MCGILL UNIVERSITY

THE INUIT COMMUNITY WORKERS' EXPERIENCE
OF YOUTH PROTECTION

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ABSTRACT

The delivery of youth protection services by indigenous social workers in native communities is a fairly recent development in Quebec. This research project is a qualitative study of the practice experience of Inuit community workers located on the Ungava Bay coast of Arctic Quebec. Using participant observation and dialogue as methods of inquiry, an attempt is made to render an account of the workers' day-to-day experience of youth protection work. The findings suggest that their conditions of work encourage a passive subordination to the bureaucratic organization of practice. This tendency emerges in response to the difficulties workers encounter while trying to conform to the requirements of the Youth Protection Act and, at the same time, to the norms and realities of Inuit village life. The resultant tension is central to the Inuit workers' experience and not amenable to any simple resolution. Implications for social work practice, policy and research are examined in light of these findings.

RESUME

L'offre de services de protection de la jeunesse par des
travailleurs sociaux autochtones dans leurs communautés est
un fait relativement récent au Québec. Ce projet de recherche
est une étude qualitative de l'expérience pratique des
animateurs socio-culturels inuits de la côte de la baie
d'Ungava, dans le Nouveau-Québec. Cette recherche, basee sur
l'observation et sur des conversations avec les participants,
tente de cerner les divers aspects du travail quotidien de la
protection de la jeunesse. Les résultats suggèrent que les
conditions de travail incitent à une subordination passive
face à l'organisation bureaucratique de l'exercice de cette
profession. Cette tendance découle des difficultés que les
animateurs sociaux recontrent en tentant de se conformer à la
fois aux exigences de la Loi sur la protection de la jeunesse
et aux normes et réalités de la vie dans un village inuit. La
tension qui en résulte est au coeur de l'expérience des
travailleurs inuits et aucune solution facile ne peut être
envisagée. Les répercussions sur la pratique, les lignes de
conduite et la recherche en travail social seront examinées
en tenant compte de ces constatations.

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INTRODUCTION

This study concerns the experience of Inuit community workers[1] employed by the Quebec state to implement its youth protection mandate in the remote Arctic settlements of Ungava Bay. While it is early yet to speak of a distinctive indigenous approach to youth protection, nevertheless, elements of such a model are being worked out at the level of day-to-day practice as workers attempt to implement the Youth Protection Act in a culturally sensitive way.

The hiring of Inuit by the Social Service Centre to work in the area of statutory child welfare began in the early 1980s. Previously, whites had been employed to do this work, and the change in hiring practice was prompted by conditions of the James Bay Northern Quebec Agreement signed in 1975[2] and later, by the implementation of the Youth Protection Act in 1979. While the presence of Inuit workers in the service organization acknowledges the need to increase native participation in the delivery of social services to native people, the current context of statutory practice constrains the nature and extent of their involvement.

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[1] Social workers in Inuit settlements are known as community workers.

[2] See Chapter 15 of the Agreement, "Health and Social Services (Inuit)", Articles 15.0.21, 15.0.24 and 15.0.26.

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This research project examines how the conditions for youth protection work in the north, as experienced by the Inuit community workers, encourage their passive subordination to the bureaucratic organization of practice. This tendency emerges in response to the impossible situations in which workers find themselves as they try to conform to the requirements of the law and, at the same time, to the social, cultural and political realities of Inuit village life. Their passive subordination to the administrative apparatus is best understood as a strategy for coping with seemingly unresolvable practice dilemmas. While this strategy is a reasonable means by which to manage the demands of the job from day to day, it does little to further the conceptual and practical development of an Inuit approach to youth protection work. By situating the workers' accounts of their practice experience within the organizational, legislative and community contexts in which it occurs, we can begin to identify some of obstacles which impede their efforts to define their mandate in practice.

This study was undertaken with a view to rendering an account of the Inuit community workers' day-to-day practice experience. The provision of youth protection services by community workers is a relatively new arrangement in northern Quebec, and the workers' experience has not yet been studied and documented in a formal way. As key informants in the study, the front-line workers are best situated to provide

information that could be of considerable benefit in the development of future policy and program initiatives.

The community workers are not professionally accredited social workers and have had varying lengths of experience in youth protection work. With the exception of those workers located at the Social Service Centre regional office in Kuujjuak, they practice alone in their respective communities where they are employed on a part-time basis. A crucial feature of social work practice in the north is that community workers carry responsibility for several mandates: the Youth Protection Act, Young Offenders Act, and the coordination of home care under the Health Services Act. The combined requirements of the job place excessive demands on individual workers, many of whom are unsure of the limits of their authority and responsibility with respect to any one mandate.

METHODOLOGY

Choice of Research Method

The aim of this chapter is to provide a methodological account of the process of the research. This research project is a qualitative study of the experience of Inuit social work practitioners engaged in youth protection work. Using participant observation and dialogue (Tandon, 1981) as methods of inquiry, the practice experience of four community workers in two different Inuit settlements was examined.

The decision regarding a research method was guided by the belief that an important relationship exists between the purpose of research and the method of study; that is, that the method must be congruent with the purpose of the inquiry. This study of youth protection practice was undertaken with the open-ended research goal of endeavouring to understand the experience of Inuit social workers. This objective necessitated working within an interpretive framework that accepts the subjective, value-determined nature of social action (Leighton, 1982; Leonard 1978). Moreover, to explore and map out the cultural terrain of the Inuit workers' practice reality required an ethnographic approach to social inquiry. Such a methodology speaks to the need to treat informants as active, choosing, responsible agents who shape their practice, to recognize the influence of values and

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ideology on decision making, and to employ data-gathering techniques which are germane to the social context of the phenomena under study.

In addition to a description of the methods used to collect and evaluate data, this methodological account includes pertinent biographical information on the researcher as relevant data. Attention to the values and background of the researcher acknowledges that an important interactive relationship exists between the researcher and the process of inquiry, and that methodology and research methods are not objectively employed, neutral techniques. As Saunders notes, empirical observation is to some extent paradigm-dependent: where we look and what we "see" reflects our prior judgements concerning how social reality is constituted (1979, p. 345). Given that the construction of empirical sense from the data is determined in part by the theoretical framework within which the researcher works, some insight into the theoretical framework that informed the research process will also be offered.

Relevant Biographical Information

My career as a social worker in rural northwestern Ontario began in 1976 when I worked with native adolescent girls in a group home setting subsequent to their discharge from a Ministry of Corrections training school. This experience constituted my first real exposure to native people

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and culture, and to the socio-economic and political circumstances of their lives.

I was then employed by a Children's Aid Society where, as a caseworker, I was involved in providing the full range of services mandated by the Ontario Child Welfare Act. The emphasis in daily practice was on statutory, child protection cases. At least eighty percent of the agency's clients were Ojibway Indians, the majority of whom lived on reservations. After three years of generalist practice, I specialized in the investigation and treatment of child abuse. Subsequently, I joined the agency's management team as a clinical supervisor. Both my front-line and managerial practice involved extensive collaboration with native chiefs and band councillors, and later, with native community workers whose mandate from the band councils that employed them was the prevention of family breakdown necessitating the admission of children to agency care.

My tenure with the Society occurred during a period of time (mid 1970s to mid 1980s) when state child welfare agencies were being heavily criticized by native organizations for pursuing placement and adoption practices that devalued native people and threatened cultural genocide. The political mobilization of reserve communities in response to the ongoing loss of their children resulted in the establishment of child welfare committees and the hiring of native "prevention" workers in each village. These initiatives were part of a

larger undertaking by the district tribal council to secure from the province a legal mandate for the control and delivery of native child welfare services through a native agency. The transfer of mandate was an objective which I actively supported by consulting on issues of resource and program development within the reserve communities.

Although I resigned my position before the transfer was effected, it was clear in my consultation with native community workers that while they were pleased about the prospect of a native child welfare agency, they were also uneasy about the transition from a "prevention" mandate sanctioned by the social and political structures of the reserve community to a "protection" mandate sanctioned by the state. Their concerns centered on the redefinition of their traditional role as helpers as a consequence of state-delegated authority and the implications of this for their day-to-day intervention with families.

Theoretical Aspects of the Research

In 1986, I returned to university studies full-time and began to explore the literature on child welfare policy and practice in an effort to develop a critical analysis of my own practice experience. One of the major influences on my thinking was the theoretical literature concerning the social

control function of child protection work.[3] Although the literature contains both positive and negative appraisals of this function, the latter have dominated most evaluations of policy and practice since the early 1970s, and depict child welfare primarily as a mechanism for the surveillance and control of deviant families. The reality that the vast majority of child welfare clients come from the ranks of Canada's poor, and the evidence of discriminatory judgements against women and ethnic minority groups raises fundamental concerns about systemic and other biases in the child welfare system.

Most critiques of child welfare fail to give sufficient attention to the inherent contradictions in child welfare policy and practice, and contain a number of uncritical assumptions concerning social work intervention into the family and so, do not provide an adequate framework for understanding worker practice. When we examine these issues, it is clear that the exercise of control is a complex, dynamic and interactive process in which agency clients also play an active role.

The literature on child welfare and native people, which constitutes a second major influence on my thinking, provides overwhelming evidence that social work practice in native communities has contributed to problems of dependency and

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[3] The terms child protection and youth protection are used interchangeably throughout this text.

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ethnic inferiority through the extension of culturally-biased services. A critical re-evaluation of the relationship between the child welfare system and native communities from a colonial context provides a more complete understanding of how the system has failed native people, and also confirms the need for policy and practice priorities which emphasize principles of cultural autonomy and native control of child welfare services within their own communities (Hudson & Mckenzie, 1981).

The analysis of child welfare as an agent of colonization enhances our capacity to understand the experience of indigenous social workers engaged in child protection work within state agencies. Essentially, these practitioners are working within an institution that has functioned historically to subjugate native people. While their presence in the service organization acknowledges the need to increase native participation in the administration of their own affairs, their cultural identity as members of the minority ethnic group ensures their subordinacy within the service structure (Brody, 1975; Paine 1977). Moreover, white administrators' insistence on the correctness of their own institutional rules serves to keep native workers down. Thus, the workers' identity, and their need to implement the child protection mandate in a culturally sensitive way, places them in both a subordinate and oppositional stance vis a vis the bureaucratic organization of their work.

Process of the Research

A. Access and the selection of informants

The major impetus for my decision to study the youth protection practice of indigenous social workers was my own practice experience and interest in the evolution of native child welfare services. The opportunity to pursue this interest began with an invitation from Professor Liesel Urtnowski to participate in McGill University's Certificate Program in Northern Social Work Practice as a field practicum instructor. In this capacity, I would work with Inuit social workers in the remote settlements of Arctic Quebec. The possibility of studying youth protection service delivery concurrently with the field instruction resulted in the drafting and presentation of a research proposal at a meeting of the Quebec Association of Social Service Centres for regions 10A and 10B (Hudson and Ungava Bay, James Bay sectors). The social service and youth protection directors granted approval in principle at this meeting, during which a decision was made that the Ungava Bay coast would be the geographic location for the study. Subsequently, I submitted a more detailed research proposal to the directors of social services and youth protection in Kuujjuak and was given approval to proceed with the study. We agreed that the informants for research purposes would be those workers for whom I provided field instruction, and that the study would commence at the termination of a scheduled training session

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for all Inuit community workers.

The decision as to which communities I would visit to provide field instruction, and thus who the research informants would be, was made by the Ungava Bay workers in consultation with the Director of Youth Protection. I did not view my exclusion from the selection of informants as problematic. On the contrary, I was concerned that the Inuit workers have as much control as possible over the process of the research.

Three female and one male worker, ranging in age from thirty-five to fifty years, participated in the field study. Of these, two were practising in their home communities and the others in villages where they had many extended family contacts. All of the workers were parents themselves and very active in the social and cultural life of their communities. Two of the workers had an elementary level education, one had some secondary school, and another had completed highschool. All of the workers were fluent in English and Inuktitut, and none of them spoke or read French. Their range of experience in youth protection work was considerable; the most senior worker had eight years experience while the most recently hired had been on the job for less than a year.

B. Preparation for the field study

In preparation for the field research, I spent a week at the Ungava Bay Social Service Centre in Kuujjuak familiarizing

myself with the service delivery structure of the coastal region and case management procedures in the area of youth protection. Throughout the week I had many informal discussions with the Director of Social Services, the Director of Youth Protection and the community workers (three of them) regarding their views of youth protection service delivery in the north, specific practice concerns, and my research project. That all of these discussions were initiated by the personnel offered me a much needed reassurance of their interest and willingness to participate in the inquiry.

