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SCHOOL-LINKED SERVICE INTEGRATION:
REFORMING THE DELIVERY OF SOCIAL SERVICES TO
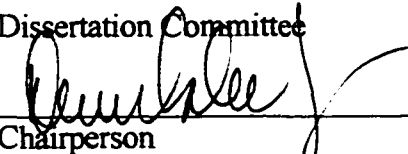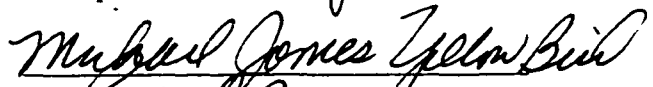## ENHANCE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES

By

Diane Pearson McMillen
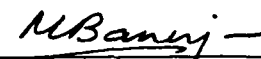
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Submitted to the School of Social Welfare and
the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Kansas in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Dissertation Committee

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ABSTRACT

McMillen, Diane P. School-linked service integration: Reforming the delivery of social services to enhance successful outcomes for children and their families. The University of Kansas, Ph.D., May, 1998.

Integrating and linking services to schools to improve outcomes for children, is an ambitious social service reform effort. This reform intends to create a more comprehensive, collaborative, and empowering system that can respond to complex and multifaceted needs of children and families. In this constructivist inquiry, interviews were conducted with parents whose children attended an elementary school that housed a School-Linked Service Integration (SLSI) Demonstration Project. Parents described their experiences with traditional service systems and with the SLSI model. Their experiences and insights are presented in a case study format. The findings suggest that the parents often experienced the traditional social service system as punitive and inaccessible, with services being delivered in ways that limit their effectiveness. Parents' describe a much more supportive and effective experience when they received services through the SLSI project. Implications and recommendations for social work education and practice, social policies, and schools are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It seems impossible to write words that can somehow adequately acknowledge the support, inspiration, laughter, and "meaningful moments" in the midst of the madness, that I have received while lost in the throes of higher education and the dissertation writing process. However, I wish to attempt another seemingly impossible task.

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And now, to that shining constellation of family and friends who brighten and enrich my life. I could never have done this without all of you! Maco, you, and our

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little ones—Montana and Fobe—make a house a home. As we have rocked and reeled through yet another adventure, I am wholly reminded that I am indeed "lucky-in-love." Your support, good humor, and patience have helped me immeasurably through this educational process—I owe you one.

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To my doctoral colleague, and true study-buddy, Fred, thanks for you constant presence and unwavering support. Big Al, you are a prince. I will forever remember our EXCEL experience, not however, as one of our more excellent ones! To Casey, who

gives new meaning to the promise to send "some inspiration," I only wish I knew how to reciprocate. And Dave, who most generously loaned me his computer and supplied more technical advice than I could ever afford to pay for, I plan to nominate for sainthood. To Judy and Mel, for their unconditional support and sincere belief in my potential, to Franzi, who made me think in ways that stretch the imagination, and to Markie, my kindred spirit, who alternately infuriates and inspires me, my gratitude for your friendship and appreciation for the value you bring to my life, knows no bounds.

And, of course, endless thanks to Mom and Dad. What a wonderful family you gave me.

I dedicate this work in loving memory to my Grandma,

Glenna Eisenhut.

She made this world a better place

and enriched the life of everyone she touched.

I learned the most valuable lessons from you!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There will be justice in Athens only when the uninjured
are as indignant as the injured parties.
—Ancient Greeks

It does not matter if you are liberal or conservative, Republican or Democrat, rich

or poor, if you live in America today you are likely to be concerned about the future for

"our children." Children and youth today are literally dying for attention. The concern

is particularly warranted for the 40 percent of children who are in danger of educational

failure because of a complex mix of social, economic and emotional problems (National

Commission on Children, 1991). Gabarino (1995) describes this condition as "a socially

toxic environment" in which 14 to 15 million children are growing up.

The educational outcomes for children born into poverty are particularly grim.

Resnick and colleagues (cited in Hendrickson & Omer, 1995) conducted a long-term

follow-up study and discovered that over 70 percent of children born into poverty

experience severe academic problems in the early elementary grades. The lives of these

children and their families are ravaged by problems that stem from economic and social

upheavals, not personal failure. Systemic problems are producing new forms and

escalating rates of poverty, violence, homelessness, crime, and illness, while

simultaneously there is decreasing political and financial support for the programs and

services necessary to address them.

Since the time of the "scientific revolution" in America, citizens have been led to believe that we would be able to "solve" social problems through social programs. However, few would agree that the social service system as it currently exists has been effective in truly helping the majority of people who must use the services. Service providers are overwhelmed and unprepared to effectively manage the unprecedented challenges that they regularly encounter. As Schorr (1997) has noted, providers are "confronting mushrooming needs with diminishing resources" (p. xv). Although most service providers are well-intentioned and hard-working, they often work in systems that are rigid, fragmented, uncoordinated, crisis-focused, and lacking in resources that are needed to effectively respond to complex human needs. Schorr (1988) laments, "It is a strange and tragic paradox that confidence in our collective ability to alter the destinies of vulnerable children has hit rock bottom just as scientific understanding of the processes of human development and the rich evidence of success in helping such children have reached a new high" (p. xvii). To know what we need to do, but to think it will not make any difference, is a vexing conundrum that must be addressed. The ability to effectively respond will require the concerted and collaborative efforts of community members, consumers of services, and professionals.

The effectiveness of the social services system as it currently exists in America is being questioned from all sides. There are some who would say the current so-called "helping" system has not been a helpful system at all. They would argue that the punitive, victim-blaming, disempowering approach to helping has enslaved several generations of people rather than allowed them any autonomy or self-direction

(Funiciello, 1993; Morris, 1986). Other Americans are genuinely puzzled by the increase in inner-city poverty, crime, joblessness and the rate of parenthood for those who have never married. Given their memory of the efforts of the War on Poverty and other social programs, they keep wondering why "those" people have not taken advantage of the available opportunities to make a better life for themselves and their families.

There are also those who are very pessimistic about any efforts to remedy social problems. As William Julius Wilson, noted sociologist, describes, "The current negative sentiment toward programs targeted to less fortunate Americans has been enhanced by the widely held belief that antipoverty and antidiscrimination programs have not only failed to alleviate social problems in the inner city, but in some cases they have actually aggravated them" (in Schorr, 1988, foreword, p. ix). This position gained credibility among American taxpayers with the publication of Charles Murray's (1984) book, Losing Ground. This most influential, as well as controversial, book purveyed the idea that social programs brought with them increasing rates of poverty, joblessness, welfare dependency, out-of-wedlock births, and crime. He argued, for example, that young women faced with the choice between an unattractive job and a welfare check, will choose to have babies. Evidence based on comparisons with other countries with more generous social welfare programs, or analyzing differences between states with varying levels of welfare payments, does not support his contention (Schorr, 1988). However, his book was warmly received by those looking to blame individuals for circumstances outside their control.

Those who hold this perspective fail to recognize the profound effect changes in

the broader economy have on disadvantaged citizens. Such attitudes also resonate an unsavory "victim-blaming" (Ryan, 1971) response that holds individuals responsible for situations they cannot control. For those people who have close familiarity, personally or professionally, with the current social service system, it seems clear that the disorganized, fragmented, under-funded, categorical system that currently exists, compounded by the social stigma associated with receiving public assistance, contributes to, rather than alleviates, the problems people face.

There are many citizens in America today who are clamoring for "welfare reform." Questions regarding the obligation of the more affluent to the less fortunate, as well as the "proper" role of government in realizing any collective social service objectives, spark rancorous debates. Morris (1996) argues that the development of the welfare system in the U.S. was shaped by the demands of various interest groups more than a deeply felt sense of obligation to those less fortunate. He believes that the current change in attitude about welfare partly reflects a changing view of the world Americans want to create for themselves. In addition, the recent vociferous critique of the welfare system, and more often than not, the consumers of its services, also reflects an undercurrent of political and economic forces that shape ideological views. As Robert Morris (1986) adeptly articulates, "Welfare becomes a proxy term for values, a lightning rod for differing views about the obligations we owe each other, the virtues of selfishness, the limits of obligation, and political behaviors which will either unify or further divide a multiethnic population" (p. 4).

The welfare state in America evolved ad hoc in the midst of social and economic changes. Between the 1930s and the late 1960s, a sense of confidence about the future and more tolerance about social behavior created greater acceptance of need and a more flexible society. This began to change in the late 1960s and early 1970s as tensions increased, expectations of growing affluence for all were not met, and minorities felt excluded from rewards for their efforts (Day, 1989; Morris, 1986). The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 signaled the shift away from government support of social programs, but it was more a culmination of a decade-long decline in confidence about social programs than a sharp break from the past (Morris, 1986).

What we are left with in the late 1990s is a pervasive disappointment with our social service system. There are those who are distressed by the unfairness of a system that does not allow equal access to the goods and services that are available in this country. Others have been persuaded to believe that the national deficit is due to social welfare programs, and they want "those people" off "the dole." Although the people holding these very disparate viewpoints come from very different value stances, they want the same thing. They want a helping system that actually provides timely assistance and enhances a person's (or family's) opportunity to be self-directed and manage their own life to the highest level that they can. True "welfare reform" (for purposes of this paper, hereafter referred to as social service reform) would create a respectable, reliable, nonstigmatizing, user friendly and financially adequate helping system that fosters opportunity, growth, and success.

"Social service reform" has become a highly charged issue in need of

clarification and definition. One method of social service reform, as it is being conceived here, is directing attention to system *reform*, not cutting programs or reducing funds, which is often the intention of conservatives when they talk about reform. Better outcomes for children and families will necessitate new strategies and programs, and new allocations of resources, not a reduction. The social service reform strategy that I am describing here developed partly in response to problems in the current helping system, and partly out of concern for the challenges facing the public education system. The combination of structural problems in the social service system, with the problems faced by the public education system, contributes to the damaging outcomes experienced by many children and families. This has created a situation that Sid Gardner (1992), a proponent of, and prolific author in the movement to integrate social services, has aptly dubbed "failure by fragmentation." The desire of this reform movement is to increase the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of service delivery by integrating education and social services in a comprehensive, collaborative intervention now identified as the school-linked service integration movement.

Efforts to define school-linked service integration have proven increasingly complicated as demonstration projects launched nationwide have revealed the challenge and struggle of identifying and meeting the needs of high-risk youth and families in unique ways (Adler & Gardner, 1993; Rigsby, Reynolds & Wang, 1995). Heather Weiss, director of the Harvard Family Research Project, believes that the difficulty in identifying and describing programs is compounded by the fact that, "reform initiatives exist in their most perfect form in the proposals to funders to get start up money, rather

than what is going on in the real world" (Weiss, 1995). In addition, a broad range of concepts and terms such as service integration, comprehensive services, interprofessional collaboration, community-based family services, and comprehensive, collaborative services are used inconsistently, interchangeably, and imprecisely by those who plan, fund, manage, and/or critique social service practices. School-linked service integration is an ambitious effort that assumes systemic reform of both social service and education by creating a consumer-driven, family-centered, prevention-oriented, empowering helping system, that is accessible, offers integrated services, is evaluated for its effectiveness, and is community-based and linked to schools, which are usually the most durable institutions in the neighborhood.

