure and powers of court

- 19.** (1) The court may, with respect to a proceeding under this Act,
 (a) compel the attendance of witnesses and administer oaths, and
 (b) adjourn the proceeding.
- (2) The court shall deliver to the superintendent a certified copy of the order made after every hearing under this Act, except in respect of an offence.
- (3) Where proceedings authorized by this section have been commenced before or heard by a judge who is subsequently unable to hear further proceedings in the same matter, further proceedings may be continued before and heard by another judge having jurisdiction, and he may give directions with regard to the rehearing of evidence, make any necessary interim orders and shall have the same power as if the proceedings had been commenced before and heard throughout by him.
- (4) Where a court issues a warrant authorizing the superintendent to enter premises, the superintendent may, if necessary, make the entry by force and may request the assistance of a peace officer, and where he makes such a request, the peace officer may accompany and assist him.

Appeals

- 20.** An appeal lies from an order of the court, and sections 91 to 94, 98 to 102, 104, 105 and 107 to 114 of the *Offence Act* respecting appeals apply.

Supreme Court jurisdiction

- 21.** Nothing in this Act limits the inherent jurisdiction of the Crown, through the Supreme Court, over infants, as *parens patriae*, and the Supreme Court may rescind a permanent order where it is satisfied that to do so is conducive to a child's best interest and welfare.

Records

- 22.** (1) No person shall disclose information obtained under this Act respecting an individual except
 (a) to his own counsel in a proceeding,
 (b) when giving evidence in a proceeding, or
 (c) where disclosure is necessary for the administration of this Act or is required by another Act.
- (2) A person who contravenes this section commits an offence.

Protection from liability

- 23.** No person is personally liable for anything done or omitted in good faith in the exercise or purported exercise of the powers conferred by this Act.

Regulations

- 24.** (1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations
 (a) respecting practice, evidence and procedure in the court in proceedings under this Act,

- (b) prescribing the circumstances in which a case begun before one judge may be continued before another, or in which a change of venue may be made, and
- (c) providing for the recognition and enforcement of orders made in another province or state as to the care, custody, maintenance and guardianship of children who, in that province or state, are in the care, custody or guardianship of a superintendent, director of child welfare or other provincial or state official charged with the supervision or care of children.

Consequential Amendments

Adoption Act Amendments

25. Section 1 of the *Adoption Act*, R.S.B.C. 1979, c. 4, is amended by repealing the definition of "superintendent" and substituting the following:
"superintendent" means the Superintendent of Family and Child Service designated under the *Family and Child Service Act*.

26. Section 8 is amended

- (a) in subsection (2) by striking out "or of a children's aid society" and "or the children's aid society, as the case may be",
- (b) in subsection (3) by striking out "or a children's aid society", and
- (c) in subsection (4) by striking out "or of a children's aid society".

Child Paternity and Support Act Amendments

27. Section 1 of the *Child Paternity and Support Act*, R.S.B.C. 1979, c. 49, is amended by striking out "'superintendent' means the Superintendent of Child Welfare appointed" and substituting "'superintendent' means the Superintendent of Family and Child Service designated".

28. The Schedule to the Act is amended by striking out "Superintendent of Child Welfare" and substituting "Superintendent of Family and Child Service".

Community Care Facility Act Amendment

29. Section 12 (b) and (d) of the *Community Care Facility Act*, R.S.B.C. 1979, c. 57, is amended by striking out "Superintendent of Child Welfare;" and substituting "Superintendent of Family and Child Service designated under the *Family and Child Service Act*;".

Family Relations Act Amendment

30. Section 21 of the *Family Relations Act*, R.S.B.C. 1979, c. 121, is amended by repealing the definition of "superintendent" and substituting the following:
"superintendent" means the Superintendent of Family and Child Service designated under the *Family and Child Service Act*.