I also participated in two weeks of course preparation at the McGill School of Social Work involving three experienced Inuit workers and the non-native instructors who would later conduct a social work training session in Kuujjuak for all of the community workers. In addition, I observed and participated minimally in the two-week training session.

The experience of these five weeks sensitized me to some of the outstanding service delivery concerns from both administrative and front-line points of view. More importantly, this experience provided an opportunity to get acquainted with the practice culture of the informants and to develop some ability to ascertain the shades of meaning that informants attach to situations that comprise their practice reality.

C. Site of the study and data collection

The field study was conducted in two Inuit settlements on the Ungava Bay coast of Arctic Quebec over a one month period during which I spent two weeks in each community. These two communities are typical of the coastal settlements in the north. They are small in size, geographically remote from the south and isolated from one another. The communities are largely dependent upon outside resources, and owing to a chronic shortage of employment opportunities, more than half of the population receives social assistance.

Since the onset of regular contact with the south in the early 1960s, government and capital efforts to include the Inuit in the political and economic mainstream of the dominant society have seriously disrupted the coherence and integrity of traditional Inuit lifestyle. This disruption has given rise to generational differences in expectations and family disputes, violence against women, intense feelings of alienation particularly among the young, alcohol and drug abuse, and a disproportionate incidence of suicide. Altered social relations resulting from the establishment of permanent settlements, the introduction of technology and wage labour, and erosion of the Inuit economic base have weakened traditional social control mechanisms and helping strategies. Traditional reliance upon elders and community leaders in matters of social relations has been gradually displaced by reliance upon non-native social and political structures such

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as the Social Service Centre (Urtnowski, 1990).[4]

D. Method of inquiry

Data gathering in this study reflects an ethnographic approach to investigation. The principle technique of data collection was participant observation which Burgess describes as not merely a method of conducting field research, but also as a role that is used by the researcher (1982, p. 45). In this view, the researcher is the main instrument of data collection. As a participant observer, therefore, the researcher needs to be able not only to take and play an effective role in the field situation, but also to evaluate this role, to evaluate her relationships with the informants and the influence that her role performance may have on the data she collects (Burgess, 1982, p. 46).

In this study of the Inuit workers' experience of youth protection practice, I took the role of field practicum instructor. Thus, I was concerned with assisting the workers to consolidate their new learning and, simultaneously, with developing some understanding of their experience of youth protection work. I experienced the teaching and research objectives as compatible and mutually reinforcing because to teach the community workers required that, at the same time, I learn about their practice reality from their perspective.

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[4] See appendix A for a more detailed description of the Arctic region.

Thus, the teaching and research objectives were realized through a process of shared learning and discovery.

My decision to engage in overt research was based on my belief that the workers' informed consent constituted the basis for a trusting relationship with them and granted me permission to invade the privacy of their experience. I was concerned as well with minimizing the imbalance of power between researcher and informants that characterizes much social inquiry. To this end, I felt it was essential that the community workers have as much control as possible over the research process. As noted earlier, the workers participated in the selection of informants. I negotiated with each informant the content of our work together to ensure its relevance to their particular learning needs and experience. The decision as to which case material would be examined remained with the informants.

In my role as field instructor, I engaged with the community workers in a review of their active cases, assisted them in analyzing specific practice concerns and developing case management strategies, and reflected with them on their earlier case experiences. I also observed their participation in meetings with nurses, police constables, teachers and their supervisors, and their interviews with clients. Although some of our time was devoted to cases other than youth protection, as these comprise the majority of each worker's caseload I was not concerned about gathering sufficient data.

The process of inquiry involved an ongoing tension between having in mind an idea of what was important material to elicit, but also, in the course of dialogue, actively listening to what the informants were saying and thus allowing the content of the discussion to be influenced by what they saw as important. The tape recording of all practice-related discussions facilitated this process. Thus, dialogue was used both as a form of inquiry and intervention with the informants. In the context of dialogue, both the researcher and informants learn from each other and from the situation of which they are a part (Tandon, 1981).

The process of participant observation was influenced by the relationship between my "inside" and "outside" roles in the research setting. My background as an experienced youth protection worker served to legitimate my "inside" role as field instructor, and enabled me to share more readily the practice culture of the informants and to identify with their perspective on the work. The risk of over-identification with the informants' experience and loss of objectivity were controlled to some extent by my "outside" role as a university-trained, professional social worker from the south with a different cultural identity from that of the Inuit informants. These attributes secured my identity as a "stranger" in the setting and ensured that there was always a certain distance in my relationship with the informants. Throughout the research process, I experienced an alternating

tension between "inside" and "outside" consciousness such that I was not entirely inside the setting, yet neither was I outside of it.

The fact that I was a stranger in the setting facilitated the data collection to the extent that I used the difference in cultural background to probe the informants' experience more deeply and to press for more detailed descriptions of their practice. I felt that this activity was mutually beneficial as it helped to highlight the differences between southern and Inuit approaches to youth protection work and these were of particular interest to both the informants and myself as the researcher/instructor. My identity as a stranger in the setting with inside knowledge of the informants' work provided an unanticipated benefit insofar as the informants were comfortable speaking very openly and frankly about their disappointment with the bureaucracy, their feelings of being discriminated against by the "white" system and way of doing things, and their frustration with their own communities. The informants' willingness to discuss these issues greatly enhanced the quality of the empirical data.

To the extent that I identified with the informants' experience, I shared their frustration and feelings of helplessness about having to do a very difficult job with inadequate supports and resources. While I was in the setting, I experienced my activity with the workers as supportive; in effect, I was a resource for them and they

acknowledged much positive feeling about our work together. At the termination of the field research in each community, however, I felt that I was abandoning the workers and had a strong impression of myself as one of the countless, transient whites in the north.

E. Data analysis

Data analysis is not a discrete and separate stage in the research process, but rather an overlapping component with data collection and theorizing. This interplay is central to the construction of empirical sense and thus, the process of data analysis cannot be separated from the theoretical framework within which I examined the research question. Throughout the research period, my relationship to both recent theoretical formulations concerning the social control function of child welfare and colonialism as a theoretical framework for the understanding of native people's relation to state welfare institutions remained essentially unchanged. However, as the empirical work progressed, my conviction grew that neither of these formulations can independently provide an adequate account of the Inuit workers' experience of youth protection practice, but rather must be used in conjunction with one another. For instance, the colonization thesis focuses attention on the issue of race relations between dominant and aboriginal society and thereby helps to account for the Inuit workers' experience of subordination within

state bureaucracy. However, this focus deflects attention from issues of gender and age which also figure prominently in the community workers' practice experience. At the same time, while recent formulations of social control acknowledge the need for analyses of both gender and age, they do not pay sufficient, if any, attention to the issue of race relations.

When using participant observation as a means of gathering data, it is important that the analysis begin soon after the onset of data collection (Burgess, 1982). This meant that as my field investigation in each of the two communities neared completion, various themes or categories had emerged from my initial analysis of the data. Admittedly, the analysis at this stage was very tentative. Nevertheless, in order to ensure the validity of my perceptions, I discussed the themes with the community workers thereby actively involving them in the process of analysis (e.g. feelings of inadequacy and helplessness, isolation and lack of support, communication barriers, and prejudice).

In the first draft of the empirical data, I explored the meaning of ten categories which emerged from my initial coding and sorting of field notes and taped conversations with the informants, and placed emphasis on the informants' words. As the action of analysis continued, I began to take more "ownership" of the data. This process involved a detailed content analysis of typed transcripts of several of the tape-recorded discussions with the workers, and was necessarily

informed by my theoretical perspective. In a second draft, my analysis and commentary took on more weight and became interspersed with the data. Ultimately, I re-worked the original categories and data into four collapsed headings: the community workers' experience of subordination, the legislative and policy context of community worker practice, youth protection in a community context, and socialization to the profession.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

Perspectives on Social Control

My intent in this chapter is to make explicit the conceptual framework within which I interpreted the Inuit community workers' experience of youth protection work. The process of social control is central to this framework for several reasons. First, this research project deals with social work practice in the child welfare field, and the institution of child welfare has been analyzed extensively as a mechanism of social control. As a legally mandated service, youth protection is a particular example of social control exercised by social workers on behalf of the state.

Secondly, this study focuses on the experience of native social work practitioners. To appreciate the implications of the workers' cultural identity for their experience of the work, we must recognize that the child welfare system has functioned historically as an agent of colonization geared toward assimilation of native people to dominant society culture. Specific activities associated with the social control function of child welfare (e.g., apprehension of children from parents' care, placement of children in substitute care) have been cited by native organizations as of particular concern because of their tendency to perpetuate historical patterns of dependency and ethnic inferiority. Native workers employed as state agents are likely to

experience some unique stresses in performing these control functions.

And finally, to more fully understand the experience of Inuit practitioners specifically, we must acknowledge that life in contemporary northern settlements continues to be dominated by the colonial encounter between Inuit and whites. That the historical relationship between Inuit and state welfare instituitions remains essentially unchanged has particular consequences for the community workers' practice experience.

My interpretation of the community workers' experience of youth protection is, therefore, framed by the realization that they are exercising a social control function on behalf of the state within the context of a dominant society institution that has functioned historically to subjugate native people. Having examined the various parameters of this framework, I will conclude this chapter by summarizing the theortical assumptions that informed my analysis of the community workers' experience. This discussion is necessary to set up the interplay between theory and data as I experienced it in my analysis of the workers' accounts of their day-to-day practice.

The Social Control Function of Child Welfare

In her analysis of the politics and history of family violence, Gordon suggests that attempts to control parental behaviors which place children at risk of harm illustate many

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of the general problems of "social control" which, she notes, is a phrase most often used to describe processes whereby deviant and, presumably, dangerous behavior is disciplined by the larger society (Gordon, 1988, p. 4). As she explains,

> Agencies devoted to the protection of children are in many ways typical of the entire welfare state in that they have faced great difficulties in maintaining a balance between social order and privacy, between protecting the rights of some individuals and preserving the autonomy of others, and they have often been the means of imposing dominant values on subordinate groups (1988, p. 4).

She also suggests that, as with other activities of the state, the social control of parental conduct could hardly be expected to be administered fairly in a society of such great inequalities of power and yet, it is precisely these inequalities that create the need for welfare state intervention. When we consider that, despite the widespread incidence of abuse and neglect, poor and racial minority children, and those from single parent (mother led) families are overrepresented in the child welfare system (Djao, 1983), we have reason to be concerned about systemic and other biases in child protection work.

A fundamental premise in Canadian child welfare policies concerning the role of the state in family life is that parents have primary responsibility for the care and upbringing of their children. That coercive government interference in family life should be kept to a minimum is the corollary to this belief (Bala, 1991). At the same time, there is widespread agreement that the treatment meted out by family

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"heads" to their dependents must be subject to some limits. However, as Gordon notes, to establish and enforce such limits provokes a fundamental tension between civil liberties and social control for "in policing private behaviour, one person's right may be established only by invading another person's privacy" (Gordon, 1988, p. 4).

Child welfare legislation, and its attendant policies and practices, embody this tension. Although the state establishes certain standards of parental behaviour, respect for parents' rights to raise children in a manner of their choice is enshrined in the child welfare legislation. At the same time, however, children are citizens in their own right and the state has a statutory obligation to safeguard their interests and well-being (Bala, 1991; Davies, 1985). Thus, in situations where parental care is so inadequate that it falls below minimal acceptable standards, direct intervention inco the family is justified to protect children.

It may be, as Bala (1991) suggests, that the child protection system is the most dramatic and coercive form of state intervention into family life. Pursuant to provincial legislation, protection agencies have a mandated responsibility to investigate reports that a child may be in need of protection and to take appropriate action to secure the child's safety. With this responsibility comes the power, where necessary, to force parents to surrender custody of a child.

One of the greatest sources of anxiety for child

protection workers derives from their power to remove children, often against their will and against their parents' wishes. The obvious central contradiction here is that simultaneously workers are supposed to build caring and close relationships with children and parents, yet they may be called upon to remove a child (Bolger, Corrigan, Docking & Frost, 1981). In the current practice context, the anxiety associated with discretionary decision making, particularly in the high risk area of child abuse, is exacerbated for workers by the realistic fear of being held publicly accountable in the event of a tragedy (e.g. death of a child) (Davies, 1985).