Statement of the Problem

The current interest and activity directed toward systemic change in social service delivery is a recycled notion of creating a more organized, comprehensive, collaborative and empowering service delivery system. This concept, which I will refer to as service integration or comprehensive, collaborative services, is not new (Dryfoos, 1994; Gardner, 1992; Gerry & Paulsen, 1995; Kagen, Goffin, Golub & Pritchard, 1995; Knapp, 1995; Larson et. al., 1992; Lugg & Boyd, 1993; Melaville, Blank, & Asayesh, 1993; Tyack, 1992). Human service providers, including educators as well as other professional fields such as mental health, public health, child welfare, education and juvenile justice, have recognized for a long time that there are problems in the service delivery system.

It is widely acknowledged that the current system provides a limited, fragmented, and most often "crisis-oriented" response that does not meet the needs of children and families who are experiencing multiple problems in their daily lives (Agranoff, 1991; Dryfoos, 1994; Gardner, 1992; Kagan & Neville, 1993; Larson et. al., 1992; Melaville, Blank, & Asayesh, 1993). Lawson and Briar-Lawson (1997) report that, "75-90 percent of services are available to children and families only after a crisis has occurred" (p. 34). An integrated approach is founded in the idea that families, especially those with complex and multifaceted needs, require a timely as well as comprehensive and collaborative intervention in order to address their unique needs (Gardner, 1992; Gerry & Paulsen, 1995; Kagan & Neville, 1993; Schorr, 1988 & 1997). This necessitates a system of accessible and effective services that does not currently exist. It is a monumental understatement to say that our most vulnerable families have not been well served by the current system of service delivery.

The Lawrence School-Linked Service Integration Context

As demonstration sites are being launched across the country in an effort to define, create, and evaluate school-linked service integration (SLSI), a model program of service integration is being developed and tested in Lawrence, Kansas. Lawrence is a medium sized mid-western city, with a major university (Kansas University) that receives significant funding for research projects. There are many variations on the service integration theme. Briefly (see Chapter 2 for more detailed examples of different models) some examples involve coordinating services and

housing them in existing community centers or establishing family resource centers which are conveniently located in neighborhoods. However, there is also a strong movement focusing on bringing health and social services into school sites, or establishing firmer connections between schools and community service agencies, or both. A relative of this movement is the idea of full service schools, the "one-stop shopping" model where all health and social services are located within the schools (Dryfoos, 1994; Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997). The pilot project used for this research follows the model of linking social services to schools.

The State Department of Education's Division of Student Support Services funded several School-Linked Service Integration (SLSI) demonstration projects in Kansas under section VI-B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (P. L. 101-476, known as IDEA). Lawrence was chosen as one of the demonstration sites and received funding for three years. This project's major goal was "to develop and field test innovative approaches to service coordination and [to] establish the linkage of community services with the family and the school" (USD 497, VI-B proposal, 1993). A second project—the School-Linked Service Integration Research Project— was awarded to Kansas University by the United States Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS), to study the implementation and impact of the SLSI demonstration project. This multifaceted and comprehensive qualitative research project used observations, interviews, participant observations, critical dialogues, and document analysis to address the following five concerns:

1. Identify effective processes for initial development of school-linked service integration.

2. Identify effective processes for implementation of school-linked service integration.

3. Identify barriers to the implementation of school-linked service integration.

4. Identify school-linked service integration accessibility issues for children with disabilities and their families.

5. Describe school-linked service integration project impact on children with disabilities and their families.

The overall research project design included seven qualitative case studies on various aspects of the Lawrence School-Linked Service Integration project, one qualitative study on a SLSI project in another city for comparison, and a cross-case analysis of the eight case studies related to the five research concerns. The following list describes the eight case study reports.

1. Needs Assessment case study, which describes the neighborhood and school and their needs as perceived by local citizens and professionals.

2. Organization Analysis case study, which describes the organization and implementation of the Lawrence SLSI project.

3. Interim case study, which describes the organization and implementation of the Lawrence SLSI project.

4. Teacher Dialogues case study, which describes the teachers' perception of the nature and effects of the project in their school.

5. Service Agency Dialogues case study, which describes service agency personnel's perception of the project, the SLSI concept in general, and social service system and needs in Lawrence.

6. Other SLSI project case study, which describes the organization and implementation of a SLSI project in three schools in another community

in Kansas.

7. Family Impact case study, which describes families' (with and without children with disabilities) perceptions of the impact of the project.

8. Follow-up case study, which describes any lasting impacts and the status of service integration after the SLSI project ended.

As a member of the research team I contributed to all aspects of the research that resulted in case studies three, four, and five. In addition, I carried out the research that produced case study seven, the Family Impact case study, which is the research presented in this dissertation. This study addressed research question five, and as such, focused on the impact of the SLSI demonstration project on students with and without disabilities and their families, from the perspective of the students' parents or guardians. Although the primary source of information in my research came from the parents and guardians who were interviewed in the Family Impact study, I also utilized other pertinent project data since I have been fully involved in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of these data.

The SLSI Demonstration Project School

Craft is one of the oldest elementary schools in Lawrence. It was built in 1915 and although it has been enlarged by additions, the original two-story building remains the foundation of the structure. There are approximately 250 students who attend this elementary school. Craft has been a cluster site for students with disabilities for a number of years. The school accreditation profile reports that 50 percent of students who attend Craft are receiving special services in addition to

regular education. Many of Craft's students come from economically disadvantaged families. For example, 55 percent of the students are on free and reduced lunch plans, and 20 percent come from homes with no employed adult. The principal, Mr. Kenny, illustrated his perception of the special nature of this school in this way:

> Craft has a really unique clientele [in that] we have about 185 families and 89 of those are headed by the mother. I am not saying that because that necessarily has any significance, but I think it does demonstrate in today's society—well, women don't make as much money...and they don't have as much money. We have almost half of our parents who are single females, and that definitely has an impact on the home life of these children and [on] all of those additional things that some kids have in the Lawrence community that obviously some of the kids here don't have. We have a lot of special needs students. It's just a really unique clientele.

Craft elementary school is strongly supported by the families, staff, and local neighborhood. This support was evident when the Lawrence School Board's decision to close Craft was met with vehement and organized opposition, which ultimately overturned that idea. The mission of Craft school evidences belief in a holistic approach towards children's educational needs. In Craft's accreditation school profile, the mission statement reads:

> At Craft Elementary School, we believe that the education of our students goes far beyond academic encounters in the classroom. In order for students to be successful life-long learners, the staff gives attention to an educational process that involves the physical, emotional, and intellectual growth of each student.

This school's mission statement reflects alignment between the goals of the school and the goals of the School-Linked Service Integration initiative.

Purpose, Scope, and Significance of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to promote understanding of the nature and effects of the School-Linked Service Integration endeavor from the perspectives of the consumers/families. The study assumes that parents have a point of view and the capacity to assess this experience compared to other experiences of receiving social services. As such, the inquiry sought to understand, as clearly as possible, how the participants perceived this program and what kinds of impact it had on them. Therefore, this study was shaped by the guiding questions: (a) how did the parents experience their treatment, (b) what program elements did the parents find to be helpful, (c) how did this program differ from other social service programs, (d) what impact did this program have on children and families, and (e) what recommendations can be made based on this study. With these interests in mind, the interviews with parents addressed the following questions:

1. How did the parents become aware of the service?

2. What types of services did children and families receive through the project?

3. How accessible were the services to the children and families?

4. What kinds of experiences have they had with any other schools, and any that provide this kind of service?

5. What experiences have they had with the traditional service system?

6. What is their overall impression of the worth or value of this program?

To address these questions, I interviewed a selected group (described in Chapter 3) of parents or guardians who have one or more children who attend Craft elementary

school. From the interviews, and the simultaneous and subsequent analysis of the data, themes emerged that describe the parents' experiences and impact of this service design and delivery.

Through this process, I, as the researcher, have developed a base of information that will inform, and hopefully inspire, the social work profession to actively work to create new methods of intervention and service delivery. These findings are also relevant to shaping social welfare programs, and the policies that undergird them in a direction that is more attuned to the needs, hopes, and strengths of individuals and families. This time in history represents both a crisis and an opportunity for helping professionals. Social work historically has had a dual focus to provide resources, services, and opportunities to combat existing problems for individuals, as well as an obligation to promote the welfare and prevent dysfunction of citizens through social reform and public policy (Ehrenreich, 1985; Franklin, 1990; Mills, 1959; Trattner, 1984).

Social reform and the shaping of social policy, are important functions of social work as a helping profession. Ginsberg (1996) believes that it is social work's extensive involvement with social policy that distinguishes it from other helping professions. "That is because social workers have always believed that human problems are not simply individual problems, but can often best be solved through social policies" (Ginsberg, 1996, p. 2). There are also social workers who are involved in social reform because they recognize that some social policies and programs in the country have contributed to, if not caused human problems. There

are many examples of social policies, as horrific as slavery or as simple as child welfare policies, that have had purposeful, as well as unintended, negative ramifications.

An early historical example of a child welfare policy that had dire ramifications for children, was how the Children's Aid Society, headed by Charles Loring Brace, handled the problem of pauper families. Brace believed that poor families should be prevented from receiving any form of outdoor relief that would help them stay together. His solution was to "save" the children of pauper families by sending them "out West" where they could be adopted by families and would learn the value of hard work and enjoy the benefits of a clean environment. During the period from 1870 through 1892, more than fifty thousand children were haphazardly and without follow-up, loaded onto trains and shipped to cities where they were "chosen" by families who waited at the train depot (Day, 1989). "Unfortunately, many of the families just wanted extra help and badly mistreated the children" (Day, 1989, p. 228). Although altruism may have partly motivated this tactic of intervention, fear of pauperism and a need to get children off the streets contributed to this approach of "rescuing" children. The unintended consequence of this policy was the enslavement of thousands of children to families who wanted help, which occurred simply because the children were born into poor families.

Attention to social policy is crucial to social work's ability to help resolve social problems. Whether social problems result because of a social policy or because there was no policy that could have prevented problems, the effect that

policies have on human problems is undeniable. Almost everything that influences or effects people—the way we marry, what is considered a crime, how we receive medical care, what kinds of help we receive when we are injured or too old to work—can be found in social policies (Ginsberg, 1996).

Also, there is another issue with legislation and the setting of social policy. Not only does policy establish a set of specified rules and regulations; in addition, there is a belief system—an ideology—that underlies the legislation. As Bloom (1984) has observed, "In some legislation this ideology is made explicit, but more often it is implicit and has to be found between the lines or identified inductively" (p. 32). Bloom (1984) cautions all who are interested in the impact of social policies to consider that, "A set of social values guides legislation in the human services, and an informed public should be aware of these values in order to be able to react constructively to such legislation" (p. 32). The movement to coordinate services and make resources more available and accessible to people, and more relevant to their needs and preferences, represents an intervention designed to remedy problems created by existing policies. Current social policies have resulted in a "nonsystem" of fragmented and scattered programs, thus rendering them nearly incapable of meeting the complex needs of at-risk families. Active involvement in the service integration movement presents a unique opportunity for social work. We have another chance to re-engage with our original mission, as well as our ethical obligation to social reform and the shaping of social policies, at a pivotal point in history.