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Society Act Amendment

31. Section 2 (1) (a) of the *Society Act*, R.S.B.C. 1979, c. 390, is amended by striking out "Superintendent of Child Welfare;" and substituting "Superintendent of Family and Child Service designated under the *Family and Child Service Act*;"

Repeal

32. The *Family and Child Service Act*, R.S.B.C. 1979, c. 119, is repealed.

Commencement

33. This Act comes into force on proclamation.

APPENDIX #6

FAMILY AND CHILD SERVICE POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

SECTION 6.3.1

APPENDIX #7

FAMILY AND CHILD SERVICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

SECTION 6.4.2

APPENDIX #8

FAMILY AND CHILD SERVICE POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

SECTION 6.3.4

APPENDIX #9

FAMILY AND CHILD SERVICES POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

SECTION 6.4.15

APPENDIX #10

FAMILY AND CHILD SERVICES POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

SECTION 6.4.3 AND 6.4.4

APPENDIX #11

INTER-MINISTRY CHILD ABUSE HANDBOOK

Chapter V

pp. 77-84

V. Ministry of Education

The Overview, found at the beginning of this handbook, contains the definition, grounding assumptions and co-ordinated response for incidents of child abuse, including sexual abuse. In order to fully appreciate the commitment of other professionals to an integrated response, it is essential to read the Overview and to be familiar with sections dealing with other ministries' procedures. A clear understanding of responsibility, policy and lines of communication will help everyone involved in the delivery of service in this sensitive area.

A. INTRODUCTION

Physical abuse involves the use of physical force which may result in an injury to a child. An injury of this nature is sometimes referred to as a non-accidental injury. Physical neglect involves the chronic or episodic withholding of essential physical care from a child. Necessary physical care may include the provision of food, nutrition, shelter, clothing, medical care and supervision. The withholding of necessary emotional care and support from a child, which results in some degree of emotional damage to the child, is referred to as emotional neglect. This kind of neglect may consist of withholding love and affection, affirmations of the child's self-worth and sense of belonging, and may even involve the complete withdrawal from any interaction with the child. Child sexual abuse involves any sexual exploitation of a child and may include any sexual behaviour directed toward a child. The sexual interaction may be perpetrated by a caregiver, family member, other adult, or older child.

B. INDICATIONS OF POSSIBLE ABUSE AND NEGLECT

There are a number of physical symptoms or behaviours which, when demonstrated by a child, may be indicative of abuse or neglect. When considering the significance of the symptoms or behaviours of concern, consultation with a community health nurse may prove to be helpful. For the purpose of example, a number of general patterns of symptoms and behaviours are described. Especially when observed in combination, these and other symptoms and behaviours should alert educators to the possibility of abuse or neglect.

Educators should be concerned about the student who is:

1. Frequently tardy.
2. Very reluctant to attend school.
3. Frequently absent from school.
4. Apparently reluctant to go home after school.
5. Frequently inadequately dressed for the season or the weather.

Of obvious concern is the student who:

1. Appears to be undernourished.
2. Has obvious medical needs that are not receiving attention.
3. Has physical injuries such as bruises, welts, cuts or burns and whose explanations appear to be incompatible with the nature or extent of the injury.
4. Appears to be unusually fearful to undress at appropriate times, such as for gym class.
5. Complains of pain around the genital or mouth and throat area.
6. Mentions that "it hurts when going to the bathroom."

It should be noted that frequently students demonstrating these symptoms are fearful when questioned regarding an injury.

Patterns of extreme behaviour demonstrated by students, whether passive and overly compliant (possibly even appearing to be fearful of physical contact) or aggressive and destructive, should also alert educators to the possibility of abuse or neglect.

Students whose drawings of people frequently include disproportionately shaped sexual organs or who demonstrate unusual interest in or preoccupation with sexual acts or sexual language, which is beyond the kind of interest normally expected for their age, are also of concern.

Educators should be alerted by a student who appears to be extremely fearful of being left alone with particular adults or with adult men or women in general. These students may also attempt to draw attention to themselves through acting out behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse or sexual promiscuity.

The behaviour of the parent may also provide an indication of possible abuse. Unrealistic demands to perform placed on the child by the parent, or a lack of concern for the well-being of the child, should concern educators. The parent who appears unduly untrusting and suspicious of personnel from schools, or is aggressive and abusive when approached about concerns regarding his child, may also be indicative of an abusive or neglectful situation.

A more complete list of indications of possible abuse and neglect may be found in the Appendix B.

C. THE ROLE OF EDUCATORS

Educators play a unique role in the identification and reporting of abused and neglected children. Since educators are in daily contact with children and are trained observers of children's behaviour, they are frequently the first adults to become aware of situations which may be indicative of abuse or neglect. In fact, the school may be the only place where an abused child feels safe and in contact with caring adults.

All educators share responsibility for increasing their own awareness and knowledge of:

1. The incidence and identification of child abuse.

2. Their responsibility to report all suspected cases to the Ministry of Human Resources and the police.
3. The appropriate procedures to follow when reporting suspected cases.