Recent changes in the legislative and organizational contexts of child protection have had a direct impact on the experience of front-line social workers. The legal definition of "child in need of protection", which establishes the basis for whether or not involuntary intervention in the family is justified, now contains more precise and objective language, thereby restricting intervention to relatively well-defined situations and limiting the discretion afforded judges and social workers.[5] The narrower, more specific definition is also consistent with notions of due process as it more clearly identifies for parents the problems to be addressed. Increasingly efforts have been made to maintain children in

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[5] Sections 38 and 38.1 of Quebec's Youth Protection Act enumerate situations which constitute risk to the security and development of a child.

their parental homes through the provision of in-home supports (e.g., teaching homemakers, parent aides, parent relief), and if they must be admitted to agency care, to maintain them within their extended family or home community. This emphasis is reflected in the legislation which requires that agencies prove their plans for involuntary intervention to be "the least restrictive alternative" consistent with a child's welfare (Bala, 1991). The increased legalization of the protection process not only affords a greater recognition of parents and childrens' rights but also places greater controls on the power of the state to intervene in family life. At the same time, the exercise of discretion by social workers within state bureaucracy is increasingly constrained by the highly structured and tightly regulated nature of statutory work.

The example of child protection work produces a more complex view of social control than has been customary among social theorists. By failing to give sufficient attention to the inherent contradictions in child welfare policy and practice, many theorists have promoted a view of social work as simply unwanted intervention (Gordon, 1988). However, the historical evidence of the development of child welfare tells a very different story. By drawing attention to the uncritical assumptions that underlie the condemnation of social work as a process of domination, recent critics of the social control interpretation of child welfare have demonstrated the need for a more complex appraisal of outside intervention into the family. I turn now to consideration of these issues.

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Limitations of the Social Control Perspective

The condemnation of "outside" intervention into the family via the institution of child welfare is a prevalent theme in the theoretical literature of critics on the left dealing with the relation between state and family. In his 1969 publication "The Child Savers", Platt argues that it was not the humanitarianism and benevolence of social reformers that provoked the child saving movement but rather the spectre of the dangerous and perishing lower classes in need of control. As evidence in support of his claim, Platt notes that the rhetoric of reform was couched in political economic terms of producing better disciplined workers, preventing and combatting delinquency and crime, cutting off the supply of paupers, and producing industrious, self-reliant citizens who would no longer be a drain on state coffers (Van Krieken, 1986, p. 402). Lasch (1977) is uncompromising in his view that child welfare constitutes the assertion of social control by one group over another with the result that the family has been undermined and taken over by professional experts, with its socializing function being transferred to outside agencies (e.g. schools, child guidance clinics, juvenile courts). In a similar view, Donzelot condemns the overshadowing of the family by what he terms the sphere of "the social", and evokes powerful images of families being "policed", "colonized", and "subjected to a tutelary complex" such that they are no longer capable of autonomous functioning (1979, p. 7,9,89).

Summarizing these themes, Van Krieken explains that the

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social control perspective of child welfare is one in which the purpose and effect of reform measures are viewed as guaranteeing the class structure of capitalism, controlling the unruly elements among the working class, and generally maintaining social order. He notes as well that within this optic, the state, bourgeoisie and middle class are presented as the dominant actors, and child welfare is viewed as a means of regulating, policing and controlling largely immigrant, working-class families to facilitate adherence to middle-class values and family lifestyle (1986, pp. 403-406). The analysis of social work intervention which follows from this perspective depicts social workers primarily as agents of social control on behalf of the state.

Yet, as we have already seen in the example of child protection, front-line workers perform both caring and control functions, and the inherent tension between these aspects of their role is endemic to all welfare state services. Traditional analyses of child welfare do not adequately reflect this reality and thereby limit our capacity to understand the experience of front-line workers and child welfare clients. Moreover, the work of recent critics reveals that such analyses contain a number of uncritical assumptions which lead to a misrepresentation of the child welfare enterprise.

Toward a More Realistic Appraisal of Child Welfare

While usage of the concept of social control as a paradigm for explaining the development of child welfare was initially helpful in bringing the benefits of a class analysis to reform efforts, it also gave rise to conceptual problems (Gordon, 1988; Mayer, 1985; Van Krieken, 1986). As Mayer explains:

> Most studies concentrate upon the motivation of reformers, the resultant programs which reformers set up, and then simply assert that the poor were controlled. Precisely who was doing the controlling, for what reasons and by what means remain unclear issues. Also, interpreters of various reform movements do not address the further issue of whether seemingly widespread social control measures were effective (1985, p. 21).

Problems arise, therefore, with how to conceptualize the subject and object of social control, its overall purpose and effects.

The condemnation of state intervention, and in particular social work intervention, into the family as nothing more than a process of domination reflects a simple appraisal of social control which is built upon a number of uncritical assumptions (Gordon, 1988). Gordon notes that critics of social control often cite the violation of civil liberties as evidence of the dangers of intervention into the family. Yet, as she notes, this begs the question of whose privacy and whose liberties, for the dominant conception of liberties in the 19th century was one of individual rights against the state, which was in fact an attribution of rights to heads of households (1989, p. 294-295). This argument, therefore, reveals a primary

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concern for men's privileged position in the family.

Several scholars have criticized the institution of child welfare and professional intervention for destroying a traditional family autonomy. Yet, family relations have never been immune from social regulation. Indeed, social control in some form is a defining feature of all social interaction.

> While the form of social control exercised by child protection agencies is clearly different from that of traditional societies, such as community gossip or private intervention, the latter were no more tolerant of individual liberty or deviance than the bureaucratic state and its professionals (Gordon, 1988, p. 295).

The notion of class-oriented social control as traditionally applied by theorists includes the assumption that the imposition of middle-class values was an unwelcome intrusion on working-class family life. However, as Mayer (1985) explains, while child welfare institutions were designed in part to impose a middle-class discipline and morality, the general principle that these would benefit working-class children was not confined to the elite. On the contrary,

> Discipline and control among the working class of its disorderly elements was often seen as a means of social advancement, in fact, precisely as a means of undermining bourgeoisie power. Rather than being imposed from above by the middle class, repectability came to be central to the working-class assertion of worth, dignity, integrity and independence in the face of middle-class condescension (Mayer, 1985, p. 26).

Thus, although the intervention of the middle class influenced the direction of change in working-class culture, so too did

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the active participtation of working-class members themselves
(Van Krieken, 1986, p. 415). The tendency in many critiques
of social control to disregard a group's self-regulation of
its own members results in claims regarding the effectiveness
of control measures that cannot be substantiated. Moreover,
it reduces the working class and other minority groups toward
whom control measures are directed to passive objects of
historical change (Van Krieken, 1986, p. 422).

Gordon's work, however, shows that clients came to use
the child welfare system for their own purposes, and that
their cumulative pressure did affect agencies' definitions of
problems and proposals for help. She notes that the
interventions of professionals, bureaucrats and upper-class
charity workers were often invited by family members.

> Although clients were not likely to control the
> relationship, or even necessarily get what they
> wanted, nevertheless, it is a mistake to see the
> flow of initiative in only one direction - from top
> to bottom, professionals to clients, elite to
> subordinate (1988, p. 295).

The active role played by agency clients is typically
overlooked by theorists who conceive of the family as a
homogenous unit unmarked by age and gender differences. The
historical evidence, however, reveals that agency intervention
was most often initiated by women and children, the weaker
members of the family power structure. Although their
expressed intent may not have been to alter existing family
power relations, this was precisely the outcome of much social
work practice with families. As Gordon concludes, therefore,

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an accurate view of social work intervention into the family
must consider, as clients did in their decisions to seek
outside help, both external and familial forms of domination
(1988, p. 299).

Examination of the historical evidence reveals that the
expansion of child welfare services was not simply a linear
progression toward increased state intervention into family
life but rather was the outcome of a complex process of
negotiations and alliances involving the state, capital,
middle-class professionals and the working class (Van Krieken,
1986, p. 418). Social work, and the social control
establishment, did not arise out of an independent ruling or
middle-class agenda, but out of conflicts that had both gender
and generational as well as class "sides" (Gordon, 1988, p.
296). To achieve a more accurate appraisal of social work
intervention, therefore, we require a more sophisticated
understanding of the operation of power within class, gender
and generational relations, and in particular, of the active
role played by the supposedly powerless in the stability and
change of any given social order (Van Krieken, 1986, p. 423).

As a framework for the analysis of social work practice
and the experience of workers, this conceptualization of
control provides a different angle of vision for perceiving
efforts of dominant groups to influence the behaviour of
others; the latter can resist, negotiate or attempt
politically to nullify such efforts. In this view, the
exercise of social control is a complex, dynamic and

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interactive process that sets up a dialectical tension between domination and resistance which is experienced by social workers and clients alike.

The conceptualization of control as a dynamic and interactive process entailing negotiation and alliances, and resistance, among the various partners provides a more satisfactory paradigm for the analysis of social work practice. Most importantly, in my view, it accommodates the reality that social workers' experience of practice is not pre-determined but rather emerges through the processes of action and decision making they undertake in carrying out their child protection mandate (Davies, 1985). However, in order to understand and describe the experience of native social workers engaged in statutory child welfare practice within a state bureaucracy, we must expand the conceptualization of control to include an analysis of race relations.

Native Child Welfare

The literature on child welfare and native people provides substantial evidence that state provision of child welfare services has failed to respond adequately to the needs of aboriginal children and their communities. The history of child welfare intervention in native communities demonstrates both a lack of understanding of native culture and a tendency to ignore the root causes of social problems such as family violence, alcoholism and neglect that often precipitate the

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removal of native children from their families and communities (Warry, 1991).

That native children are significantly overrepresented amongst child welfare clientele in many Canadian provinces is indicative of this failure (Hepworth, 1980; Johnston, 1983).[6] In some Canadian provinces, native children are five times as likely to be admitted to care as non-native children, but the problem is not simply one of over-representation. Native children in substitute care are more likely than non-native children to experience numerous placement disruptions and to have less contact with their birth parents (Hepworth, 1980). Removed from their communities, placed in non-native temporary or long-term substitute care arrangements and socialized within the dominant culture, native children are more likely to lose touch with or devalue their own cultural background, and as a result, experience extreme emotional and psychological distress as young adults (Warry, 1991).

Attempts to account for the disproportionate rate of native childrens' admission to care often posit a simple cause and effect relationship between parents' socio-economic status and their ability to provide adequate child care (McKenzie, 1985; Ryerse, 1991). Similar to poor families in general, Canada's native people tend also to suffer from the

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[6] According to Johnston, aboriginal children comprise only 4.8% of all Canadian children, yet they make up 36.7% of all children in care in British Columbia, 28.7% in Alberta, 32.1% in Manitoba, 63.8% in Saskatchewan, and 47.5% in the Northwest Territories.

environmental stressors (i.e. poverty, chronic unemployment, inadequate housing, malnutrition and poor health conditions) which precipitate family disruption, breakdown and child maltreatment (Ryerse,1991). Indeed, these conditions are a fact of life for the vast majority of child welfare clients.

However, native people and other ethnic minority groups must also contend with the problem of racial discrimination. To the extent that social work judgements reflect the values and practices of the dominant society, they discriminate against minority groups. The literature suggests that native children may be apprehended from their families more as a result of differences between native and non-native child rearing practices and cultural values than out of child welfare needs.[7] As Warry explains:

> The apprehension of native children by non-aboriginal child welfare authorities stems in part from non-native attitudes toward Indian social and environmental conditions and a misunderstanding of the structure of native communities. This point is diacritical in that it provides the moral justification for the "protection" of native children: protection against an allegedly destructive environment that impedes the socialization

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[7] There are critical differences between the child-rearing practices of native and non-native people. Generally, aboriginal parents respect their child's individuality and allow the child greater freedom to develop naturally whereas non-aboriginal parents direct and control their children. Native children are socialized to display their feelings only at appropriate times and in private, and their emotional self-control has often been mistaken as indifference. Teasing is used by adults as a means of discipline and is often interpreted as emotional abuse by outsiders. Native children may be cared for by several households of an extended family with the natural parents' understanding that the child would receive the same love and care which they would provide. This contrasts with non-native emphasis on the nuclear family as the basic unit of child care provision.

of children and adolescents (1991, p. 220).

Recent critics of native child welfare maintain that the extension of professional social services in aboriginal communities has fragmented, rather than reinforced, native family life and contributed to problems of dependency and ethnic inferiority through the application of assimilationist and culturally insensitive policies and practices (Hudson and McKenzie, 1981; McKenzie, 1985; Sinclair, Philips and Bala, 1991; Warry, 1991). To rectify this situation will require that future social work intervention rely upon a more comprehensive explanation of native social problems which incorporates relevant causal explanations concerning native poverty, native-white relations, and related concepts of cultural devaluation and racism (McKenzie, 1985).