A critically important aspect of this study is that it provides information from the participants' viewpoint of the experience and impact of this design and delivery of service. They, as consumers of service, are in an ideal position to provide crucial insights that may differ from "professional" views. Researchers are only beginning to recognize the value in seeking information from the people who are receivers, rather than providers, of services. The consumers of services can provide a perspective that speaks more directly to their actual experience, which may feel, and actually be, different from what the provider planned or intended. With this knowledge, the social work profession has an opportunity to facilitate movement toward collaboration among families, schools, citizens, and service agencies. Equipped with information and motivated by the mutuality of collaboration, we can develop community programs and design social policies that will promote the well being of all persons.

Research Approach

Efforts to integrate social services and to create a comprehensive, collaborative system of help for individuals and families presents a very real challenge to standard research and evaluation methodologies. The prevailing research and evaluation methods have not provided the knowledge needed to make good judgments about social programs that hold promise (Brown, 1994; Dryfoos, 1994; Guba, 1978; Kirst & Kelly, 1995; Knapp, 1995; Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997; Schorr, 1988 & 1997; Usher, 1995; Ware,

1995; Weiss, 1995; Weiss & Jacobs, 1988). Knapp (1995) identifies the problems this

social endeavor presents to researchers and evaluators in his statement:

> The difficulty for those who wish to study comprehensive, collaborative services,
> however labeled, stems from their complexity and flexibility, the nature of
> collaborative effort, and the convergence of different disciplines. Complexity
> derives from the sheer number of players, stakeholders, and the levels of the
> system, as multiple services lodged in different agencies or disciplinary contexts,
> each operating from its own premise about good practice and the "client" or
> "consumer," join forces in some fashion to influence the life prospects of high-
> risk families and children. (p. 5)

Kagan (1991) adds his concern that good evaluation and research on integrated,

collaborative service ventures is also complicated by the unique, and often incomplete,

implementation of many of the initiatives. This poses a critical opportunity for

researchers and evaluators to seriously consider what the appropriate questions are to ask,

and answers to seek, at the current phase of service development, experimentation, and

understanding (Knapp, 1995). The experience that Robert Stake (1986) outlines in his

book, Quieting Reform: Social Service and Social Action in an Urban Youth Program,

serves as a wake-up call for researchers to be wary of the potential damage that can be

caused by studying programs using a methodological approach that is inappropriate for

the particular study and cannot reveal what is valuable. The problem is that typical

formal evaluation designs use formal criteria, and considered them to be relatively

constant across people and places, not adapted to particular situations and contexts, as a

central notion in evaluation. For programs like Cities-in-Schools, the technical difficulty

of using common criteria with students having uncommon problems can not possibly

demonstrate how these programs are moving children toward productive and meaningful lives.

The movement to integrate social services into a comprehensive service system presents an ideal opportunity to advance the kinds of methodological learning that new social interventions require. The evaluation methods that were established as "credible" in the 1960s often involve an experimental design, do not take into account variations within programs, and are typically used to inform a remote decision-making audience of legislators and program funders (Weiss & Greene, 1992). An evolution of evaluation methods is necessary as program planners and researchers come to a new awareness about what is important to learn about a program. "In addition to wanting to know the outcomes of a program, both stakeholders and evaluators have come to want to know how better programs can be formed" (Ostrom, Lerner & Freel, 1995, p. 434).

Lawson & Briar-Lawson (1997) state that the development of their monograph, Connecting the Dots: Progress Toward the Integration of School Reform, School-Linked Services, Parent Involvement and Community Schools, was partly in response to requests they had received from community and school leaders. "They told us they need explanations, analyses and complex, integrated change strategies that conventional scientific studies had not yet provided" (Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997, p. 10). Schorr (1988, 1997) contributes her persuasive argument that current evaluation methods, which frequently fail to capture the true effects of these innovative programs, have contributed to our nation's distrust of social interventions and the pervasive sentiment that, "nothing really works." This chorus of voices is joined by many others (e.g., Brown, 1994;

Cousins & Earl, 1995; Fetterman, 1994; Fetterman, Kaftarian, & Wandersman, 1996;

Greene, 1994; Lieberman, 1992; Stake, 1986; Usher, 1995; Ware, 1995; Weiss &

Greene, 1992) who advocate for a new vision and innovative approaches to research and

evaluation.

New approaches are needed that emphasize widespread participation and a

collaborative relationship among the participants, and between participants and

researchers. Grey (1993) also suggests that evaluation needs to take form as an ongoing,

developmental learning process, which can inform both the internal and the external

audiences. The central premise of those advocating for new research methods is that

research and evaluation can be more useful if they address the priority concerns of

participants in the immediate context, fully utilize participant/stakeholder participation,

and provide rich experiential understandings to promote program improvement. Schorr

(1988, 1997) describes how public support—be it financial, educational, or social

support—for children and families has eroded in the last several years. Knowing which

aspect of a program is working, as well as why and how it works, is more crucial to good

service delivery than being able to declare a program a failure if the children and families

it serves continue to encounter difficulties with which they cannot cope. Given the

prevailing conservative attitude toward social programs, research and evaluation can no

longer be conducted as an "autopsy" which will not advance the development of good

social programs or adjust ineffective ones.

Yet another compelling impetus for challenging dominant research methods and

advancing methodologies that will allow adequate and appropriate study of service

integration efforts, or any of the comprehensive, collaborative services endeavors, is considering how findings get "used". Patton (1987) describes the inherently political nature of program evaluation. His position is fortified by Cronbach and Associates (1980) who state, "The evaluator has political influence even when he [sic] does not aspire to it" (p. 3). Greene (1994) concurs, as evidenced by her statement that, "Program evaluation is integrally intertwined with political decision making about societal priorities, resource allocation, and power" (p. 531). Although there are important subtleties that distinguish research from evaluation, "in the realm of popular social interventions, all research has political and evaluative overtones, and, regardless of intention, may be enlisted in the debates regarding the merits of one or another initiative" (Knapp, 1995, p. 6). Thus, it is incumbent upon the researcher to select a research method that compliments the needs of the inquiry and can provide useful information.

In the face of this reality, researchers need to advance evaluation and research methods that capture the complexity and articulate the uniqueness, in a word provide the needed "thick" descriptions (Geertz, 1973) of collaborative service arrangements at the point of service delivery. As stated by Kagan, "We simply cannot fit the square peg of conventional evaluation into the round hole of comprehensive, community-based efforts" (cited in Schorr, 1997, p. 143). Schorr (1997) contends that the near-unanimous acceptance of prevailing research and evaluation approaches may be nearing an end.

> As more and more researchers, practitioners, and funders come to appreciate the importance of the interaction among interventions, the crucial contribution of neighborhoods, and the difficulty of measuring the effects of community-building and institutional reforms, it becomes glaringly apparent that any method of evaluation which excluded such factors as "contaminants" could not long be

considered the sole legitimate source of information about what works. (Schorr, 1997, p. 146)

In order to disentangle the complex forces that surround these comprehensive, collaborative initiatives, research operating from a qualitative, interpretivist paradigm is the ideal choice. This approach, because of its emphasis on accepting the reality that there are multiple perspectives and on the value of consumer voice, will allow researchers to develop a greater understanding of how the various participants experience the intervention, which can be used to augment local understanding and promote program improvement.

Qualitative/Constructivist Research Approach

Naturalistic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Skrtic, Guba & Knowlton, 1985) or, as is now the preferred term, constructivist (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) inquiry was selected as the research methodology for this study. The goal of constructivist inquiry is to holistically observe, collect, interpret, and analyze constructions of social phenomena from the perspective of the participants in the social setting. Because the intent of constructivist research is to permit the point of view of the participants to emerge, the design and implementation of the study is not based on a priori theory (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Instead, theory is grounded in the data and emerges in the particular social context (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In addition, the researcher does not control or manipulate the participants. Given that the goal is to understand the events in natural contexts, this research method provides the opportunity and encourages

participants to speak from their own experiences. Constructivist inquiry was selected

because it provided a match of the problem under study with the primary purpose and

guiding questions of the research.

In addition, constructivist inquiry is designed to address several of the

generally recognized axiomatic problems associated with positivist methods. Lincoln

and Guba (1985, pp. 37-38) have provided the following summary of the axiomatic

differences between positivist and constructivist (naturalist) inquiry.

> Axiom 1: The nature of reality (ontology)
>
> Positivist version: There is a single tangible reality "out there" fragmentable into independent variables and processes, any of which can be studied independently of the others; inquiry can converge onto that reality until, finally, it can be predicted and controlled.
>
> Naturalist version: There are multiple constructed realities that can be studied only holistically; inquiry into these multiple realities will inevitably diverge (each inquiry raises more questions than it answers) so that prediction and control are unlikely outcomes although some level of understanding (verstehen) can be achieved.
>
> Axiom 2: The relationship of the knower to known (epistemology)
>
> Positivist version: The inquirer and the object of inquiry are independent; the knower and the known constitute a discrete dualism.
>
> Naturalist version: The inquirer and the "object" of inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable.
>
> Axiom 3: The possibility of generalization.
>
> Positivist version: The aim of inquiry is to develop a nomothetic body of knowledge in the form of generalizations that are truth statements free from both time and context (they will hold anywhere and at any time).
>
> Naturalist version: The aim of inquiry is to develop an idiographic body of knowledge in the form of "working hypotheses" that describe the individual

case.

Axiom 4: The possibility of causal linkages.

Positivist version: Every action can be explained as the result (effect) of a real cause that precedes the effect temporally (or is at least simultaneous with it).

Naturalist version: All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects.

Axiom 5: The role of values in inquiry (axiology).

Positivist version: Inquiry is value-free and can be guaranteed to be so by virtue of the objective methodology employed.

Naturalist version: Inquiry is value-bound in at least five ways, captured in the corollaries below:

    a. Inquiry is influenced by the *inquirer* values as expressed in the choice of a problem and in the framing, bounding, and focusing of that problem.
    b. Inquiry is influenced by the choice of the *paradigm* that guides the investigation into the problem.
    c. Inquiry is influenced by the *substantive theory* utilized to guide the collection and analysis of data and in the interpretation of findings.
    d. Inquiry is influenced by the values that inhere in the *context*.
    e. With respect to the above corollaries, inquiry is either *value-resonant* (reinforcing or congruent) or *value-dissonant* (conflicting). Problem, paradigm, theory, and context must exhibit congruence if the inquiry is to produce meaningful results.