School districts should develop effective in-service programs, possibly taking advantage of available community and provincial resources, in order to enhance knowledge and awareness in this area. Programs to train children in strategies to avoid or deal effectively with abuse situations should be supported and further developed. Educators should also take part in the development of effective integrated community-based networks to respond to cases of child abuse and neglect. Inter-agency protocols or guidelines will be developed in each local area and educators should participate in their development and ensure that all staff members are familiar with them.

Educators must also become aware of basic dynamics and detection of child sexual abuse. Again, because of the unique relationship which educators have with students, there is a significant chance that the sexually abused child will disclose to them the fact that they have been, or are being, abused. The immediate response to a disclosure of this nature is extremely important. Educators should be able to react in an appropriate and sensitive manner:

1. **Listen** to what the child is trying to convey.
2. **Respect silence** and do not rush the child or put words in the child's mouth.
3. **Keep any questions short**, using words that are part of the child's vocabulary.
4. **Give immediate reassurance** and support to the child, indicating that you believe him and do not blame him.

It is critically important that, upon disclosure, educators take immediate action by reporting to the Ministry of Human Resources and to the police. This will help protect the child from any recurrence and from pressure to retract allegations.

D. REPORTING RESPONSIBILITIES

The Family and Child Service Act (1981) requires that every person who has reasonable grounds to believe that a child is in need of protection report the circumstances immediately to the Superintendent of Family and Child Service (in practice, to the delegated social worker in the local Ministry of Human Resources office). For further details regarding The Family and Child Service Act (1981), please refer to the information under the Ministry of Human Resources section of this handbook.

Educators, therefore, who have "reasonable grounds" are thus **required by law** to report to the local Ministry of Human Resources office their suspicions of a case of child abuse or neglect. Policy also requires that the police be informed of any suspicion of physical or sexual abuse. The responsibility for investigating such reports rests with designated social workers of the Ministry of Human Resources and the police.

Many school districts have established internal procedures for reporting such suspicions. Frequently, there is consultation with the community health nurse. Suspected cases are also reported to the school principal and the Superintendent of Schools. These practices are desir-

able; however, it must be stressed that, by law, responsibility for reporting rests with the person who has reasonable grounds to suspect abuse. **This responsibility is not discharged by an educator reporting to any person other than an appropriate delegate of the Ministry of Human Resources.** Any individual making such a report is exempt from liability unless he makes the report maliciously or without reasonable grounds.

E. REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES

The investigation of a complaint that a child may have been abused is the joint responsibility of the Ministry of Human Resources and the police. **These responsibilities cannot be assumed by school district personnel.** An integrated response requires that an investigating social worker and/or police officer will request co-operation from school personnel who have knowledge of the situation and will endeavor to provide feedback regarding the outcome of the investigation.

In cases where it is suspected that a child has been abused, the procedures outlined below are to be followed:

1. All school employees, alerted for signs of child abuse, shall promptly report their suspicions to a social worker within the local Ministry of Human Resources office, and notify the school principal of their actions.
2. In the event of suspected physical or sexual abuse, educators shall report their suspicions to both the Ministry of Human Resources and the police. Both agencies should be notified that the report has been made to the other agency.
3. Statements made to school employees should be recorded in the child's own words. School employees, while offering support, should refrain from interviewing the child after receiving the child's first disclosure. Interviews will be conducted by police and/or Ministry of Human Resources personnel. In the event that the child has a disabling condition which impedes his ability to communicate (for example, is hearing impaired), steps should be taken to locate an individual who is familiar with the disabling condition, to assist with interviewing the child.
4. In all cases, principals are required to allow the investigating social worker and the police to interview the child in the school. As the school is a safe, neutral environment in which to conduct interviews which are sensitive to the child's needs, social workers or police officers may choose the school as an interview site. It is expected that the principal shall advise the investigating social worker or police officer of pertinent information.

Although an educator may be requested to be present during an interview to provide support to the child, an educator is not required to be present when the child is interviewed. This situation is not parallel to that described in Schools Department Circular No. 101, 79.10.23 in which police officers interview the child in the course of investigating an alleged offence by the child. In that case, the principal or teacher in acting "in loco parentis" to ensure the protection of the child's rights. A social worker may interview a student in a school when investigating child abuse under the legislative mandate for the protection of children.

When there is reason to believe that an abusive situation exists, educators should refrain from contacting parents unless specifically asked to do so by the investigating social worker or police officer. The responsibility for contacting the parents of the child who is allegedly abused or neglected rests with the investigating social worker or police officer.