Child Welfare as an Agent of Colonialism

Hudson and McKenzie (1981) situate their analysis of the child welfare system within a conflict perspective of race relations, arguing that this context is required to understand the historical subjugation of native people by white, European-based economic and social systems. The conflict perspective leads them to an examination of colonialism and an analysis of the child welfare system as an agent in the colonization of native people.

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As a theoretical explanation of native social problems, colonialism takes us beyond the current social work preoccuption with the individual and combines theories related to economic and cultural dependency (McKenzie, 1985, p. 275).

Thus, it allows for a more complete understanding of how the child welfare system has failed native people and provides guidelines for the development of more comprehensive responses to child welfare needs in native communities.

In their analysis of the extent to which the child welfare system is colonial in its operation, Hudson and McKenzie note three particular features. The first of these is the location of power and decision-making authority within the dominant society. The legislation which governs service provision was created and implemented by the courts and child welfare agencies without native input and consequently, with little regard for its social and cultural impact (McKenzie, 1985). Decisions related to the apprehension and placement of native children have been made primarily by non-native professionals outside the native community. Such decisions deny the existence of formal and informal social and political structures within the community and thereby undermine their legitimacy and power. Moreover, decisions of this type negatively affect the emotional, spiritual and cultural health of the community by reinforcing a sense of collective powerlessness (Warry, 1991).

The second attribute of colonialism evidenced in child welfare policy and practice is the devaluation of native culture. Historically, little attention has been paid to the

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ways in which native communities have traditionally handled neglect through serial parenting and extended family networks. The continued extension of non-native services, including the removal of children, has so severely disrupted the transmission of knowledge and patterns of child care that many native communities have had difficulty re-establishing networks of community care or creating substitute care resources. The maintenance of control by non-native authorities over the definition of adequate child care in relation to neglectful families and substitute care resources perpetuates the devaluation of native culture. In their attention to material standards, these definitions encourage a culturally-biased perception of native communities and families as impoverished, primitive, socially disorganized and generally unsuitable environments for children.

And lastly, the authors draw attention to the interactive quality of the colonial relationship, noting that it is an everyday lived experience which conditions members of both the dominant and subordinate groups. The ongoing process of removing children from their home communities and culture has systematically contributed to internalized perceptions among parents and children which stress the inferiority and inadequacy of their own community and culture. The internalization of these perceptions is manifested in requests from parents who want their children placed in white, middle-class foster homes to give them a better opportunity for future success. Responses of this type often serve only

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to reinforce the inferiority of the subordinate group (Hudson & McKenzie, 1981, pp. 63-66, 87-88).

The foregoing analysis confirms the need for policy and practice priorities which respond to the needs of native communities rather than those of the dominant society, and which emphasize principles of cultural autonomy and native control of child welfare services in their own communities. In some Canadian provinces (e.g. Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatechewan, British Columbia), native political organizations have established child and family service agencies and have negotiated successfully with their provincial governments to secure a mandate to provide child welfare services in their own reserve communities. The current structures for the delivery of social services in Quebec remains far less favourable to the interests of native people.

The Inuit Context of Practice

One of the most salient features of life in contemporary Inuit settlements is the extent to which these communities, in their material, ideological and economic structures, are a creation of white, southern intrusion. Irrespective of their individual motives, all of the institutions represented in the north during both the pre- and post-war period have been intent on causing change which would enable the incorporation of Inuit into the mainstream of southern life. Whereas the missionaries and traders during the pre-war period desired

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moral and economic incorporation respectively, the newer state institutions aim at incorporation that is broadly ideological (through education), national (through law and medicine, and political (through local government) (Brody, 1975). In each case, progress toward the overall objective has been facilitated by the fact that the Inuit have come to depend, or have become convinced that they depend, on things which only whites can dispense.

Prior to white incursion into the north, the Inuit nuclear family was firmly determined by economic and environmental conditions, and traditional beliefs and customs depended for their coherence on a highly mobile lifestyle based on subsistence hunting. In the hunting camp, Inuit were their own masters and were neither directly supported nor manipulated by outsiders. The smallness of camp life also conditioned the relationships which existed among its families who looked to one another for help and who greatly valued cooperation and sharing of resources.

The independence and self-reliance of the subsistence Inuit was quickly lost with the introduction of fur trading, an activity that changed social relations between Inuit and whites, and among Inuit themselves. The sense of coherence and integrity that previously had been felt most keenly in family life was disrupted, and the cultural and social values which had been central to the Inuit's collective, ecological adaptation were no longer operational within the social structures that accompanied the new economic order.

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Paine (1977) argues that the most noteworthy feature of the Canadian north is the degree to which colonialism was unintended, even accidental. While a dependency relationship certainly arose between Inuit and whites in the pre-war period, this process was largely determined by situational factors (e.g. disease and famine) rather than by any deliberate attempt to create a situation that would promote dependency. While Paine admits that government intervention in the north has perpetuated colonial aspects of the Inuit's pre-war contacts with whites, he suggests that the form which the current relationship has taken obscures the fact that Inuit continue to be devalued by the institutional arrangements between themselves and southern society.

The tutelage experience of the past forty years has left a legacy of dependence and divisiveness in each settlement, largely as a consequence of Euro-Canadian pluralism in the north. Each group of white agents in the north has represented a particular segment of western values and each has desired the propagation of its own version of western culture. The overlap in spheres of influence and transactions with Inuit by various agents led to a community divided into clienteles and fragmented along lines of acceptance or rejection of particular values and patrons (Brody, 1975; Paine, 1977).

Brody (1975) explains that Inuit transactions with whites have given rise to two polarized systems at the local level. Traditionalist values are conservative and lead to an uncompromising cultural stand which precludes client-patron

relationships with whites. By contrast, transitionalist values are more pragmatic and conciliatory, giving way to a system which accepts white institutions and simultaneously calls for a continuation of Inuit ones. While not precluding patron-client relationships, transitionalist action seeks to alter the existing distribution of power, privilege and prestige between Inuit and whites. Although the distinction between these two value systems refers more to a continuum rather than a dichotomous division, the disparities between them seriously limit the possibility of Inuit concensus and collective action, and make leadership problematic.

Perhaps most troubling to the Inuit is a profound sense of alienation which arises in part from their awareness of the meaning of their own experience. Their cultural responses through the past forty years of rapid change have been adaptations to situational exigencies rather than an actualization of cultural values. The moral values of the Inuit - those which embody the shared meaning that constitute culture and which engender a deep commitment - have been difficult to realize in a social structure in which traditonal Inuit practice and beliefs are seen to be anachronistic. As people who are now marginal in their own communities, at the centre of which stand white institutions, the Inuit are experiencing a deep sense of loss and uncertainty.

The potential for change in the north is limited by the extreme intrusiveness of white tutelage, an experience which makes it difficult for Inuit to maintain a perception of self

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which is independent of the white man and his culture, or independent of situations of white help. This help is made to seem all the more necessary by the application of white norms of public administration. Precisely because it addresses itself to the bicultural aspect of settlement life, the transitionalist ideology is the politically persuasive one. Transitionalist action focuses on putting Inuit content into institutions that are modelled on Euro-Canadian ones. Successful realization of this objective would legitimate the Inuit role system and restore to them a central component of their identity. The changing social and political climate in the north suggests that this process is underway.

To conclude this chapter, the assumptions that informed my analysis of the Inuit community workers' experience of youth protection are as follows. Although the workers' practice is constrained by the legislative, organizational and social contexts of their work, they retain some margin of maneouvre in their day-to-day practice and are, thus, active agents in the construction of their own practice experience. Moreover, their experience of youth protection work is not pre-determined but rather will emerge through the processes of action and decision-making they undertake in carrying out the child protection mandate (Davies, 1985). The tension between the care and control elements of practice will figure prominently in their experience. That the community workers are "insiders" who share an identification with and investment in local community values and traditions is likely to

exacerbate their anxiety around decision making. And finally, as native people employed within a state bureaucracy, the community workers are apt to experience feelings of subordination that accrue specifically from their cultural identity.

Having now examined the various parameters of the theoretical framework of the research, I turn to the analysis of the empirical data and discussion of the Inuit workers' experience of their youth protection practice.

THE DAY-TO-DAY EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY WORKERS

I begin this chapter by exploring the Inuit workers' experience of subordination as a consequence of their structural location in the social service bureaucracy and their ethnic minority status. The community workers' sense of subordination to the administrative apparatus has a pervasive influence on their practice experience. While certain structures within the service organization offer workers some measure of support and protection with respect to their case decisions, the very nature of this support urges conformity to the bureaucratic organization of the work (Davies, 1985).

The legislative and policy framework of child welfare services largely determines the form and content of youth protection work. I will examine the community workers' experience of this framework, revealing how the foreign auspice of their mandate is problematic in several respects. Most essentially, the lack of legitimacy accorded the "white man's law" in the north deprives workers of a clear sanction for their role and practice. The sanction available to workers thus resides within the bureaucracy and their compliance to administrative expectations of their work.

The Inuit workers' attempts to satisfy the requirements of the law, subject to bureaucratic norms of public adminstration, in a setting where the norms and realities of village life militate against such conformity, sets up a fundamental tension in their experience of day-to-day

practice. This tension is exacerbated by the workers' close identification with their communities. Therefore, I will examine how the local conditions of work require that community workers define and implement the law in a culturally sensitive way while, simultaneously, making it difficult for them to do so.

I will also consider the Inuit workers' socialization to the profession of social work to see how the nature and outcomes of this process function to sustain rather than mitigate the conflicts and tensions they experience in daily practice. The lack of legitimation and professional identity that result from the Inuit workers' weak professionalization limits their capacity to resist the administrative definition of their work.

Despite the many constraints on their youth protection work, the community workers are active agents in the construction of their own practice experience. The empirical evidence suggests that they are making some progress, albeit limited to date, to develop a distinctive indigenous approach to statutory practice.

COMMUNITY WORKERS' EXPERIENCE OF SUBORDINATION

Social work practice within state bureaucracy

The recommendations of the Castonguay commission in the early 1970s prompted a massive restructuring of the organizational context of social work practice in Quebec. The

state's efforts to maximize the efficiency and cost effectiveness of its welfare apparatus, along with a technocratic vision, resulted in a highly centralized state bureaucracy (Lesemann, 1984). These developments have had far-reaching consequences for both social workers and clients.

The status and role of professionals has been greatly diminished by the predominance of managerial authority and the extensive division of labour which leaves those engaged in direct service delivery with little say in the planning and coordination of services (Davies & Thomson, 1983). The consolidation of decision-making authority in the highest echelons leaves social workers feeling powerless in the face of the administrative hierarchy. This is particularly true for Inuit workers whose senior administrators and supervisors make decisions from outside the north.

The severe pressure on public expenditures since the mid 1970s has limited the quality and availability of resources that workers can offer to clients. Confronted by serious constraints on resources, social workers are having to resort to a more controlling relationship with their clients. Some analysts have argued that in youth protection work the practice emphasis is now on disciplining families to manage on their own or be subject to coercive and punitive state intervention; e.g., removal of a child (Bolger, Corrigan, Docking & Frost, 1981; Parton, 1981).

The push on workers to "get tough" with clients does not

arise from economic considerations alone. Attacks on social work itself, precipitated by the moral panic around child abuse[8] and charges of how the youth protection system has failed,[9] have prompted managers of social service departments to step up their efforts to monitor front-line practice. The pressure on social workers to comply with the bureaucratic organization of practice is considerable given the high-risk nature of child abuse cases in particular. However, even in youth protection, which is perhaps the most highly regulated and tightly structured form of social work practice, workers retain some measure of discretion in their day-to-day work. In the current climate, this discretion often is perceived by social workers as a dangerous thing (Davies, 1985).

While clients occupy the most starkly dependent role in relation to organizations and their resources, social workers too occupy a subordinate position within the state bureaucracy. However, if we hope to appreciate the situation of indigenous community workers, we must also recognize the sense of subordination that accrues from their cultural identity as Inuit.

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[8] Originated by Stanley Cohen, the term "moral panic" describes a situation in which the societal reaction to a perceived threat is out of all proportion to its empirical reality.

[9] Since 1985 in Quebec, extensive media coverage has been focused on child abuse cases allegedly demonstrating "how the system has failed" (Montreal Gazette December 14, 1985), "how agency ignored kid's plight (Montreal Gazette February 4, 1987), or worse, how child protection services are in "a shambles" (Montreal Gazette January 24, 1987).