This study was designed as a way to learn about an innovation in service delivery as it is experienced and described by families who were consumers of the service. As such, these axiomatic presuppositions of constructivist inquiry are consistent with the problem and purpose of this study. For example, Axioms 1, 3, and 4 are consistent with my interest in understanding the experience of participants holistically in terms of the multidimensional ways of understanding experiences. As the researcher, I was dedicated

to hearing the participants' multiple constructions of the experience of this project and their interpretations of the mutual shaping between their thoughts and actions and the context of this demonstration project school. Axioms 3 and 5 directly relate to my desire to become informed about this method of service delivery as it exists in this particular site, and in understanding local interpretations of social services. And finally, although the results of this study reflect the ideas of the participants rather than the inquirer, I recognize the influence one has on another, which is congruent with axiom 2, that the knower and known are inseparable.

I am proposing that developing a new services system will require a new role for participants who have been neither major sources of information nor part of the decision-making process as it currently exists. The constructivist method of inquiry assumes a knowing participant and provides an opportunity for their ideas to emerge. It is the intention of this study to learn about this new service delivery method from consumers who have had the opportunity to experience this program. Consistent with the goals in designing and conducting constructivist inquiry, there will be no attempt to manipulate the setting or the participants or to predetermine the salient issues (Patton, 1980). This research seeks out issues emerging from the inquiry process and the voices and ideas from the participants in the research. Thus, constructivist methodology was selected as the best method of inquiry to accomplish the researcher's goal.

The substantive problem that has been introduced in Chapter 1 will be further expanded upon in Chapter 2, the review of the literature. Chapter 2 summarizes

findings from the literature on: philosophical issues related to social welfare, the

historical development of social welfare policy in the 20th century, selected historical

issues in the development of the social work profession, service integration, and the

connected concerns of educational reform and service integration.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

[When] ideas are neglected by those who ought to attend
to them—that is to say, those who have been trained to think critically about ideas—they
sometimes acquire an unchecked momentum and an irresistible power over multitudes of
men [sic] that may grow too violent to be affected by rational criticism.
                                                                    —Isaiah Berlin

This review of related literature will be presented in five broad sections. The first

section poses questions about the word "welfare" and notes how the meaning has

changed in the last two generations. This is followed by a discussion of the issues that

ensue when we dichotomize people into categories of "worthy" and "unworthy" poor,

which impacts the philosophy of social welfare and, consequently, programs and policy.

The second section of this review will focus on the historical development of social

welfare policy in the 20th century. The particular points in history that will be more

carefully analyzed are: the New Deal and the Social Security Act of 1935; the 1960s and

the Johnson Administration's War on Poverty; the 1980s and the Reagan years; and

current efforts at welfare reform. The third section will address the history of social

work. Issues such as: the historic dual mission; the loss of an emphasis on social

action/social reform; the movement toward increased professionalization, and the costs

and consequences that accumulate with these changes, will be discussed. The fourth

section will cover the concept of service integration, with special emphasis on the notion

of collaboration. The final section will address issues in educational reform and their

connection to the service integration movement, and will propose that social work may

be able to facilitate a timely juncture of these two reform movements.

Questioning the Meaning

What is the meaning of "welfare"? As it was used in the statement framing the

Preamble of the U.S. Constitution, "to promote the general welfare," it meant prosperity,

good health, or well-being. Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the

English Language (1989) defines welfare as "the state or condition with regard to good

fortune, health, happiness, prosperity, etc.; well-being" (p. 1619). The social work

dictionary provides two definitions of welfare.

> 1. A condition of physical health, emotional comfort, and economic security. 2.
> The efforts of a society to help its citizens achieve that condition. The term is
> also used popularly as a synonym for *public assistance* or other programs that
> provide for the economic and social service needs of poor people. (Barker, 1995,
> p. 406)

At one time, to think of providing for the welfare of another conjured up images of

fulfillment, satisfaction, and contentment.

It is interesting to consider how the meaning of the word welfare, in its current

context, has become reversed, and now implies poverty, laziness, and poor health when it

is used to describe people living "on welfare." An illustration of this can be found in the

social work dictionary, which provides a definition for "welfare queen." This

unattractive euphemism is described as, "a pejorative term applied to people, especially

mothers receiving *Aid to Families with Dependent Children* (AFDC)... the term is often a

code to suggest that many recipients would live in luxury if not scrutinized" (Barker,

1995, p. 406). As Gordon (1994) suggests, the word welfare "connotes slums, depressed single mothers and neglected children, even crime…today 'welfare' means grudging aid to the poor, when it once referred to a vision of a good life" (p. 1). Although "welfare" could refer to any of a number of programs the government provides to its citizens, for example; Social Security, Worker's Compensation, public education, fire protection, paved streets, clean water, safe food, sanitation, etc., the term has come to refer nearly exclusively to the few programs designed for the very poor. The programs that most people associate with the negative connotation of the welfare system, are Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and General Assistance (GA).

The universal hostility toward welfare is evident in the manner in which nearly all people speak of welfare. No one, not the prosperous or the poor, those who consume the services or those who believe they are paying for them, is satisfied with how this system works. It is hated by the prosperous who resent paying for something when they are not sure who gets the "help" and why, and they doubt if it really is helping. The consumers who are subjected to rigorous supervision and invasions of privacy in order to "prove" their need and worthiness to receive help resent it. In fact, most would agree that the system merits scrutiny because "it does nothing to move poor women and their children out of poverty and often places obstacles in the paths of women's own attempts to do so" (Gordon, 1994, p. 2). What is the history of social welfare in the 20th century that has led us to this place?

Values Driving the Development of Social Welfare

It can be argued that the history of helping in this country is premised on a belief that those in need can be divided into two categories. One of the categories includes those who are poor through no fault of their own, the "worthy poor"—the aged, blind, and disabled. People who fall into this category are considered to be "those whom society has a moral and ethical obligation to help" (DeNitto and Dye, 1983) and who therefore, "deserve" help. On the other hand, there are those who are considered able, but are perceived to be unwilling to work, and thus are considered the "undeserving" or "unworthy" poor.

America inherited this dichotomized labeling tradition from England. Actually, it would be more accurate to say that immigrant Americans perpetuated the English tradition. Haynes & Holmes (1994) contend that to consider the history of American social welfare only through the traditional historical summaries ignores extensive systems of social welfare fashioned by the Native American tribes that inhabited this land before the Western European invasion. In their words,

> The habit of tracing U.S. history principally through England, no matter how significant that historical relationship was, perpetuates the social myths of English culture and society that have been preserved in the written records conventionally accepted as an accurate representation of real events in England and its colonies. Furthermore, the acceptance of such written records as "complete" inevitably excludes the unrecorded activities and contributions of significant participants. (Haynes & Holmes, 1994, p. 46)

With the caveat that I am not addressing what we ignored, but rather what Americans acted upon, let it be said that the Elizabethan Poor Laws of 1601 were important because they formalized and legalized England's governmental responsibility for the poor. They

are also critically important to an understanding of the welfare system in the United States today because of the continued use of categorical groupings of the poor. The English Poor Laws established the groups: the impotent poor, those incapable of self-support (including dependent children) thus deserving help; and the able-bodied poor, those who could support themselves and thus were considered as undeserving. The reifying of these categories is evident in our current social service system.

Our current social welfare system upholds the distinction between worthy and unworthy poor and, by its design, underscores a belief that people who are able, *should* be responsible for their own problems and able to solve them with very little social intervention. Wilensky and Lebeaux (1965) have conceptualized this orientation as the "residual" approach to social welfare. The "residual perspective" in social welfare results in short-term, limited, parsimonious programs that are given grudgingly, with judgment and stigma attached. In Romanyshyn's (1971) opinion, "Social welfare in the United States has fallen in a large measure within the residual concept, with its patchwork system of programs based on the assumption that social obligation extends to meeting the emergency needs of that portion of the population that is regarded as incapable of meeting its own needs through the traditional means of the market and the family" (p. 33). Day (1989) states that the residual perspective complements the medical model of social work treatment in that services are designed to "fix" (treat and cure) or control people. A succinct recapitulation of a residual perspective is offered by Day (1989, p. 40) who explains that these programs should be available:

1. In emergency situations, when other social institutions fail;

2. on a short-term basis;

3. as a stopgap measure, until the "normal" social institutions once more come into play;

4. with eligibility usually determined by means testing;

5. in a way which encourages recipients to find other means of help, usually by stigmatizing them;

6. begrudgingly, especially in assistance programs, where the minimal is given.

The current public assistance programs, AFDC and GA, are examples of the residual ideology shaping the design and delivery of services, in that eligibility is limited, services are stigmatizing, and resources are inadequate to maintain health and welfare.

On the opposite end of the continuum from the residual perspective of program design is what Wilensky and Lebeaux (1965) call the institutional perspective. From this perspective, programs are universal and every citizen has a right to services. There is no stigma attached to receiving these services, primarily because this perspective does not view social problems as the result of personal fault. As Day (1989) describes, "The institutional perspective leads to the 'structural' or 'social' model of social work—social problems are believed to come from oppressive or inegalitarian structures in society" (p. 40). Programs such as Social Security and public education are examples of universal services that most Americans support as essential, and most believe that they should be accessible to all persons. In actuality, most Americans probably would not consider public education or Social Security benefits as "social welfare" given the existing "residual" interpretation of "welfare." The debate over social welfare programs as

universal right or residual "privilege" rages on. The idea of social justice recognizes the pervasive inequality in this country, and advocates that all citizens have a right to share in the benefits and resources of this society, and recognizes that the primary issue is equitable distribution of those resources.

Social Events and Social Policy

The source of professional help for consumers of formal services is the development and implementation of social programs. Social policy is the mechanism that creates the opportunity, structure, and funding for programs to be developed. Indeed, there would be very few formal services available if there were no social policy to authorize their development, set goals and parameters, and financially support the programs. There is a long history of the existence of social services. Ginsberg (1996) states, "Historians who specialize in the study of social policy history note that as long as there have been civilizations there have also been social welfare services to help people deal with their needs or problems" (p. 15). A study of societal events and social policy history allows some understanding of the current form and development of the social service system. This dissertation is not the avenue to provide an extensive social policy history. There are many excellent sources for those who desire a thorough study of this history (see P.J. Day, 1989 or J. Axinn and H. Levin, 1992). What follows is a discussion of particular social policies relevant to the issues addressed in this study.

The Social Security Act of 1935

A worldwide economic crisis, the Great Depression, had to occur before the U.S. government developed any national social welfare policies. The federal government offered no social safety net for the poor, although there had always been need for aid, until the 1930s (Collins, 1996). During the Depression, human need became so pervasive it could no longer be viewed as an isolated, individual experience. The near collapse of the economy, the widespread unemployment, the instant poverty for many who had been prosperous, and the failure of the market to regenerate growth, resulted in massive social unrest (Collins, 1996; Day, 1989; Ginsberg, 1996). The economic difficulties created a shift in U.S. voting patterns, causing the defeat of the incumbent president and the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt (FDR). FDR, with his many remarkable characteristics, "is best remembered for making major changes in the role and functions of the United States government"(Ginsberg, 1996, p. 25).