F. SUMMARY OF PROCEDURES

REPORTING

An educator who suspects that a child is being abused reports his suspicions to a social worker within the local Ministry of Human Resources office and notifies the school principal of his actions. Suspected cases of physical or sexual abuse shall be reported by educators to both Ministry of Human Resources and the police.

INVESTIGATION

The delegated social worker, and in appropriate cases the police, will investigate reported cases. Consultation with educators will take place where appropriate and practicable.

INTERVENTION — OUTCOME

Following the investigation carried out by the social worker, representatives of the Ministry of Human Resources will assess the need for any service required by the family or child and then withdraw from or intervene in the case. The police will, following their investigation, withdraw from the case or forward a report to Crown counsel to determine if there is sufficient evidence for prosecution. Representatives of both the Ministry of Human Resources and the police will endeavor to provide feedback to those educators directly involved regarding the outcome of the investigation; however, confidentiality respecting details of the case is required by Section 22 of the Family and Child Service Act.

APPENDIX #12

BASIC STAFF ENTITLEMENT CALCULATION

BASIC STAFF ENTITLEMENT CALCULATION (RAC)

This calculation determines regional entitlement to basic social work capacity to carry out each of the major F&CS functions; i.e. Protection/family service, Planning, Parenting, Resource management, and Adoptions. The calculation is a two step process:

(1) Social Work resources are allocated on a provincial basis to each of the major functions. This allocation is made on a "judgement" basis taking into account the standards of practice expected in each function, the priority of each function relative to the other functions, and the volume of demands within each function.

(2) Each of the provincial functional allocations is distributed to the regions on the basis of weighted key indicators that measure the geographical distribution of the work associated with each function. The selection and weighting of the indicators involved a "workflow analysis" supplemented by a "practice judgement" consensus process involving social work practitioners, supervisors, and managers.

MAJOR FUNCTIONS AND DISTRIBUTION CRITERIA	ALLOC SW CA	WEIGHTS	PERCENT OF S.W. CAPACITY
PROTECTION/FAMILY SERVICE	256.8		33.9
PROTECTION/FS/PT 1800S		0.29	
CASES(AO,INT CARE,SUP ORDERS,		0.29	
ADMISSIONS		0.35	
NATIVE ADMISSIONS		0.07	
PLANNING	162.8		21.5
CASES		0.52	
ADOPTION REFERRALS		0.03	
HEARING OUTCOMES		0.1	
CONTESTED HEARINGS		0.075	
LAWYER HOURS		0.075	
DISCHARGES		0.2	
PARENTING	70.5		9.3
CASES		0.8	
DISCHARGES		0.1	
INDEP. LIVING		0.1	
CHILD WELFARE RES. MANAGEMEN	99.2		13.1
HOMES PENDING		0.2	
APPROVED HOMES		0.4	
NON-RES PROGRAMS		0.1	
PLACEMENTS		0.3	
ADOPTIONS	16.7		22
ACTIVE CASES		1	
POTENTIAL POPULATION	151.5		20

APPENDIX #13

FCS INTAKE FORM



Province of
British Columbia
Ministry of Social Services

Family and
Children's Services

F&CS INTAKE

82412

OFFICE INFORMATION

NAME OF INTAKE SOCIAL WORKER	
CASELOAD NUMBER	D. O. CODE
DATE	TIME (24 hr. clock)

TYPE OF REPORTER (IF AFTER HOURS, INDICATE ORIGINAL REPORTER)

<input type="checkbox"/> SUBJECT CHILD	<input type="checkbox"/> Friend/ Neighbor	<input type="checkbox"/> Anonymous	<input type="checkbox"/> School
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> Homemaker/ Babysitter	<input type="checkbox"/> Concerned Citizen	<input type="checkbox"/> Preschool/ Day Care
<input type="checkbox"/> MSS Employee	<input type="checkbox"/> Relative	<input type="checkbox"/> Police	<input type="checkbox"/> Health Professionals
<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER PROFESSIONALS SPECIFY:			

FAMILY/ HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION (SEE REVERSE FOR CODING SELECTIONS ON REL/ PRIMARY LANGUAGE SPOKEN)

PERSON 1	LAST NAME	GIVEN NAME	AKA'S/ PREVIOUS NAMES	BIRTHDATE	SEX	KEY PERSON
PERSON 2	LAST NAME	GIVEN NAME	AKA'S/ PREVIOUS NAMES	BIRTHDATE	SEX	REL TO KEY