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The impact of institutionalized racism[10]

The community workers' position within the social service structure parallels that of Inuit in the broader social, economic and political context of Canadian society where, as members of a minority ethnic group, they are discriminated against in their efforts to participate fully in the institutions of the dominant society (Bolaria & Li, 1985; Brody, 1975; Kallen, 1983). Community workers labour under a dual sense of subordination, first as state agents constrained by the social and bureaucratic context of their work and secondly, as a direct consequence of their cultural identity.

Although the hiring of Inuit workers by the social service agency may suggest a shift away from the paternalistic model of ethnic relations[11] that has characterized the historical relationship between Inuit and the state, the current administration remains nonetheless colonial. The community workers' relationship to the bureaucracy continues

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[10] Institutionalized racism consists of the laws and relationships built into major social institutions that act to promote existing inequality and the social exclusion of minority groups. See Brad McKenzie, "Social work practice with native people." In Shankar A. Yelaga,(Ed.), An introduction to social work practice in Canada (Scarborough: Prentice Hall, 1985), 272-288.

[11] Kallen (1983) describes the paternalistic model as highly asymmetric with vast disparities in political, economic and social power between the dominant and subordinate groups. The more powerful, dominant population is highly ethnocentric, and it is the normative imperatives of the dominant ethnic group which become sanctioned into public institutional policies thereby providing the moral and cultural guidelines for the whole society.

to be shaped by white tutelage.[12] As one worker observed:

> They [white administrators] might be very nice to us because we can help them to get things done. They don't speak Inuktitut so they need our help. But sometimes I think that they take advantage of us. Maybe they think that we Inuit are dumb or something.

The suggestion that community workers feel taken advantage of by the agency, and that perhaps administrators do not recognize that workers have this perception of their relationship to the organization, reveals the extent to which the tutelage complex remains intact. In their interaction with the social service bureaucracy, Inuit workers find themselves placed in a childlike role; those who conform to the tutor's norms of public administration will be rewarded, but when there is deviation from what the tutors deem appropriate, support may be withdrawn.[13] The community workers' dependence upon the agency for the resources with which to do their job maintains this arrangement.

The Inuit workers' accounts of their practice suggest that they have to some extent accepted their denigration and collude with the process of their own domination even as they resist it. This process manifests itself in their interactions

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[12] Paine (1977) notes that tutelage is based upon conformity whose inducements include subtle coercions and implies a relationship in which manifest superiority is attributed to the tutor, in this case white administrators.

[13] Community workers gave an example of how concerns regarding medical services were reported by village residents to the appropriate Ministry only to be told that if their complaints were to continue, the services may be withdrawn from the community.

with other professionals in the village (e.g., nurses, police constables and teachers), the majority of whom are white southerners. There is a pronounced tendency for the community workers to defer to other professionals, even when doing so is likely to jeopardize their own interventions. The following, in which a female worker recalls her involvement in a presumably joint investigation of sexual abuse, illustrates this point.

> Researcher: Before going to the school, did you have any opportunity to talk with the police about how the two of you [community worker and police constable] would do the investigation?

> Worker: No. I didn't know what to do. I thought that all these police had good experience in these cases, so I followed him, but he did not do a good job. Do you mean that it would be okay for me to tell the police how I think we should do the investigation?

Although the worker's decision to comply with the constable's plan for the investigation was prompted in part by her own lack of knowledge, there were clearly other factors at work. As an Inuk woman, she did not see herself as an equal partner in a joint investigation with a white, male police officer.

An experienced female worker recalls her frustration in dealing with a police constable in a case of alleged sexual abuse:

> He would not agree to let me go and interview the child on my own. I tried to explain why I felt this was a good idea, but he said no, that he wanted me to come along just to do my job of interpreting. I don't think he believed that I could do a good job. But he didn't find out anything because the little girl was too afraid to talk to him. On the way back to the office he gave me a really hard time because things did not go well.

Here again, the community worker complied with the constable's expectations, although in this instance, the worker did try to assert her own views on how best to handle the investigation. However, she did not defend herself against the constable's imputation that she was to blame for the poor outcome of the interview. In further discussion of these and similar instances, workers revealed that they did not follow up with other professionals about their dissatisfaction with the process of the work as they experienced it.

Taken together, the interviews suggest that such deference has complex origins. The phenomenon of deference may be interpreted in a number of ways. It may be, for example, a deliberate strategy to avoid confrontation, something their own culture teaches Inuit to do whenever possible.[14] Given the community workers' sense of subordination, deference may be a strategy of impression management; i.e., an attempt to fit their behaviour to what they believe to be others' expectations of them (Briggs, 1971). Alternatively, by deferring to others, community workers may be privately modifying the scope of their own discretion and authority. By imposing restrictions on the scope of their powers, social workers can to some extent free themselves from perceived

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[14] In conjunction with personal autonomy and flexibility, deference in one's behaviour towards others is highly valued in Inuit society. Deference includes people being patient with one another, not pressing one another to conform, not trying to change or reform each other, and withdrawing from strong, threatening interpersonal relations. See Paine, The nursery game.

responsibility for outcomes (Lipsky, 1980). Confronted with the problem of scant resources with which to help clients, community workers may welcome opportunities to limit their discretion in this way as a means of coping with the discrepancy between resources and the demands of the job. But however we interpret examples of deference, one of the unintended consequences for community workers is that clients and village residents come to doubt their competence to do the job.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CONTEXT FOR PRACTICE

A mandate for youth protection

At the most fundamental level, the question of goals and objectives in social work is problematic.

> It is impossible to take for granted a goal and work towards it. What one views as a problem, what one accepts as a solution to the problem as defined, and what will be regarded as a satisfactory means for arriving at a given solution to a given problem is a matter of debate: it involves options about the kind of lifestyle one is prepared to tolerate, and will differ according to one's position in the social structure, and in particular, the social structure of the welfare enterprise (Pearson, 1975, P. 48).

This lack of consensus inevitably gives rise to competing and even contradictory objectives in day-to-day practice. Youth protection work is no exception. In child welfare services there is general agreement that children must be protected against threats to their physical and psychological well-being. Yet what exactly do we mean when we talk about protecting a child? How is risk defined, by whom, and what are

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the most appropriate means by which to ensure a child's safety while simultaneously respecting both the child's and the parents' rights? These basic questions in youth protection are subject to a wide range of interpretations and beliefs. Our own responses to these and related questions are influenced by the prevailing political and ideological climate of a given historical period, as well as our own experiences of family and community in which cultural differences play an important role.

The Quebec Youth Protection Act offers social workers only the most general practice guidelines. As a formal statement of government social policy, the Act attends mostly to administrative, legal and procedural arrangements while the underlying principles and goals are left implicit, ambiguous, open to interpretation. To some extent, this ambiguity is bounded in day-to-day practice by the highly regulated and tightly structured nature of statutory work; there are hierarchical lines of accountability, procedure manuals, supervision and case conference structures. However, considerable latitude remains within which youth protection workers must exercise their discretion. While compliance with formal procedures and regulations offers workers some measure of support and protection concerning their decisions, it is impossible for workers simply to orient their practice to bureaucratic exigencies (Davies, 1985).

The utility of administrative procedures and rules in

providing solutions to problems, and in turn directions for practice, is limited by the complexity of clients' problems. Formalized procedures assume that events unfold clearly and predictably and are amenable therefore to simple, programmatic intervention (Glastonbury & Cooper, 1980). However, in youth protection work the majority of cases fall into a "grey area" in which current and future risk to the child is unclear. In short, it is difficult for workers to decide whether a child is at sufficient risk to warrant court-ordered supervision or removal from the home (Davies 1985). Ultimately, protective services workers must rely upon their best assessments of fluid situations. An Inuit worker aptly conveyed how the problem of exercising discretion confronts all youth protection workers.

> The law tells us when we should go to investigate to see if a child is maybe in danger. And the law says that if I think that it is too dangerous for a child to stay with her parents that I should take the child away to a foster home, or to stay with a relative. But I still have to make up my own mind about this. And what if people don't agree with me? Everybody has an opinion.

The diverse opinions surrounding the decision to remove a child renders decision-making even more problematic for front-line workers. Youth protection workers frequently are criticized by clients and the general public for being unnecessarily coercive and intrusive. In the current climate for social work practice, criticism of this nature reflects a major practice dilemma in statutory work. On the one hand, social workers may be accused of being "baby snatchers", while

on the other, they may be blamed for failing to adequately protect children from neglectful and abusive caregivers (Bolger et al., 1981; Davies, 1985; Satyamurti, 1979). In effect, workers are caught in a no-win situation so that even the initial decision to intervene may generate considerable anxiety.

Administrative procedures and regulations could not resolve the uncertainty which confronted this new community worker.

> It is sometimes hard to know if we should be involved with a family or if we should stay out. When we know that a child is being neglected or sexually abused, then we don't have to wonder. But sometimes we know that there is a lot of drinking in a home, or maybe that a man beats his wife. In cases like these, we are worried about the kids but it is harder to know if we have a right to be there because there is no information to tell us that the children are suffering. Even if we know that it is not good for kids to see their mother beat up. Maybe the mother is not too worried about the children, or maybe she is afraid to tell us anything because she knows that her husband will get back at her.

In cases like this, the lack of "evidence" concerning the children's status in the home and fear of reprisals by the husband against his wife, and possibly against herself, may provide sufficient reason for the worker to decide not to intervene, or at least not until the situation deteriorates further and there is clearcut evidence of risk to the children.

There are few right answers to the tough decisions youth protection workers make in day-to-day practice, and in exercising discretion they court risk to themselves and/or to

the child. In this context, the foreign auspice of the Inuit workers' mandate takes on a special significance.

The "white man's law"

The Youth Protection Act is commonly referred to in the north, by residents and community workers alike, as the "white man's law". Many Native people regard the legislation with suspicion and scepticism -- as another attempt by government to regulate their lives in accordance with dominant society norms. Their concerns are well-founded when we consider that Native interaction with institutions of child welfare in Canada has been marked by colonialism and related expressions of racism. As a creation of southern institutions and political processes, the legislation embodies dominant society values and ideologies around parenting. The potential conflicts engendered by cultural differences concerning the raising of children have a direct impact on the community workers' practice experience.

Attempts by community workers to implement the youth protection law have earned them the derogatory title of "policeman". An experienced male worker explained one of the problems confronting Inuit workers as a consequence of the foreign auspice of their authority.

> It is very hard to accept this, to be called a policeman. I don't like people to think of me this way when I do my job. But people here do not understand that sometimes the law is necessary to protect the child, that some parents will not cooperate without the law. But it used to be that children had to sometimes be taken away from their

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parents and given to somebody else. I think that people are angry about the law because it is not ours; it comes from outside.

Clearly, the Act is perceived by some Inuit as a coercive form of control imposed by outsiders that serves to displace the self-regulatory practices of traditional Inuit society concerning the care and protection of children. As a result, the law and the community worker role are accorded only minimal legitimacy in the north. When Inuit workers invoke the law as justification for their interventions, they are likely to provoke inordinate resistance from clients as well as criticism from other residents. Moreover, appeals to the law expose workers to accusations of betrayal or selling out in the service of the "white man's law". Under these circumstances, the workers' exercise of authority and discretion is highly problematic.

Role conflict: Inuit as state agents

The tension that Inuit workers experience in trying to conform to the requirements of the law, and at the same time, to the norms and realities of village life, is heightened by the disjunction between the traditional Inuit conception of the helper's role and the contemporary, bureaucratic definition of the social worker role.

Prior to the implementation of the Youth Protection Act in the north, child protection derived from community self-regulation. Intervention relied upon a consensual process of

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decision-making and collective action on the part of the family and kinship group. This natural helping network was built from relationships based on equality and reciprocity between those who gave and those who received help, to which, it was believed, each person had a right. The shared responsibility for problem-solving was essential to the integrity and well-being of the group (Brody, 1975).

This form of child protection was displaced by the implementation of the Act, which imposed the state's definition and organization of statutory practice and social control. Child protection was reconceptualized as a mandated responsibility to be carried out by the state's youth protection workers.

Reflecting upon his experience of these changes in his role as helper, one Inuit worker remarked:

> I didn't know that what I was doing all along was social work. But for me, helping people now is harder. Before we didn't have the law and the CSS [Social Service Centre]. If somebody needed help, I would do what I could to support them. But now the law says that I have to help people even when they are not asking for help. It's hard to force somebody to accept help.

Youth protection workers commonly feel uncomfortable when intervening in situations where their help has not been solicited. However, this worker was acknowledging a particular shift in the context of helping, a shift that magnified his discomfort. By virtue of his mandated authority as a state agent, the worker can no longer enjoy the benefits of an egalitarian relationship with the recipient of his services.