Roosevelt took many of his ideas from the teachings of economist John Maynard Keynes. Keynes, who was from England and had visited the U. S. during the Great Depression, proposed theories of the government's ability to manage the economy. Based on his belief that, if people did not consume or invest enough, the economy would fail, and recognizing that during this Depression private business could not stimulate consumerism, Keynes insisted that government must find ways to increase expenditures (Ginsberg, 1996). Embracing Keynesian approaches, Roosevelt named his legislative endeavors the New Deal, and initially directed programs toward restoring the U.S. economy and putting the unemployed back to work. The New Deal programs, using the

Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) as primary examples, were designed to reduce individual or family economic need by creating jobs. Successful as these programs were in expanding the economy, they were rooted in a belief that our Nation's recovery would come with the revival of economic investment, which was not completely accurate in this case.

Consequently, FDR navigated an uneasy balance during his first hundred days in office. Collins (1996) explains, "Roosevelt had to appease both a reluctant and sometimes hostile business establishment and an increasingly angry and militant public" (p. 89). A new reform, surpassing all previous measures, would be needed. With this in mind, Roosevelt formed a commission of young social reformers who shared his vision "not only to provide for people who were suffering from economic disadvantage but to prevent permanently such disadvantage in the future" (Ginsberg, 1996, pp. 26-27). It was their goal to design a massive, low-cost insurance program that would provide permanent security for American people and could end poverty once and for all. Thus, the Social Security Act of 1935, was enacted which established the first federal social services policy. This act is also considered very important because it indicated an admission that programs designed to simply massage the economy would not bring prosperity to all.

It is also important to recognize that the Social Security Act replicated the persistent and prevailing attitude regarding "earned rights" (read "deserving") and "handouts" by creating two different types of programs. There were social insurance programs such as those we still see today, which include: Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, Medicare, Veterans Assistance, Railroad Retirement, etc., that were popular

then, as they are now, because benefits were available regardless of income, to those who had paid in through payroll taxes. People were seen as having "earned" these benefits.

The other set of programs is known as public assistance. People could receive goods and services, if they could prove they were income eligible, even though they had not contributed to the general revenues fund (Collins, 1996). Until the Welfare Reform Act of 1996, these programs included: Aid to Families with Dependent Children (originally known as Aid to Dependent Children), Medicaid, Food Stamps, Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children, Head Start, and others. These are the programs that have carried the increasingly pejorative label of "welfare."

The Great Society/War on Poverty

The 1960s are described by Ginsberg (1996) as "The most notable and active era for social policy development, after the New Deal"(p. 29). The early 1960s were a time of great optimism about both the government's capacity to enact initiatives that could engineer a great society, and the ability of social science to guide the way (Kirst & Kelley, 1995; Simon, 1994). Coupled with this optimism was a broad concern about racial and economic inequality and a committed president who built his domestic agenda on these issues (Davidson, 1969).

It is widely reported that President Kennedy had read Michael Harrington's classic exposé of poverty, The Other America: Poverty in the United States, and was moved by the description of the continuing existence of a great deal of poverty in America. He launched a fight against poverty that was designed to strike at the causes of

poverty, not just to ease the hardships of being poor. President Kennedy initiated his program, the New Frontier, prior to his assassination. This set of policies, as DiNitto and Dye (1983) describe it, was "the first curative antipoverty policies" (p. 170), and was intended to help people overcome the basic causes of their poverty. This included the Kennedy administration's creation of legislation such as the Area Redevelopment Act of 1961, which authorized Federal grants and loans to businesses in designated "depressed areas" to fight "pockets of poverty" caused by technological change.

Those social programs and legislation were continued and further developed by Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson when he announced in his 1964 State of the Union Address that he would declare "an unconditional war on poverty" and create "the Great Society" (Collins, 1996; DiNitto and Dye, 1983; Karger and Stoesz, 1990). President Johnson believed that his "war" would make a difference. He expressed his conviction that government work and training programs could provide the necessary skills to make young people into self-sufficient adults, thus breaking the cycle of poverty (DeNitto & Dye, 1983). Echoing the optimism of the American government to solve social problems, it is reported that while signing the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, President Johnson exclaimed, "Today for the first time in the history of the human race, a great nation is able to make and is willing to make a commitment to eradicate poverty among its people" (Moynihan, 1969, pp. 3-4).

Although the War on Poverty challenged the status quo, unfortunately, the program that emerged was not able to live up to the powerful rhetoric that shaped it into existence. Gans (1995), echoing the sentiment of many of those involved in it, refers to it

as "the Skirmish on Poverty"(p. 3) because it was so meagerly financed and lacked vision

of what really needed to occur. As Collins (1996) describes, "From the beginning, the

War on Poverty, though the largest attempt since the Great Depression to alter the

distribution of resources, was limited in conception, scope, administration, and funding"

(p. 100). In spite of the gap between what was promised and what was delivered, some

of the programs and events that emerged during this era were significant and some still

exist today (e.g., Head Start).

One area that was particularly significant was Johnson's commitment to

empowering poor communities to overcome poverty and develop economic opportunities

within their own neighborhoods. The often-repeated expression "maximum feasible

participation of the poor" was a key phrase meant to motivate poor communities to act in

their own behalf. The Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) was designed to allow a

direct link between the Federal government and the poor in order to foster the creation of

education programs, jobs, and other incentives and opportunities. The Community

Action Program (CAP), which became one of the most controversial features, operated

under the umbrella of the OEO and was designed to mobilize community resources

(Collins, 1996; Karger & Stoesz, 1990).

Communities were encouraged to organize community action agencies governed

by a board composed of representatives of government (a public official, such as, county

commissioner, mayor, school board member), private organizations (including, for

example business, religious, civic organization), and *most importantly*, the poor. This

was the most visible sign of the "maximum" participation of the poor. Through CAP,

local communities were allowed to design their own antipoverty programs, and efforts were made to "mobilize" the poor in order to have an impact on their communities. As a result, a plethora of services and programs was offered, such as health services, child development centers, literacy training, neighborhood centers, vocational training, legal aid, and the like.

The poor also were organized as a political force, which contributed to the unpopularity of the program. As Piven and Cloward (1993) describe it, when poor people use federal funds to protest racist governing structures and unfair practices, this does not sit well with the traditional political establishment. Consequently, between the controversy caused by creating an opportunity for poor communities to claim greater control over their lives, and the costly and divisive Vietnam war, Johnson began cutting back on the community action program before the end of 1966 (Collins, 1996).

Richard Nixon was able to win the election in 1968 by playing on the fears of urban violence and black militancy on the part of white working and middle-class voters, and their anger at welfare. Karger and Stoesz (1990) describe how Nixon assumed the presidency in 1969 and promptly began to dismantle the Great Society. Nixon was determined to clean up the "welfare mess" and curb the power that had been given to poor communities. Collins (1996) recalls that, "When Richard Nixon abolished the Office of Economic Opportunity, the most prominent agency of the War on Poverty, it signaled the end of the government's commitment to eradicating poverty" (p. 103). With an agenda that no longer included ending poverty, the welfare state actually expanded during the conservative Nixon presidency. The Nixon presidency is probably most well

known for its proposed legislation that would have guaranteed a minimum income through benefits and tax credits to families with children. This legislation, known as the Family Assistance Plan (FAP) died in Congress.

Although there were some additions to social services, some reductions in budgets, and some effort to reverse policies that had been previously implemented, our nation did not substantially alter its social welfare policies through the presidencies of Nixon, Ford, or Carter (Ginsberg, 1996).

The Reagan Years

In the 1980 presidential election, the neoconservative politicos and their religious allies had the power to defeat the incumbent, Jimmy Carter, and elect Ronald Reagan. Reagan had campaigned from the classic conservative position of removing the federal government from direct service programs for citizens. He implemented his promised policies to reduce social programs through a series of reallocation of federal budget dollars, tax reform, deregulation, and monetary policy (The New Federalism) (Collins, 1996; Ginsberg, 1996). The core of Reagan's social policy was his "trickle down" notion of how to stimulate economic growth in a package coined as "supply-side economics." Collins (1996, p. 109) deftly summarizes this notion:

> The theory was that if the cost of doing business were lowered for corporations through tax and regulatory relief (including the relaxation of antitrust laws), and if people were allowed to keep more of their earnings through income tax reductions, savings would increase, resulting in a flood of new business activity that would stimulate economic growth, reduce inflation, create jobs, and balance the budget.

Of course, critics warned that this policy would only make the rich richer and, in fact, Reagan and his successor George Bush presided over an astounding redistribution of the wealth upwards to the top twenty percent of the population. Especially dramatic were the gains seen by the top one percent. The richest one percent (those making over $676,000 a year) saw their incomes soar 136 percent while the poorest twenty percent saw their income drop by twelve percent (McIntyre, 1989). A humorous colloquialism that critics believed captured the essence of Reagan's "trickle-down" philosophy, is that this idea suggests that we can feed the birds by gorging the horses.

Part of the redistribution of wealth was accomplished by Reagan's 1981 Economic Recovery Tax Act, which was a ploy presented to the public as tax reduction that would allegedly benefit the middle class. David Stockman, Reagan's budget director, described this promised middle-class tax break to journalist William Grieder (1981) as a Trojan horse which was used to divert attention from their dropping the tax rate of the very rich from 70 percent to 28 percent. The tax reform bill also lowered corporate taxes, which by 1983 would drop to an all-time low of 6.2 percent, down from 32.1 percent in 1952, dramatically reducing tax revenues to the federal treasury (Phillips, 1990). This reduction, combined with increased military spending, skyrocketing health care costs, and the "bail-out" of the savings and loan industry, sent the federal deficit through the roof. Citizens in this country witnessed the profound shift in status of America's moving from being the world's largest creditor to the world's largest debtor in a ten-year period (Collins, 1996).

The initial efforts of the Reagan administration to cut the federal budget proposed

sweeping cuts that, as is often the case, fell most heavily on the poor and working class.

However, general services, such as libraries, recreation, public transportation, park

maintenance, and education also were cut. The military was a notable exception, with

over one and a half trillion dollars being spent on defense in the first five years of

Reagan's reign (Greider, 1981). Some social programs were dismantled by way of

regulatory changes that rendered people ineligible for programs. For example, the

Reagan administration ruled that 200,000 people who were on disability insurance, some

with severe disabilities, would no longer be eligible to receive the only source of

financial assistance they had available (Katz, 1986). This is also the era in which budget

cutters, in their effort to reduce costs to school lunch programs, attempted to have

ketchup declared a vegetable so they could save money, yet still meet the nutritional

requirements of school children.

The Reagan revolution accomplished most of its agenda to dismantle social

services in the first one hundred days he was in office, and we continue to live with the

effects of Reaganomics ticking like a time bomb in the foundation of our society. A huge

national debt compels policy makers, Republican and Democratic alike, to stand against

using the government to provide for the general welfare of its citizens. However, the

disparity between rich and poor has not gone unnoticed. Phillips (1990) reports that a

1987 poll by the University of Chicago's National Opinion Research Center found that

59 percent of Americans believed that the wealthy are not taxed enough. Middle-class

Americans are increasingly concerned about poverty, hunger and homelessness.