ADDRESS

CITY/TOWN POSTAL CODE HOME PHONE BUS PHONE PRIMARY LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN THE HOME CODE

CHILDREN: (✓) IF SUBJECT CHILD(REN)						
LAST NAME	GIVEN NAME	AKA'S	REL TO KEY	SEX	BIRTHDATE	LOCATION/ SCHOOL/ DAY CARE

A PROGRAM/ NATURE OF CALL - COMPLETE SECTION A OR B ONLY

<p>A. VOLUNTARY SERVICE REQUEST</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a) Family Support Services</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b) Repatriation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c) Services For Youth</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d) Adoption Services</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> e) General Enquiry DO NOT REGISTER</p> <p>PROCEED TO SERVICE PLAN</p>	<p>B. REPORT OF CHILD PROTECTION (More than one code can be entered. At least 1 of a) - f) MUST be checked)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> a) Physical Abuse</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> b) Sexual Abuse</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> c) Emotional Abuse</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> d) Neglect</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> e) Absent From The Home...</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> f) FRA SEC.29 (death of Guardians)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> g) Alleged Offender(s) resides outside the family home</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> h) Investigation in Child Care Resource</p> <p>DO NOT REGISTER</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> i) Investigation directed by Medical Health Officer (Protocol 2 Interministry Handbook)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> j) School Board Employee Investigation (Protocol 3 Interministry Handbook)</p> <p>No. of Children Interviewed</p>
---	---

SUMMARY OF CHILD PROTECTION INVESTIGATION

REPORT REJECTED:	<input type="checkbox"/> a) Outside Of Statutory Definitions	<input type="checkbox"/> b) Insufficient Information To Locate	<input type="checkbox"/> c) No Credible Reason To Suspect Abuse/ Neglect	<input type="checkbox"/> d) Previously Investigated
REPORT ACCEPTED:	<input type="checkbox"/> a) Initial Complaint	<input type="checkbox"/> b) Supplemental Complaint	<input type="checkbox"/> c) Additional Complaint	ACTUAL RESPONSE TIME: <input type="checkbox"/> a) Immediate <input type="checkbox"/> b) 24 HR <input type="checkbox"/> c) Beyond 24 hrs.
NOTIFICATION TO POLICE:	DATE	DECISION ABOUT POLICE/ MSS INVESTIGATION:	<input type="checkbox"/> a) Joint <input type="checkbox"/> b) Parallel <input type="checkbox"/> c) MSS only <input type="checkbox"/> d) Police Only, SKIP TO DS SIGN-OFF	
FINDINGS:	<input type="checkbox"/> a) ARE OR MAY BE IN NEED OF PROTECTION <input type="checkbox"/> b) Are NOT In Need Of Protection <input type="checkbox"/> c) Insufficient Information <input type="checkbox"/> d) Unable To Complete			
ARE CHILDREN OF ABORIGINAL ORIGIN ? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> UNKNOWN				

SERVICE PLAN MORE THAN ONE PLAN CAN BE ENTERED

<input type="checkbox"/> a) REFERRED/ ASSIGNED TO	CASELOAD NO.	<input type="checkbox"/> b) Referred To Community Service	<input type="checkbox"/> f) No Service Indicated
NAME OF SOCIAL WORKER	D. O. CODE	<input type="checkbox"/> c) Provide Voluntary Family Support Services	<input type="checkbox"/> g) Service not accepted
		<input type="checkbox"/> d) Provide Protective Family Services	<input type="checkbox"/> h) Outside Family: Parent Ensuring Safety
		<input type="checkbox"/> e) Admit Child(ren) To Care	<input type="checkbox"/> i) Repatriation
			<input type="checkbox"/> j) Provide Adoption Services

SOCIAL WORKER SIGNATURE DATE

DISTRICT SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE DATE

DISTRIBUTION: ORIGINAL - DISTRICT OFFICE FILE BLUE - ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT CANARY - PROV. STATISTICS (CORPORATE SERVICES DIVISION) PINK - DISTRICT OFFICE CONTROL

VITA

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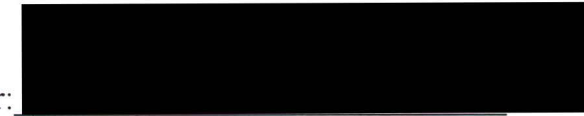
Student of the Year Recreation Society of B.C. 1980

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Title of Thesis: Child Protection as Support

Author:



SHEILA WALLACE
DEC 22/94