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The altered social relations engendered by the implementation of the Act are troublesome for Inuit workers in part because authority and power accorded on the basis of some apriori ascriptive status were not attributes of the traditional helper role.

Attempting a self-portrayal of his emerging identity as a community worker since the implementation of the Act, another individual explained that he is now a helper in the traditional sense of this word (an Inuk who cares about the well-being of others) and a government agent (someone who cares about others because he is legally obligated to do so). The worker's struggle to reconcile these divergent conceptions of his role must be worked out in day-to-day practice where, to satisfy the requirements of the mandate, he may have to violate cultural norms of conduct; e.g., that of non-interference. The crucial adjustment to be made here is for both the worker and client to internalize and act upon the professional and bureaucratic definitions of their roles. They will be rewarded for this, workers by approval from their superiors and clients by positive attention from their worker. Questions of desirability aside, this adjustment cannot come easily, particularly as the inequity inherent in the contemporary definition of the worker-client relationship undermines the traditional Inuit values of equality and reciprocity in helping others.

As state agents, the community workers encounter a major

practice dilemma. As long as they strive to comply with administrative expectations of their practice, they are valued by the agency; yet simultaneously their efforts as state agents alienate them from their communities, thereby diminishing their potential value to both the agency and the community (Brody, 1975). By virtue of their recruitment, the workers come to occupy a marginal position at the interface between the community and the bureaucracy and do not feel a sense of belonging to either one.

This subjective experience of marginality is evident in this worker's reflections.

> Many times I think that nobody understands how we community workers feel. The bosses don't really know how hard it is to use the law here. Maybe they know but don't care because they get upset when we don't do what they want. And the people here don't know about the law and they get angry. Some of them say that we think too much like white men. We are in the middle all the time.

The difficulty of negotiating community and agency is compounded by the youth protection mandate's basis in dominant society ideologies of parenting and family life. Inuit workers have difficulty identifying with the dominant ideology and yet are expected to act on its premises. In their role as cultural brokers, the workers try vainly to interpret and apply the law in a culturally sensitive manner.

The Inuit workers' attempts to define their mandate in practice is hampered by their isolation and the highly individualized nature of their work. While their geographic and administrative distance from the bureaucracy may appear

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advantageous to developing an alternative approach to the work, it in fact deprives workers of a supportive network within which to develop appropriate norms of practice. I will now consider the local context of the workers' practice, examining how this setting exacerbates the difficulties workers experience as they attempt to define and implement the youth protection mandate.

YOUTH PROTECTION IN A COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The village as practice setting

Statutory practice generates anxiety associated with the exercise of authority and discretion, particularly in the high-risk area of child abuse. Making decisions about the welfare of children is all the more problematic for Inuit workers because of the intimacy of their relationship to the community. The majority of workers are practising in small villages where they have close family ties. The possibility of having to intervene in their own extended families causes workers a great deal of discomfort. One woman described her situation this way.

> Sometimes I think it is an advantage for me to be in a small community. I know everyone pretty well and if there is a problem, I usually hear about it very soon. But many of the people in this village are relatives of mine. It is very hard for me to think about going into their homes and telling them that they are not good parents. To investigate my own family would cause me, and them, a lot of pain. I would not want to cause people in my family to take sides against me or against each other.

The fear of disrupting family ties and provoking divided

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loyalties is distressing for this worker and suggests to her a need for extraordinary caution. When workers must intervene in their extended families, objectivity is regarded as pretentious; as a result, they risk being criticized for engaging in preferential treatment.

As observed by the worker quoted above, the small size of northern communities can be an advantage for workers insofar as their familiarity with the residents may permit them to better anticipate problems and to intervene early. However, the small size of the communities often precludes confidentiality and invites an intense degree of public scrutiny of a worker's performance. A worker can be readily observed going to and from clients' homes; her interactions with other professionals in the village elicits their interest in the outcomes of her work; the cases on which she is working are sometimes made public when a parent or family member shares their experience with social services on the local FM radio; and cases typically involve a large cast of players including an extensive family network both within and beyond the village. In addition, workers feel considerable pressure to lead exemplary lives lest they be taken for hypocrites. A number of female workers, in particular, noted the additional pressure they feel to be good mothers and wives in the face of their responsibility to assess the adequacy of others' parenting and household management.

The social organization of northern communities is

especially significant for workers because it precludes the separation of public and private life enjoyed by social workers in the south. Without this distinction, it is impossible to achieve the social distance from clients that normally helps to protect workers from the emotional impact of their day-to-day work (Satyamurti, 1979). Thus, Inuit workers are unusually vulnerable to repercussions from their decisions and are quick to personalize criticisms of their practice. Given their cultural and family ties to the community, Inuit workers are likely to identify with and be influenced by their clients' perspectives and, therefore, to experience extreme tension in the exercise of authority and discretion. This tension is particularly acute when agency and community expectations of worker practice are incompatible with one another.

Conflicting expectations: community versus agency

The geographic and structural location of community workers heightens the divergence in service orientation that characterizes any core-periphery arrangement of services. Johnson (1973) found that an orientation to client rather than administrative needs is more likely to characterise the work of practitioners close to the periphery whose relationships with clients are more meaningful and immediate than those with socially distant colleagues and superiors. This is certainly the case of Inuit workers. Given the local situation described

above, it is not surprising that Inuit workers feel a need to be especially mindful of community perceptions of their practice.

At the same time, however, community workers are accountable to the agency for their interventions and so cannot afford to lose sight of administrative expectations of their work; e.g., statistical reports, properly maintained files, well-documented case interventions. Although the agency's monitoring of worker performance is far less intense than that which they experience from local residents, the pressure for workers to comply with bureaucratic expectations is considerable nonetheless. Youth protection is acknowledged by administrators and workers alike to be a high-risk area of social work practice. The risk of being held responsible in the event of a tragedy (e.g., death of a child) is that much greater for a worker who has not complied with agency standards.

Problems arise, however, when the activity required to satisfy agency demands is deemed unacceptable by one or another source in the village. All of the workers have had some experience of this conflict. Reflecting on her experience with a case of alleged sexual abuse, a worker recalled that:

> After I interviewed the child to get her story, and she was upset and crying, the mother did not want me to talk to her daughter again. She was worried that this would upset her more. And one of the teachers too said that maybe I should leave the child alone, that she would tell somebody when she was ready. People were getting angry with me for going around and asking lots of questions.

In this particular case, the worker went on to explain that even though several weeks had elapsed since her initial interventions, she continued to feel that she should resume the investigation. The worker was upset about not having done a thorough job although she had taken measures to protect the child from the alleged perpetrator.

In addition to the personal discomfort and anxiety which youth protection workers may experience in dealing with cases of child sexual abuse, this worker was also confronted with the strong cultural sanction against interference in people's personal lives. While it is impossible to assess the relative weight of these factors on the worker's decision, we can see that, when taken together, these conditions might easily deter even the most conscientious worker from attempting anything more than an expeditious solution (e.g., removal of the child). In this example, the need to attend to both agency demands for a thorough investigation and community norms of personal autonomy left the worker feeling caught, and ultimately, distressed about not having done a good job. The conflicting norms of conduct that community workers encounter in such cases make it very difficult for them to decide whose expectations should be given precedence, those of the agency or those of the community. The need to remain sensitive to both compounds the difficulty that workers encounter in trying to define appropriate norms of practice. As a result, day-to-day practice varies considerably from one community to the

next and tends to be only vaguely defined in each village.

The problem of diffuse role boundaries

The community workers report that they do not know the legislation and structure of social services well enough to be able to clearly articulate the nature and limits of their various roles (youth protection worker, worker for young offenders, home care coordinator) to village residents. Their inability to do so, coupled with the lack of public awareness of social services, generates considerable confusion for both workers and clients.

As might be expected under these circumstances, workers often receive requests for service which fall beyond the scope of their various mandated responsibilities. Yet, turning people away is difficult. As "the only show in town", workers face the additional burden of not being able to refer applicants to an alternative resource. Nor do they want to risk being judged as uncaring or dismissive. For example, the Inuit workers are frequently called upon by other professionals (medical, judicial) and community residents to act as interpreters, which is an accepted part of the more traditional helper role. An experienced female worker explained:

> These cases take a lot of my time because, most of the time, that person needs to fill out papers so I end up writing for them. I spent a lot of time last week helping a woman write a declaration for the police so they could lay charges against her husband. It took a long time to explain to her why they needed the information and to

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> help her put together the details of her story. But I
> felt that I had to help her because I know something
> about these things and she really didn't know what to do.
> These kinds of situations bring me lots of extra work
> because I sometimes then have to spend time counselling
> the person, listening to their troubles and supporting
> them.

While the extra demands on her time may be considerable,
requests for assistance of this kind have a compelling quality
about them; not only is the worker able to easily avert any
untoward criticism for lack of responsiveness, but she is also
able to provide a concrete service to the client, thereby
increasing the likelihood that her intervention will be
genuinely helpful and thus, personally gratifying. The
provision of concrete services, which figured prominently in
traditional helping, is highly regarded and frequently
expected by community residents. By contrast, the more
abstract services typical of the professional social work
role, (e.g. counselling) are less likely to be gratifying for
clients or workers. In light of this, it is easy to appreciate
why community workers may continue to identify the more
traditional aspects of their helping role as appropriate
responsibilities in their current practice. Yet, by responding
to requests for service that fall beyond the scope of their
mandates, workers inadvertently perpetuate the confusion
surrounding their role. Furthei, the wide range of activities
and additional demands on worker time promote a sense of
crisis-orientation in their practice and leaves workers
feeling that they have no control over their work.

For social workers in public agencies, this problem is generally resolved to some extent by their colleagues and supervisory staff. This primary reference group not only provides workers with much needed support, but also serves as a structure within which to develop guides for day-to-day practice activity. Through association with colleagues, workers generate what Rees (1978) terms "practice oriented ideologies" and a consensus around appropriate norms of practice that help them to make sense of the demands of their job (e.g., caseload size, resource limitations). For example, a casework ideology would lead workers to give precedence to situations appearing to require ongoing intervention of a therapeutic nature. Rees maintains that the importance of practice oriented ideologies is twofold: they enable workers to perceive appropriate roles for themselves, and they give workers some sense of control in a job which confronts them with a range of baffling problems.

The Inuit workers, however, are geographically so far removed from their front-line colleagues and administrative personnel that it is virtually impossible to align themselves with either group as a point of reference for clarifying day-to-day practice. Although the community workers may want some guidance and direction from village members, the lack of awareness and consensus at the local level constrains the latter group's capacity and willingness to assist workers in this area. Consequently, the community workers find themselves

struggling independently to make sense of the demands of the job. This particular condition of the work not only contributes to a highly idiosyncratic approach to practice, but also to intense feelings of alienation among the workers. Regrettaoly, no concrete steps are being taken at either the community or organizational level to deal with these outcomes.

The foregoing analysis suggests that the community worker is perceived by members of the village as a "person" with traditional (ascribed) status of one sort or another (woman, mother, elder, etc.) deriving from a matrix of her characteristics. On the other hand, she is seen by her agency as a "worker" with activities deriving from that role exclusively. The village personalizes her and the agency objectifies her. Also, the wide mandate for various kinds of interventions probably fits better with a village idea of a generalist, personalized helper than would a highly specialized role. Moreover, within the bureaucratic organization of practice, the helping role is by definition monopolized through access to resources, thus devaluing others sorts of aid by others. Thus for the worker, the problem includes lack of guidance with respect to triage (which mandate takes precedence?) and a lack of resources (triage decisions become impossibly difficult under pressures of extreme scarcity).

Isolation and lack of support

Social workers need to be supported in their work as they
are continually faced with anxiety-provoking and often
intractable situations that as a profession they claim to be
able to do something about (Spencer, 1973). In youth
protection work, particularly in the area of child abuse,
workers need support and protection to negotiate the risk
associated with the exercise of discretion and their own power
(Davies 1985). They also need the opportunity to talk over
candidly what they think and feel and their doubts about their
work. The risk for social workers is that they themselves may
interpret such doubts as indicative of personal inadequacy,
a judgement which undermines their self-confidence and sense
of competence to do the job.

A. At the community level

At present, there is no effective structure in place to
adequately support the community workers in their day-to-day
work. Inuit workers often experience their communities as
unsupportive environments in which to practice. This worker's
observations about her own community reflects their shared
experience.

> People do not understand what it is that we have to do.
> They don't know how difficult it is to do this work. And
> many of them think that it is just 'our' job, that it's
> up to us, because we are the community workers, to solve
> all of the problems in the community. But the problems
> are too big; we cannot do it alone.