Hopefully Ginsberg (1996) is accurate in his comment that, "Although political leaders

such as Presidents Reagan and Bush might have preferred otherwise, the American commitment to social assistance programs has continued and grown since the major social policy developments of the New Deal" (p. 34).

Current Reform Efforts

In 1992, Bill Clinton was elected president in a tight race that was complicated by the populist rhetoric of Ross Perot, who drew a surprising 19 percent of the vote. Perot's popularity was indicative of the angst and frustration many Americans felt as they faced danger in their streets, escalating rates of poverty, working families without homes, skyrocketing health care costs, and daily reports of declining wages, plant closings, and corporate "downsizing." Clinton's initial efforts to establish youth services programs, implement health care reforms, and allocate funds to local governments to fight crime were greeted with enthusiasm by supporters of social programs. Unfortunately, even as early as 1993, Clinton's power was limited by Congress that, in response to the rising deficit, had placed permanent caps on entitlements and discretionary spending (Leonard and Greenstein, 1994).

For the two years following the 1994 midterm election, which resulted in the Republicans winning a majority in both houses of Congress, the actions of the U.S. Congress dominated the administration more than any initiatives by President Clinton. A "Contract with America" was introduced by Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House. This was a manifesto that included a significant overhaul of the social welfare system with drastic changes in AFDC, food stamps, Medicaid, and Medicare, as well as reducing the

size and influence of the Federal government (Ginsberg, 1996). Collins (1996) describes

the Contract as, "the most radical restructuring of government since the New Deal—in

effect, a repudiation of the idea of compassionate government" (p. 117). The new

welfare legislation transfers many of the federal welfare entitlements and programs into

block grants at reduced amounts, for the states to use as they like. However, the original

plan sets restrictions on who is eligible, under what circumstance, for how long, as well

as other parameters. Collins (1996) succinctly describes the plan:

> Cut government spending (with the exception of the military and corporate
> subsidies); transfer standard setting and regulatory authority—especially for
> social programs—to the states; redistribute the tax burden downward; make
> market principles rather than safety and health considerations the basis for federal
> regulations on business; and finally, what states refuse or cannot do leave to the
> private sector. (p. 118)

The use of euphemistic rhetoric to name the bills that would accomplish these

changes hides the true consequences of the legislation. For example, a bill that will

protect corporations from prosecution for marketing products that prove harmful was

called the "Common Sense Legal Reform Law." Likewise, the bill called "Job Creation

and Wage Enhancement Act" was the avenue to shift wealth from the lower and middle

classes to the top ten percent. The most reprehensible bill from the perspective of social

service advocates, because it slashes aid to poor mothers and their children, was called

"Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act."

In order to gain an understanding of the neoconservative thinking that is

evidenced in the provisions of these acts, Collins (1996, pp. 121-122) provides a

summary of the "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act":

- Elimination of AFDC's entitlement status, which meant that no child or family, regardless of the depth of the family's poverty or the parent's willingness to work, would be assured of receiving assistance if a state ran out of money.

- Capping AFDC spending at 1994 levels for the next five years and repealing the mandate for states to match federal funds.

- Prohibiting mothers under eighteen from receiving grants for children born out of wedlock, as well as children born to families already receiving AFDC or who received aid at any time during the ten month period before the birth of the child. If a husband were to desert his pregnant wife, thereby forcing her to apply for cash assistance, she would be prohibited from receiving any aid for the newborn—even though the child was conceived before the parents started receiving assistance.

- A five-year limit on the time a family could receive welfare, regardless of whether the parents have been able to find work.

- Eliminating cash assistance through the SSI program for 80 percent of disabled children who would otherwise become eligible in future years, and for people whose disability stem from alcoholism or drug abuse.

- Replacing federal child welfare programs with block grants, thus ending the assurance of foster care payments for children from AFCD-eligible families who cannot safely live at home, as well as payments to families that adopt children with special needs.

- Denying most form of assistance to most immigrants and to all immigrants without papers.

- Repealing the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills (JOBS) program, which had required states to provide a range of education, training, and work programs for AFCD parents. No new resources would be committed to expanding welfare-to-work programs.

- Reducing federal resources for child care, a critical component of any initiative to move welfare recipients into the workforce.

A reasonable and thinking person would question how these proposals could possibly be called welfare reform. True reform will occur when ramifications of these changes surface, because the effects of these changes will probably be devastating for millions of families, many of whom already suffer severe hardship. Uncovering the true causes of poverty, and then attempting to eradicate "poverty as we know it" rather than eliminate "welfare as we know it" seems a much more reasoned, responsible and humane path to take.

The Evolution of a Social Work Perspective

The Mission of Social Work

"No other profession is as self-examining and critically self-conscious as social work...there are many reasons for this...in part, it relates to the profession's young history, its ambiguous position in society, and to its multiple purposes and functions" (Rapoport,

1960, p. 62). Although this statement was made more than three decades ago, the continual re-examination of the meaning and purpose of social work has never abated. According to Ehrenreich (1985) and others (Franklin, 1990; Leiby, 1978; Lubove, 1971; Mills, 1959; Specht & Courtney, 1994; Trattner, 1984) social work historically has had a dual focus: a) to provide resources, services, and opportunities that combat existing problems, primarily targeted at individuals and families, and b) to prevent dysfunction of its members through social reform and public policy, which targets social conditions. The focus on existing problems results in services designed and delivered for individuals and families to meet individual needs and address personal crises. An emphasis on social reform implies a mission to create conditions that would promote the well-being of all persons (Lofquist, 1983).

The history of social work mirrors the cyclical swings of the attitudes and values of society that attempt to identify and label the causal factors of the problems people face. Goldenberg (1971) comments that professions are typically shaped by the societies in which they exist, as well as by the social and political realities of their time. Therefore, the practices and orientations of professions are reflections of the values and prevailing ideologies of the greater society of which they are a part. Rather than reflecting only professional assessment, the focus of social work has been, and continues to be, influenced by prevailing political climate. There have been periods in history where the common belief was that individuals were responsible for their own problems (Day, 1989; Gil, 1990). Ehrenreich (1985) describes these periods as

Very crudely, in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the 1920s, the

1940s, and 1950s, and the present time, the more individual orientation
has predominated (and along with it, despair as to the possibility of
reform and disdain for social action). (p. 12)

Alternatively, as evidenced during the Progressive era, the overwhelming social

problems caused by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and immigration could not be

attributed to individual defect or lack of effort. Likewise, there have been times of

massive social unrest, for example, during the Depression and the 1960s, which have

given rise to efforts toward community action and social reform. Large-scale movements

for social change, such as the civil rights movement, were possible at these times of

massive social change or social unrest, because most people understood that social

conditions created situations that individuals could not be held responsible for or be

expected to control. Consequently, the focus of social work has shifted between services

to "fix" individuals (individual treatment) and services designed to ameliorate social

conditions (social reform). These shifts have contributed to the profession's continued

debate to define its aims and purpose in some generally accepted statement (Chambers,

1986; Day, 1989; Spano, 1986; Specht & Courtney, 1994; Trattner, 1984).

The Emergence of Social Welfare

In the late 1800s, there were two very influential organizational movements,

Charity Organization Societies (COS) and Settlement Houses, that jointly assumed

responsibility for social welfare in the United States. These were formed in order to ease

the massive social and economic changes brought on by the transition from an agrarian to

an industrial economy, and they interactively shaped the social purposes of the social

work profession (Franklin, 1986). Both the COS movement and the Settlement House

movement emerged from English models and both attempted to address problems of

pauperism, crime, and disability that contributed to dependency. They each, however,

had different intellectual and ideological frameworks that directed their efforts toward

alleviating problems associated with poverty (Day, 1989; Franklin, 1986). Franklin

(1986) summarizes these as:

> Those who accepted the ideas of liberalism with its emphasis on individual
> responsibility and action tended to give their support to the Charity Organization
> Society. Those who embraced the philosophy of pragmatism and who were more
> concerned with the problems that beset neighborhoods and entire geographical
> regions worked in the Settlement House movement. (p. 507)

The COS emerged not only as an effort to coordinate relief-giving and to make it

scientific, efficient, and organized, but also to prevent people from receiving help from

more than one charity (Day, 1989). The guiding philosophy of the COS directed that

poverty was to be cured by investigating, studying, and ultimately rehabilitating, the

character of individuals seeking help. The COS carried out its work through the use of

paid staff who investigated applications for relief, and volunteers, who as "friendly

visitors" personally interviewed applicants, identified needs and problems, and

developed rehabilitation plans for the poor (Pumphrey & Pumphrey, 1961). In this

approach there was an undeniable emphasis that the poor are morally responsible for

their own circumstances.

The influence of Mary Richmond, who became the presiding matriarch of the

Charity Organization Society, was in the promotion of the profession of social work

based on scientific charity. Her belief in the value of science, and what she saw as

similarities between the professions of social work and medicine, were reflected in her 1912 address to the National Conference of Charities and Corrections (NCCC), "Medical and Social Cooperation." The belief that science offered the best hope in addressing social problems, as well as aiding in the development of social work as a profession, was furthered by Richmond, and her associates, Edward Devine and Abraham Flexner, at the NCCC conference in 1915, when the theme of the conference was the status of social work as a profession (Franklin, 1986). Richmond further secured both the direction, and her position as a leader, of the profession with the publication of her book, Social Diagnosis, in 1917. It was in writing this book that Richmond "...facilitated an easier transition to the helping processes as a technical service analogous to that of a doctor or lawyer..." (Franklin, 1986, p. 517) and framed her specifications of casework by adopting the medical study-diagnosis-treatment model (Germain, 1970).

The Settlement House movement, as a form of service delivery, was developed in part to counter the moral philosophy of the Charity Organization Society, which had, in its original design, perpetuated the notion that poor people were responsible for their situation (Davis, 1984; Day, 1989; Trattner, 1984). For those who were involved in settlement houses, the causes of poverty were seen as systemic, rooted in social and economic conditions, not individual characteristics. Thus, they emphasized social reform rather than relief or assistance (Day, 1989). Addams (1940) says that, "The Settlement, then, is an experimental effort to aid in the solution of the social and industrial problems which are engendered by the modern conditions of life in a great city" (p. 125). The COS inspired distinction between worthy poor and unworthy poor was quickly discarded as

settlement workers got to know people in their communities. Ehrenreich (1985) says of

settlement workers that,

> They saw that poverty was the lot of thousands of people with energy,
> intelligence, ambition, and imagination; that you quickly became poor,
> through no fault of your own, if you lost your job, or your husband was
> injured at work, or your child was sick, or you had to pay half of your
> income for a rat-infested tenement apartment with no indoor plumbing.
> (p. 62)

In addition, Addams (1940) illustrates how relationships that were developed

with residents in the settlements allowed appreciation for a person's capacity to move

beyond a state of "neediness." She described an incident with a woman who invited her

to her home for dinner two years after her family had received help because "she couldn't

bear to have me remember them as they had been." Addams (1940) captures the

significance of this with this reflection:

> She perhaps unconsciously illustrated the difference between the relief-
> station relation to the poor and the Settlement relation with its neighbors,
> the latter wishing to know them through all the varying conditions of life,
> to stand by when they are in distress, but by no means to drop intercourse
> with them when normal prosperity returned, enabling the relation to
> become more social and free from economic disturbance. (pp. 164-165)

Based on a richer understanding of the effect of social conditions, efforts were channeled

toward organizing communities, changing environmental conditions, developing schools

and training programs, strengthening child labor and factory safety laws, and providing

parks, libraries, and sanitary living conditions for residents.

Thus, in the early years of this century, the polarity had clearly formed in the

social work profession. The divergence of these two perspectives spurred the cause-

function debate within the profession that Porter Lee spoke about in his presidential

address to the NCCC in 1929. Although he was one of the first to discuss the ideological

tensions within the profession, theoretical, methodological, and ideological debate

persists. As Barbara Simon (1994) sums it up, "social work, after all, has never been one

harmonious chorus of unified practitioners and theorists. To the contrary, the evolving

profession has been an arena of ceaseless internal debate, tension, and conflict since the

1880s" (p. 5).

There were (and are) those who believe the central role of social work is social

action, community development, reform, and advocacy; roles built on a belief that most

individual problems are caused by economic conditions and the physical and social

environment. These were (and are) essential roles for social workers due to the fact that

"The policy of the public authorities of never taking the initiative, and always waiting to

be urged to do their duty, is obviously fatal in a neighborhood where there is little

initiative among the citizens" (Addams, 1940, p. 98). On the other hand are those who

see individuals as the cause of their own misfortunes, and individual casework,

counseling, and provision of direct services as necessary in order to solve their problems.

The Movement toward Professionalization

Robinson (1978) described how the influence of psychology and psychiatry

"mold[ed] the point of view and approach of social casework from the year 1910' (p.49).

In addition, she acknowledged that the National Conferences of Social Work in 1911,

1914 and 1915, "revealed the real sweep of the interest of psychiatry and psychology in

social behavior and its control" (p. 51) based on the people who spoke and the papers that

were presented. Edward Devine, who was then directing the New York School of

Philanthropy, which was to become the Columbia University School of Social Work,

presented a paper at the 1915 conference focused on the curriculum of the professional

school of social work. His recommendations focused on the priority of curriculum

courses dealing with interventions with individuals and families (Devine, 1915).

Franklin (1986) suggests that his position "... reflected the influence of the rehabilitative

philosophy of the COS, a philosophy that placed emphasis on the individual and did not

directly address environmental or structural constraints" (p. 515).

This psychological/psychiatric orientation became even more firmly entrenched

when, at the same conference in 1915, social work was challenged by Abraham Flexner's

pronouncement to legitimate itself as a profession. It was believed that the major route to

professionalization was the adoption or creation of an identified body of knowledge. "By

the late 1920s, psychoanalytic theory had gained wide acceptance among leading social

workers as the route social work must take if social work was to achieve full professional

status" (Ehrenreich, 1985, p. 73).

This infusion of Freudian theory resulted in a de-emphasis on the importance of

the social environment, as clinicians focused on internal psychodynamic forces as

determinants of human behavior. Bisno (1956) echoed the concern that the influence of

Freud, combined with social work's concern with its status and the medico-scientific

approach with an emphasis on technique, led inevitably to a focus on individuals and

their problems. Jimenez (1990) describes how universities emphasize educational and

training programs with a clinical practice focus, serving to encourage the profession

away from a perspective that links individual functioning directly to the social environment. The adoption of a psychiatric approach transformed the profession of social work in the 1920s, and has continued to guide the mission of social work.

People within and outside of the social work profession are raising questions about the efficacy of this drive for professionalism and the unintended consequences of this approach. The attraction of a rational, logical method of social work practice that Richmond proposed in 1917 made sense at a time when the profession was struggling to establish its credibility, as well as to standardize practice in order to plan interventions and predict outcomes (Weick, 1992). However, Schon (1983), in his provocative book, The Reflective Practitioner, confronts social work with the inevitable effect of what he called "Technical/Rationality" as an approach to helping. That the social worker will name the problem and frame the solution, perpetuates the idea that clients are naïve, at best, and will passively accept the technical expertise of the social work professional. This "social-worker-as-expert-who-will-diagnose-and-treat-the-client" perspective is currently being challenged. There are practitioners and scholars in social work who are now advocating for a practice approach that operates from an empowerment perspective (Gutierrez, 1990; Pinderhughes, 1994; Rose & Black, 1985; Simon, 1994; Solomon, 1976) and one that emphasizes the strengths that people have before they are labeled as clients (Saleebey, 1992).

Simon (1994) convincingly argues that "empowerment" practitioners have existed in social work since the 1890s, although the term was not introduced into professional discourse until 1976. Yet, as she recognizes, empowerment has become a

term that means different things to different people. Simon (1994) explains,

"Empowerment has achieved the dubious distinction of being among the tiny handful of concepts, along with *freedom, equality,* and *welfare reform,* that signify opposite meanings to political antagonists" (p. xii). She elaborates that those who advocate minimal government intervention in social and economic programs use the word to imply that people in local areas should be handed the responsibility for making their own lives better (Simon, 1994). This differs sharply from those who believe that their government and corporate leaders, those who are more powerful, ought to help sustain the smaller, less powerful entities and communities, rather than dominate them (Bellah et al., 1991).

Present-day empowerment practitioners embrace the belief that all citizens have a right to the goods and resources in this country and vigorously work with oppressed populations (people of color, poor people, women) to secure those rights. The focus of social work intervention, from an empowerment perspective, is to mediate the power inequities in this society that play a role in keeping some people powerless, and in effect create and maintain social problems (Gutierrez, 1990; Pinderhughes, 1994; Simon, 1994; Solomon, 1979). It is the premise of empowerment theory that individual problems arise from the failure of society to meet the needs of its members, not because of individual pathology or deficit.

The empowerment practitioner works with the consumer to gain power. In this case power is defined as, "the capacity to have some control over the forces that affect one's life, the capacity to produce desired effects on others, and to demonstrate mastery

over self" (Pinderhughes, 1994, p. 22). In order to accomplish this, empowerment-based

practitioners must work to avoid the rival tradition in social work to operate in a

paternalistic mode. Simon (1994) describes how there are two approaches within the

paternalistic model, the *benefactor* and the *liberator*, which are considered alien to the

essential values and purposes of empowerment practice. As opposed to trying to "lift

clients up" as the benefactor might, or "lead clients out" to the liberator's view of a better

world,

> [i]nstead, the social worker who is intent upon client empowerment attempts to
> initiate and sustain interactions with clients and client groups that will inspire
> them to define a promised land for themselves, to believe themselves worthy of
> it, and to envision intermediate approximations of that destination that they can
> reach, in a step-by-step fashion, while remaining in reciprocal connection with
> each other and with a professional guide who offers technical and emotional
> help. (p. 7)

Social workers with an empowerment perspective work from a deeply held belief that

people can succeed and environments can change. And they also believe that people are

basically intact and inherently "whole."

Consistent with empowerment theory, the idea that more effective service

utilization could occur for individuals and families through the use of a strengths

approach is gaining credibility and prominence (Kisthardt & Rapp,1989; Rapp &

Chamberlain, 1985; Saleebey, 1992; Weick, 1992; Weick, Rapp, Sullivan & Kisthardt,

1989). A strengths approach defies the traditional professional standard for how clients

are seen and understood. As Saleebey (1992) describes,

> Social work, like so many other helping professions, has constructed much of its
> theory and practice around the supposition that clients become clients because
> they have deficits, problems, pathologies, and diseases; that they are, in some

critical way, flawed or weak. This orientation is rooted in the past where certainties and conceptions about the moral defects of the poor, the despised, and the deviant, held thrall. More sophisticated terms prevail today, but the metaphors and narratives that guide our thinking about our clients are essentially negative constructions that are fateful for their future. (p. 3)

Social work, from a strengths perspective is driven by a deep respect for individuals and their unique ways of seeing, knowing, and describing their experiences. This is coupled with a profound awareness of the talents, attributes, resources, and aspirations that consumers bring with them as they enter the helping relationship (Saleebey, 1992; Weick, 1992). The dynamics of this collaborative expectation is likely to result in a "helping relationship" that differs dramatically from the typical encounters with helping professionals where the problems of the consumers, rather than their strengths, are emphasized.

In social work today, the strengths perspective urges social workers to develop a different attitude toward our work and especially toward those with whom we work (Saleebey, 1992). The professionalization of social work has resulted in a body of knowledge and a plethora of strategies for the assessment, diagnosis, and intervention into individual and family problems and pathologies. With this orientation, we lose focus on the strengths, resources, and positive attributes of people, we do not emphasize the social structural inequities that contribute to personal troubles, nor do we look to the employment of natural resources in the environment.

Obviously, how social work defines problems and determines solutions shapes the manner in which the profession delivers its services. If the balance of a dual focus is lost and the concentration of effort in social work is psychotherapeutic and aimed toward

helping individuals or families on a one-to-one basis, then this implies that the problem is located within the individual or family and, thus, they must "be treated" so they can adapt or change. If the profession also places an emphasis on changing the system of service delivery or elements in the environment, then it is recognizing that structural factors also need to change, not just individuals or families.

In our current social and political climate there is a resurgence of blaming individuals for problems beyond their control. This orientation challenges social work's professional commitment to social justice and social responsibility. It is important to remember social work's longstanding professional interest in social reform. In a sense, the National Association of Social Workers 1990 statement of its Code of Ethics *obligates* social workers to take action on a structural, as well as individual, level. The subsection titled, "The Social Worker's Ethical Responsibility to Society" under the division "Promoting the General Welfare," states:

1. The social worker should act to prevent and eliminate discrimination against any person or group on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, mental or physical handicap, or any other preference or personal characteristic, condition or status.

2. The social worker should act to insure that all persons have access to the resources, services, and opportunities which they require.

3. The social worker should act to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, with special regard to the disadvantaged or oppressed groups and persons.

4. The social worker should promote conditions that encourage respect for the diversity of cultures which constitute American society.

5. The social worker should provide appropriate professional services in public

emergencies.

6. The social worker should advocate changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions and to promote social justice.

7. The social worker should encourage informed participation by the public in shaping social policies and institutions. (Edwards et al., 1995, p. 2629)

This is a clear statement to social workers of their obligation to social reform as well as direct service. One possible avenue for social workers who are interested in applying their efforts toward social reform can be found in the service integration movement.