The residents' lack of support and understanding, in

conjunction with their uncertainty about the law, has resulted in considerable suspicion regarding worker motives, and in some cases, where the outcome of worker interventions have been judged unfavourable, a lack of trust and even outright hostility toward the worker. Fear for their safety is a common experience, particularly among female workers. Other professionals in the village who might usually be regarded as potential sources of support often are not perceived this way by the workers. Many of the workers report serious problems in communication with other service providers, and with few exceptions, they have been unsuccessful in establishing good collaborative working relationships with them.

B. At the organizational level

Although a supervising social worker (white professional) used to make regular visits to workers in their villages, these visits have been largely curtailed. The lack of organizational support is felt keenly by workers. For example, this experienced worker's sense of abandonment is very clear.

> It's been a very long time since a social worker came to this community. The social worker used to come and talk with the workers about their cases and give us support. We could see that they know how difficult it is to do the work here, and it was good to be able to talk with the supervisor. But now they never come; nobody even comes here. That's why now the community workers feel we are on our own.

At present, workers can expect to meet with a supervisor at the outset of their employment. During these contacts the emphasis is placed on familiarizing the new worker with

administrative requirements and procedures (e.g., case registration, statistical reports, setting up client files). While the community workers allow that these are important components of their preparation, supervision of this kind clearly is intended to be time-limited and does not speak to the workers' ongoing needs for learning and support.

Once a worker has been fully oriented to the system's needs, she is left on her own with the option to call the supervisor or Director of Youth Protection (DYP) for consultation and direction on specific case-related difficulties. While community workers appreciate being able to contact these individuals to ask for direction, especially at the outset of an investigation, there are inherent limitations of such supervision, as suggested by this worker's account of her interaction with head office.

> Most of the time when I call the supervisor or DYP it's because I have a new case and I have to let them know that. Sometimes when I am stuck with a problem on a case I will call to ask what they think I should do. Or I call one of the workers in another village, especially if I know they have good experience with some kinds of problems. But we don't talk like this, like we have been doing this past week. We don't ever talk about the things that bother us, except maybe we complain about forms and paperwork, little things like that.

While the emphasis on procedural matters is to some extent supportive of workers because it helps them to structure their interventions and offers some measure of protection around the decisions they must take, this focus discourages any discussion of the workers' feelings about their practice and leaves them to struggle alone with their doubts and fears.

Ultimately, the community workers are left feeling vulnerable and exposed and unable to rely on either the agency or community.

Climate of despondency about worker practice

Like all social workers, the community workers feel that their interventions should improve their clients' lives. Yet in reality, workers' efforts often are of limited benefit, and in some instances, possibly even detrimental to clients. The limited effectiveness of worker interventions is in part a direct consequence of inadequate resources with which to do the work. The problem of limited resources affects the practice of all social workers in state agencies and constrains their ability to respond to clients in a fully human way, contributing to feelings of frustration and powerlessness. However, the situation confronting Inuit workers is unusually drastic: there are few substitute care resources; there are long delays between court dates; there are no treatment resources for substance abusers, and so on. Recounting her experience in the case of a sexually abused child whose father was awaiting prosecution, one worker reported that:

> There was going to be a long wait for the court to come and the police did not remove the father from the community. So it was impossible to keep the child here. She had to go to a foster home in another community until there was court. This was very hard for the girl, and for her mother and brothers and sisters, too. The child ends up being punished while the father gets to stay with his family. I know that already the child was feeling bad

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because all her family was upset. When she had to go away, I'm sure she must have felt even worse. But all of us felt, the child, the mother and me, that there was no other way to protect her from the father.

The worker's responsibility to protect the child in this case required that she resign herself to placing the child outside her own community - an unsatisfactory arrangement considering the child's emotional needs. In cases like this, workers cannot help but question the value of their interventions.

The lack of appropriate resources to offer clients, in conjunction with the material impoverishment of their clients' lives, leaves workers feeling helpless. The Inuit workers recognize all too well the limitations of what they can do for clients. Sharing her frustration about the work, one woman observed that:

> I feel useless in many cases because I can't give clients what they need to solve their problem. If a battered woman wants to get away from her husband and take her children, the best thing is for her to have another house, maybe here or in another village. But there are no extra houses. She would have to wait for a long time. And for her to go to another community means that she will lose her friends and the support of her family.

Another worker echoed these sentiments when she reported that:

> Sometimes I think that the help I give people is no good, it doesn't change very much. A mother who asked for help with her daughter, she was fifteen and using drugs, told me after a long time that she should never have brought her daughter to social services because now she is worse, her behaviour has gotten worse. With another case like this one, I don't know what I would do. I feel powerless with some of the problems.

The workers' sense of helplessness in such cases is enhanced by the extent of certain social problems in their communities (e.g., substance abuse and violence). Workers feel, and

rightly so, that while their interventions might make a difference in the short run, in the final analysis their efforts do little to change things. In light of this, it is difficult for community workers to go on justifying and defending their interventions to the community and to themselves. The apparent futility of their efforts generates a pervasive sense of despondency.

SOCIALIZATION TO THE PROFESSION

Thus far, we have seen how the various contexts of the Inuit workers' practice construct a very particular experience of youth protection work. I have noted in particular how the workers' day-to-day practice is fraught with conflict, much of which arises from the imposition of the state's definition and organization of statutory work, and a simultaneous lack of resources. While it is clear that all social workers within state bureaucracy feel constrained by the organizational and social context of youth protection work, practitioners in the south are better able to resist excessive bureaucratic control of practice. Their ability to do so derives from their identification with the professional model of social work practice. I turn now to consider the Inuit community workers' socialization to the profession examine how this process sustains rather than mitigates the conflicts and tensions that they experience.

From lay helper to professional social worker

Socialization to the profession of social work involves relinquishing lay conceptions of what helping is about. As we have seen, this is difficult for Inuit community workers, in part because their lay conception of helping is informed by a cultural tradition that embodies values and norms of conduct that have little place within contemporary views of professional helping. Inuit are socialized to a tradition of undifferentiated helping, whereas professional helping is grounded in a functional division of labour. In the functionalist tradition of social work, the worker's professional identity derives from the specific activities of the agency rather than from a generalist commitment.

The residual influence of Inuit tradition is manifested in current hiring practices. The community, through its leaders, recommends certain of its members to the social service agency as appropriate candidates for employment as community workers. Suitability for the work is judged by the community on the basis of personal qualities deemed essential in a good social worker: the potential worker must inspire trust in others, be someone to whom others feel they can turn for advice and support, and must have the respect of others. While the agency appreciates the desirability of these qualities, it is particularly interested in hiring individuals who demonstrate sufficient proficiency in English to be able to acquire the knowledge and skills essential to meeting

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organizational needs (e.g., for written reports for accountability and court purposes). Ironically, all official documents are in French which none of the workers read.[15] The agency's preference not only limits the pool of potential workers, but also results in the hiring of younger people less likely to satisfy community criteria. Those hired without the approbation of their community have a very difficult time establishing credibility. An experienced older worker observed that:

> The young workers have a really hard time because the community does not show much respect for their opinion and judgement. And the community will not support someone that they don't respect. Of course, this makes the work even harder.

State control of hiring undermines the social bases of recruitment, thereby depriving community workers of the forms of sponsorship and potential sources of legitimation crucial to successful practice at the local level (Johnson, 1973). Thus, the discrepancy between lay and professional conceptions of a suitable candidate is resolved at the expense of individual workers. There are few individuals in the north who satisfy both agency and community criteria for employment, and even those who do cannot help but feel that, ultimately, they will never quite measure up to agency standards of professional practice.

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[15] Community workers would prefer that all written documents (e.g., court orders and agreements for service) be available in Inuktitut to ensure their own and their clients' understanding of the material.

Professionalization of Inuit Workers

The feelings of inadequacy which community workers expressed arise in part from their inability to conduct their youth protection practice in the prescribed way. As we have seen, the bureaucratic norms of public administration do not fit the practice reality in the north; attempts to make them do so are bound to generate frustration. At the same time, however, Inuit workers are socialized to a professional model of social work practice that claims expert knowledge as a legitimating principle.

The process of what Pearson (1975) terms "joining the club" typically begins for students in universities or colleges where liberal professional ideologies of social work practice remain dominant. Much emphasis is placed on the training and competence of individual caseworkers. The therapeutic casework relationship continues to be at the core of what is deemed professional social work, and it remains the basis for claims to specialized knowledge and status.[16] In addition, professional ideologies posit social workers as autonomous, competent, professional experts.

Identification with the professional social work culture is an important aspect of formal training as it provides

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[16] Pearson notes how, compared with the lavish care spent on helping students to develop casework and relationship skills, there is minimal effort to help them relate to the complex personal, moral and political force fields of social welfare. See "Making social workers: bad promises and good omens", 1975.

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workers with a self-protective armour. As Pearson notes,

> Professional culture has the important function of offering ready-made, routinized 'solutions' as opposed to solutions which are grounded in the complex moral calculus of welfare services (1975, p. 48).

Without the armour of routine professionalism, workers would be repeatedly confronted by the moral and political dilemmas which lie behind their practice decisions. At the same time, the internalization of professional ideologies of practice enables social workers to better resist excessive bureaucratic control of their work. In this regard, the community workers find themselves at a real disadvantage.

The vast majority of community workers are trained subsequent to their hiring. As students registered in the McGill University Certificate Program in Northern Social Work Practice, the community workers participate in a series of two-week long, intensive training sessions offered in the north by full-time faculty and sessional lecturers from the McGill School of Social Work.[17] The emphasis in these credit courses to date has been placed on issues that the community workers themselves have identified as crucial to their learning, and on orientation to the relevant legislation and the Quebec social service structure. At some point during their employment, workers can expect to have a two week period

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[17] Written proposals for the training of community workers, prepared by Professor Liesel Urtnowski at McGill, in addition to fieldnotes from her teaching experience on the Hudson and Ungava Bay coasts, provided an important source of documentary evidence in this research project.

of closely supervised practice during which the integration of social work theory and practice is emphasized. Just recently, experienced community workers have started to take an active role in the course preparation and teaching. Their participation helps to ensure the relevance of course content and sensitivity to cultural differences, as well as allowing much of the teaching to be offered in Inuktitut.

Within the social service organization itself, hierarchical supervision on case-related issues provides additional opportunities for training; however, the emphasis here is placed on teaching workers the bureaucratic and administrative requirements of the job. Given the sporadic nature of both the training sessions and direct supervision of worker practice, Inuit workers have little opportunity to consolidate new learning in such a way that it enhances their sense of confidence and competence to do the work.

The community workers' weak professionalization has two outstanding consequences. First, the Inuit workers lack professional confidence and a sense of professional identity. As a result, it is difficult for them to resist the administrative, bureaucratic apparatus in the same way that southern workers might. In order to do so, the community workers would need to perceive themselves as the competent experts that professional ideology teaches social workers that they are.

The community workers, however, do not consider

themselves to be professional experts, nor are they accorded this status by the agency, as suggested by this worker's observations.

> It's really not fair that we are called 'community workers' and that we don't get paid as much as social workers. Even if we don't have a degree, there are other things we have, like knowledge of our people and the community. A person needs this to work in the north. And besides that, the bosses expect us to do the same job as a social worker. It is very hard to get our people to understand what we do. A community worker could be someone who drives the water truck or picks up the garbage. You know, those people get paid more than we do!

This worker's frustration and sense of being devalued by the agency was shared by all of the community workers interviewed. The knowledge that the Inuit workers bring to the job is not valued by the agency except to the extent that it enables them to satisfy organizational needs (e.g., workers' ability to speak Inuktitut facilitates service delivery). Although the workers are deemed by the agency to be less qualified to do the work than accredited social workers, and are remunerated accordingly, they are nevertheless expected to perform the same tasks. Thus, community workers conclude that the agency regards their work as inferior, and it is difficult for them to feel competent in their dealings with clients or the bureaucracy.

A second critical outcome of the Inuit workers' socialization to the profession is that they find themselves without a reference group in their day-to-day practice. As noted earlier, this deprives workers of a supportive

environment in which to define appropriate norms of conduct in their youth protection practice. Moreover, it means that no one is assisting the community workers with what Berger (1981) terms the "ideological work"[18] that is required to legitimate their role at the organizational and community level. As a result, Inuit workers continue to experience a stark disjunction between divergent conceptions of their role and practice, and they remain unable to sanction their own use of authority.

In the current context of the Inuit workers' youth protection practice, both professional ideology and bureaucratic norms of public administration function to perpetuate the community workers' feelings of inadequacy and subordination. Moreover, the sources of legitimation available to community workers within the contemporary definitions of statutory practice appear to be incompatible with potential sources at the community level. How are the community workers attempting to address their need for legitimation and support at the local level, and what do their efforts tell us about the ongoing conceptual and practical development of an indigenous approach to youth protection?

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[18] Remedial ideological work is an interpretive process which constructs a set of legitimations or arguments aimed at coping with dissonances.

Redefining Youth Protection Practice

The notion of professional autonomy is problematic for all front-line workers in youth protection services. While the ideology of professional autonomy implies that social workers should be capable of functioning independently in a sure and competent manner, the reality is that workers seldom feel this way when confronted with the risks and uncertainty of decision-making around the welfare of children (Davies, 1985).

The discomfort associated with the exercise of authority and discretion is exacerbated for community workers by their lack of professional identity and legitimation. Given the current organizational and social context of statutory practice, it is clear that in order to reduce these tensions, Inuit workers need to look to the community for alternative sources of legitimation and support in their work.

In some of the villages, workers can seek support from the local social advisory committee. However, these do not exist in all communities, and where they have participated in case discussion and planning with the workers, the outcomes have not always been very satisfactory from the workers' point of view. They cite a number of reasons for this: the workers and committee members are not clear about their respective mandates and what they can expect from each other; the advice of the committee may not fit with the worker's own opinion of the best way to proceed on a case; and members sometimes resent being asked to volunteer their time to assist a worker

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who is, after all, being paid to deal with the problem at hand.

In those instances where workers have found the committee's participation to be helpful, this has been largely as a result of the legitimating function that the committee provides for the worker. Recounting her experience of requesting the committee's support in order to gain access to a family in which the mother was being beaten by her husband, one worker observed that she felt more secure and confident presenting her concerns to the couple in the presence of the advisory committee. The sense of security afforded the worker and the permission to intervene that she derives from meetings with the committee and client are important factors in her decision to become actively involved with the family. The sanction provided by the committee serves to alter the clients' perception of the worker's role. Her intervention comes to be seen as less intrusive or coercive than potential alternatives such as police and court involvement. At the same time, the committee's participation serves to diminish the worker's sense of individual responsibility for the case. It may be, as well, that meetings such as these are particularly helpful to the worker because they replicate the more traditional approach to intervention into family matters which relied upon a process of consensual decision-making to arrive at a plan of action.

The foregoing example of community participation in the

worker's youth protection practice contains a number of important lessons concerning the future direction of statutory work in the north. In the concluding chapter, I will summarize these lessons and suggest how they might be utilized to further the conceptual and practical development of an indigenous approach to youth protection.

CONCLUSIONS

The initiative taken by Inuit workers to actively engage the community in their practice is a creative response to the demands of the job at the local level. The benefit of such a strategy for community workers is considerable. By involving the advisory committee, workers may obtain a clear sanction for their work and thus, the legitimation that is crucial to their exercise of authority. The committee's participation serves to diminish the extreme isolation that community workers experience and permits a shared responsibility for decision making and case planning. In addition, this proc⁻ ɔs replicates the traditional approach to problem solving and thus, is more likely to give rise to intervention strategies that better reflect the norms and values of the local residents.

The limited success of committee participation to date reflects the continued dominance of the state's definition and organization of statutory practice. However, it also speaks to the current lack of consensus at the local level concerning the role of youth protection services more generally. Such a consensus will be difficult to achieve given the legacy of divisiveness within communities that has come about in part as a consequence of forty years of white tutelage. Yet, by virtue of the success that has been achieved in individual

cases, there is reason to be optimistic that ultimately a practice model might be defined through worker collaboration with the social and political structures already in place at the local level.

While community support is crucial to the ongoing development of an indigenous approach to youth protection, this objective requires more than active community participation to be realized. In addition, the workers need the support of a reference group in which to validate their practice experiences with one another and to achieve a clear definition of their identity as community workers. By engaging in a self-reflective analysis of their own practice, Inuit workers may begin to develop practice guidelines that better reflect the realities of the north. Thereby, they may achieve a beginning sense of control over their work. However, these initiatives cannot be undertaken without organizational support.

Clearly the issue of control is central to future developments in the area of youth protection services in the north. The empirical evidence suggests that the form and content of statutory work imposed by the state simply do not fit the realities of contemporary Inuit village life. The experience of Inuit workers demonstrates that the hierarchical relations of control and functional division of labour engendered by the bureaucratic organization of youth protection work are untenable at the local level. In order to

achieve even minimal resolution of the fundamental conflicts in their day-to-day practice, Inuit workers must share their power and decision-making authority with the community.

The organizational commitment to facilitating this process has yet to move beyond the level of rhetoric. To actively support the workers' efforts in this regard would imply facilitating, albeit indirectly, the development of a local constituency which could eventually threaten state control of services. It remains to be seen whether the Quebec state is prepared to question the correctness of its views.

Implications for Practice, Policy and Research

The empirical findings suggest that the obstacles to the conceptual and practical development of an Inuit practice model are many and complex. At present, youth protection in the north is essentially a non-native service delivered by native workers whose authority derives from a mandate that is not accepted by the people whom it is intended to govern. With the requirement that provincial legislation govern the administration of child welfare matters, there is little or no recognition of customary law (Sinclair, Philips & Bala, 1991). Thus, while Inuit workers are given authority to administer the Youth Protection Act, they do not have jurisdiction to enforce Inuit laws and customs concerning the welfare of children. The community workers are at least able to put their own interpretation on the provincial law, thereby

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incorporating Inuit values, beliefs and customs in the provision of youth protection services.

Yet, the experience of community workers reveals this to be an onerus task made all the more problematic by their isolation and lack of community and organizational supports. By virtue of their employment, the community workers find themselves peripheral to the community whose needs they are endeavouring to address. Like many native professsionals, the Inuit workers feel as if they are brown faces locked into white institutions as they are forced by Ministry standards and guidelines into an agency-based model of youth protection service (Warry, 1991). As a result, they are distanced from the needs and aspirations of their communities.

A fundamental problem with the agency model of child welfare service delivery is the requirement that youth protection be treated as a separate entity. In the dominant society, youth protection and child welfare are differentiated both structurally and ideologically for practical and administrative reasons.The separation probably reflects a cultural approach to child raising which is often fragmented and compartmentalized (Ryerse, 1991). By contrast, in native cultures, the protection of children is not separate from overall concern and provision for the welfare of children. Moreover, the welfare of children is a community responsiblity shared by parents with extended family members and the wider native community. Thus, the community is central, rather than

peripheral, to the child welfare enterprise as it is under the current agency-based model.

The experience of the Inuit workers demonstrates the need to move toward a community-based, holistic approach to child welfare services such as that being developed by native child welfare agencies in several Canadian provinces. In addition to current "protection" activities, the native approach to child welfare service would involve a variety of prevention programs, including family counselling, parenting skills, crisis intervention, substance abuse programs, child care and early childhood education in language and culture (Ryerse, 1991). Such an approach requires that child welfare be treated as an aspect of community development in keeping with the social and political aspirations of native people.

There is clearly a need for changes in the legislation and policies which govern the delivery of child welfare services in native communities. Although the legislation has been amended in some provinces to make it more responsive to the needs of native children, many feel that these measures are not adequate. It is not sufficient, some critics argue, that federal and provincial governments should be delegating responsibilities to native communities but rather, that they should have responsiblity for their own children and enact their own child welfare code. Some aboriginal groups are advocating that the federal government act on its constitutional authority to permit Indian bands to enact their

own child welfare laws as part of the broader move toward aboriginal self-government (Sinclair, Philips & Bala, 1991, pp. 193-194). Given that considerable time will be required to achieve this objective, it is important that in the interim, efforts be made to sensitize and educate non-native professionals and agencies, and to recruit and appropriately train more native workers.

The development of truly native child and family services must be based on traditional values which can be reflected and codified in native child welfare legislation. Thus, federal and provincial government encouragement and support of research which is designed to document and explain traditional native concepts as a prelude to the development child welfare legislation should be a priority (Warry, 1991).

It is important that future research endeavours in the north support the social and political aspirations of Inuit people by affording them the opportunity to develop their own strategies to address immediate and long term child welfare needs. For this reason, a community based, participatory research model would be most appropriate. Such a model attempts not only to give native communities control over the research process, but to produce a research environment that enables people to acquire skills in survey research, program development and evaluation. Outside researchers, such as myself, would become trainers and facilitators rather than the owners of what, from a community perspective, is esoteric

knowledge (Castellano, 1986). Close collaboration and communication between government, universities, Inuit political organizations and front-line workers would help to ensure the effectiveness of the research and the development of appropriate policy and program initiatives. Research into traditional child-rearing practices, appropriate training models for Inuit child welfare workers and administrators, and evaluation research of existing holistic service models might be of considerable benefit to the overall objective of local community devlopment.

APPENDIX A

Geographic Profile of Region 10A

The territory under the jurisdiction of the Kativik
Regional Council of Health and Social Services includes all
lands in Quebec north of the 55th parallel. There are
fourteen coastal communities within the region situated along
eastern Hudson Bay, the Hudson Strait and Ungava Bay. The
territory covers an area of 563,515 square kilometres and
accounts for more than one third of the total area of the
province of Quebec. The vastness of the region can be grasped
more easily by noting that the southernmost village of
Kuujjuarapik is located 1,300 km. north of Quebec City while
Ivujivik, the most northerly, is 2,100 km. from Quebec.

There are no roads connecting the communities to each
other or to settlements outside the territory. The distances
between the communities range from 60 km. to a maximum of 360
km. with an average distance of 105 km. between the
settlements. Transportation to and from the communities and
outside the region is by air or sea. Kuujjuak and
Kuujjuarapik have airstrip facilities to accommodate jet
landings and are on the Canadian Airlines route. The other
communities are serviced by twin-otter aircraft. Weather
permitting, there are three to five flights weekly depending
on the size and location of the community. Construction
materials, heating oil, fuel for generating stations, gasoline
and other non-perishable goods are transported from southern
centres by ship during the brief summer.

Demographic Profile

The population is approximately 6,200 divided among the
fourteen communities. The population of each settlement
varies from 120 to 1,150 people. The majority are Inuit (91%)
and the few non-natives are scattered throughout the
communities, primarily in Kuujjuak, Kuujjuarapik and, more
recently, in Povungnituk.

Compared to the rest of the province, the population of
northern Quebec is very young. In 1987, 55% of Inuit were
under twenty years of age and only 4% were over sixty while
overall Quebec figures were 31% and 13% respectively. The
birth rate is high but so is the infant mortality rate. The
fact that infant mortality has been associated with the socio-
economic conditions of a given population, the availability
of health services and hygiene practices underlines the

complexity of this problem and the particularity of the region in terms of general living conditions. In 1984, the life expectancy for men was fifty-four years and for women, sixty-seven, compared to Quebec figures of seventy-two and seventy-nine respectively. Accidents and violence were listed as the cause of 36% of all male deaths between 1982 and 1986.

Health and Social Service Structures

Until 1960, the Inuit of Arctic Quebec were considered Indians and, according to the British North America Act, a federal responsibility. The first medical tours of the region were conducted in 1922 by the Eastern Arctic Patrol. Medical ships also carried personnel conducting scientific expeditions and providing police inspections. The first two nursing stations were built in 1949 in Kuujjuak and Inukjuak. By 1961, the federal government had built nursing stations in eleven communities and operated some local schools.

During the 1960s, the provincial government began to take an active interest in the region in keeping with its policy of northern sovereignty. The nursing stations were brought under provincial control, schools were established, and the territory's first houses were built. In 1968, the Kuujjuak nursing station was incorporated as a hospital centre and in 1979, as the Ungava Bay Hospital and Social Service Centre. A criminologist was hired as Director of Social Services and began the process of hiring Inuit community workers who were initially supervised by two non-native social workers who travelled throughout the territory.

As elsewhere in the province, the Social Service Centre is mandated to provide services related to the Young Offenders Act, Youth Protection Act, foster placement for "special needs" children, home care for the elderly and handicapped, and crisis intervention, for example, to battered women. "Service points" in each community are provided by Inuit workers who are geographically isolated from their colleagues and supervisors. Until recently, all of the supervisors and administrators were non-native professionals in social work or related disciplines. In 1983, owing to its vast size, the region was divided and a second Health and Social Service Centre was established in Povungnituk to serve the Hudson Bay coast. The two Centres operate as separate entities and there is little communication between community workers on the two coasts.

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