Service Integration

At different times across the history of the helping professions, there have been concerted efforts directed toward redefining and redesigning social services. Increasingly prevalent in the 1990s are the attempts to coordinate service delivery (Agranoff, 1991; Bruner, 1991; Gardner, 1992; Gerry & Paulsen, 1995; Kagan & Neville, 1993; Melaville, Blank & Asayesh, 1993; Tyack, 1992). Interest in service coordination is not a new idea and can be traced back to the 1960s when there was a proliferation of social programs. However, new interest, perhaps driven by necessity, has propelled the idea of service coordination into renewed prominence (Kagan, Goffin, Golub, & Pritchard, 1995; Kagan & Neville, 1993). Schorr and Both (1991) summarize the current problem with services:

Available services are often the wrong ones, too cumbersome to reach, too fragmented, too late, too meager, or too narrow in scope. With a few noteworthy exceptions, the children who, along with their families, need the attention of the most skilled, experienced, and wise professionals, the best organized and best funded institutions and agencies, and the most comprehensive services, are dependent upon doctors, clinics, social agencies, child care, and schools that are tragically overwhelmed, and offer the worst and the least. (p. 25)

Unfortunately, it is easy to find examples of how the balkanized nature of services to children and families often results in people becoming further "damaged" in their efforts to locate and secure services. Gerry and Paulsen (1995) poignantly suggest that,

> On a day-to-day basis, children and families most frequently encounter an inaccessible, highly uncoordinated array of narrowly focused services and benefits, targeted on different and often conflicting goals, administered by different agencies, using inconsistent eligibility criteria and conflicting rules, and staffed by overspecialized professionals (p. 3).

Many social reformers contend that the fragmented, categorical system, compounded with the social stigma that has accompanied receiving public assistance, in large measure contributes to, rather than alleviates, problems. It is logical that providing services in a nonstigmatizing, universally accessible, and user-friendly manner is the best way to help overcome a temporarily distressing situation, and in the process strengthen and empower people.

Helping professionals have truly come to see and understand the complexity and interconnectedness of the needs, problems, and resources of children and families. Educators recognize that schools can not prepare children to contribute to society in meaningful ways, socially, politically or economically, if their basic needs are not being met (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Human service professionals, service consumers, educators, and advocates realize that services and programs would be more effective if they worked together. The idea that the helping system can provide comprehensive, collaborative, integrated, flexible, and empowering

social service has not been lost.

Definition and Development of Service Integration

In the 1990s, efforts to integrate services for children and youth have become increasingly prevalent. Developing and implementing them is difficult because there is no universal term used for "service integration" initiatives, and there is an array of activities that fall under the broad rubric of service integration that exists on local, state, and national levels. A comprehensive definition of service integration is both useful and necessary. A study conducted by Kagan, Goffin, Golub, and Pritchard (1995, pp. 13-14), approached the complexity of service integration with a definition that is composed of three components—goals, functions, and approaches. The goals, functions, and approaches that they propose are outlined as follows.

Goals:

1) to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of systems providing human services; and

2) to positively impact child and family outcomes

Functions:

1) to bring together previously unconnected services;

2) to overturn past practice, policy, or bureaucracy;

3) to create mechanisms that work to promote and sustain integrative strategies; and

4) to change relationships for and between people and institutions

Approaches:

1) Client-centered—focuses on the point of interaction between service providers and clients. Its primary strategies are case management and integrated information and referral.

2) Program-centered—creates linkages between programs or agencies so that services and resources can more efficiently and effectively serve clients. Its primary strategies include: the creation of planning councils; the collocation of programs; streamlining application/intake; and pooled funding.

3) Policy-centered—refers mainly to governmental efforts to form linkages between strands of the human service system, including the state agencies, community organizations, and local service providers. Its primary strategies include the creation of advisory bodies and blended funding.

4) Organizationally-centered—refers to efforts by government to reconfigure relationships between government agencies or offices, usually to facilitate integration in the other three dimensions. Its primary strategies include: reorganization or restructuring within a department; restructuring across departments; and the reconfiguration of lines of accountability. (Kagan, Goffin, Golub, and Pritchard, 1995, pp. 13-14).

In terms of the array of activities associated with service integration, local communities react to the effects of fragmentation most strongly because they see the effects on "their" children and youth. Therefore, local initiatives have been created to respond to local concerns, but, without a concurrent, widespread systemic change, these efforts may be adding more disjointed pieces to an already ineffective system. In addition, it is incumbent upon the community stakeholders to facilitate movement toward state-wide endeavors and state support of integrated social services. And all these efforts must complement, and/or push the national agenda for service integration efforts.

The national service integration movement secured significant federal leadership

in the early 1970s (Agranoff, 1991; Kagan, Goffin, Golub & Pritchard, 1995). The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), now the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), implemented the Services Integration Targets of Opportunity (SITO) Project in 1972 in order to fund pilot and demonstration projects. These projects were followed by other HEW research efforts, including the Partnerships Grants Program (1974) and in 1975, the Comprehensive Human Service Planning and Delivery System Project (Kagan, Goffin, Golub & Pritchard, 1995). Although these efforts were designed to provide information based on the various demonstration projects, " the findings from these demonstration projects were far from conclusive and provided only limited lessons" (Kagan, Goffin, Golub & Pritchard, 1995, p. 7). This was due partly to the predominant use of quantitative evaluations "which are not sufficient in determining whether a program has been successfully implemented" (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1995, p. 305), and to the reality that the most successful programs are defined locally and driven by local community needs, history, resources, and interests, thus rendering them "unevaluable" (Schorr, 1997) and difficult to replicate.

Examples of Initiatives

Across the nation, various experiments and efforts are underway that are directed toward enhancing the delivery of social services in order to produce better outcomes for children and their families. Although many of these initiatives have a focus on integrating services and linking them to schools, the scope and variety reflected in these projects and experiments is one of the hallmarks of the service integration movement.

Crowson and Boyd (1993, pp. 148-150) provide summaries of the following six

examples.

1. The state of New York inaugurated a **Community Schools Program** in 1987,

providing resources to individual schools that broker health, nutritional, and social

services for children and families, that establish productive linkages with other agencies

(e.g., community-based organizations, businesses, churches, higher education), that

involve parents actively, and that serve as a site for a variety of services (e.g., cultural,

recreational).

Some twenty schools statewide were funded under the program by 1989-1990 to

pursue such goals as: (a) early interventions with families; (b) service as an umbrella for

a range of offerings to the community (e.g. tutoring, vision testing, counseling,

recreation); (c) an on-site health, substance-abuse, teen pregnancy, and community-

health-education focus; (d) a school-based food co-op and workshops for parents on the

preparation of nutritious meals; and (e) the school as a center of cultural, recreational,

and summer-enhancement activities for the community (see New York State Education

Department 1990).

2. The **Life Services System** of Ottawa County, Michigan (Holland area) is a

joint undertaking of some ten social service agencies (including the schools) in the

county, to coordinate services for youth and adults who have "functional limitations or

handicapping conditions." Services provided within the scope of the project include

housing assistance, a range of educational offerings (e.g., special education, physical

education, independent living skills training, vocational education, driver's education),

employment training and placement, health assistance, social and recreational services, and personal support services (e.g., transportation, financial assistance, family support training). The system operates on a client-intake and individual-client-need basis under the rubric of an interagency agreement and contributed staff and resources from the member agencies (see Life Services System of Ottawa County 1990).

3. The New Jersey Department of Human Services funds projects in some twenty-nine schools or near school locations, designed to link the education and human services system for adolescents. Underway since 1988, the program offers young people between the ages of thirteen and nineteen a comprehensive range of services including employment counseling, training, and placement; summer and part-time job assistance; drug-and alcohol-abuse counseling; family crisis and academic counseling; health services; and recreation services (New Jersey Department of Human Services 1990).

4. Following a feasibility study in 1990, the San Diego City Schools launched the **New Beginnings Demonstration Project of Integrated Services for Children and Families** in the fall of 1991. Located in and near a single elementary school in the poverty-ridden City Heights area of San Diego, the New Beginnings initiative links the school system, county and city services, and the San Diego Community College District in the implementation of a coordinated services center for at-risk children and families.

From classroom teacher referrals, individual children and their families can receive health services, guidance and counseling, family advocacy assistance, parent and adult education services, and ready access to an "extended team" of professionals in housing, welfare, mental health, community organizing, etc. Organized on a "case

management" basis, computer networking assists this service coordination experiment. The project has an outside evaluation contract with the Far West Regional Laboratory (San Diego City Schools, 1990).

5. One of the pioneers in the coordinated-services experimentation is **Cities in Schools**. Cities in Schools describes itself as a national program to "implement comprehensive dropout prevention programs that feature coordinated health, educational, and social services delivered to students enrolled in public schools." Its 1990 year-end report indicated a total of 46 local programs in 16 states at 217 local school sites.

Cities in schools locates its roots in the storefront "street academics" of the 1960s and a progressive development since then of federal interest and corporate assistance in a private-public partnership. While the specifics of programs vary from site to site, Cities in Schools services are mainly available within participating institutions through "multi-disciplined teams" and a "case management system" involving "social workers, employment counselors, recreation leaders, educators, health professionals, volunteers, and others as "a support system for at-risk students" (Cities in Schools 1989, p. 2)

6. With support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the University of Illinois entered into a five-year partnership with four of Chicago's low-income communities in the fall of 1989. A K—8 elementary school in each of the Chicago communities of Austin, Englewood, West Town, and Pilsen is the setting for collaborated relationships to: (a) engage in a "family ties" outreach effort to work with the community in parent education and family assistance; (b) join school and university in a set of "school enhancement" and school-improvement efforts vis-a-vis teaching, learning, restructuring,

and professionalization; (c) provide child-care and after-school youth capacity for each school vis-a-vis its community, and (d) engage in a "partners in health" initiative, linking University of Illinois health service personnel with available community resources in preventive health care (Nation of Tomorrow Project 1991).

There are many more examples that could be provided, they exist across the U. S. in a variety of forms and locations. However, these project profiles give some sampling of the range of initiatives that exist in the name of service integration. From state-initiated programs, to school district and city services cooperatives, to smaller scale "demonstration" projects at a few selected sites, the multitude of efforts to establish collaborative, comprehensive services is encouraging. In 1987, The National Association of State Boards of Education launched a national effort to encourage and document collaboration between education and human services known as Joining Forces (Crowson & Boyd, 1993). In their 1990 report, Levy and Copple identify that "some level of interagency collaboration exists in every state" (p. 5). However far from "perfect" some of these efforts may be, they are works in progress that we can learn from and, most importantly, they indicate the widespread interest in reforming systems.

Although there is common agreement about the need for radical system change, the strategies and methods of bringing about change differ. This is partly due to an expressed ambivalence in the field related to the ultimate goal of service integration (Kagan, Goffin, Golub & Pritchard, 1995). The ambivalence is about the question of whether service integration is an end in itself (an improved service delivery system) or is a means to improve outcomes for families. Given the current state of social services, it

makes sense to accept what Kagan, Goffin, Golub and Pritchard (1995) propose as a two-fold goal, that "service integration is considered a reform strategy to improve the human service system; at the same time, it is seen as a reform strategy that improves outcomes for children and families" (p. 11).

In spite of the lack of agreement regarding goals and means, there is consistent recognition that there are common issues confronting service integration initiatives on the national, state, and local level. One critical issue that federal, state and local officials have recognized is that most human service agencies, whether public or private, are structured in such a way that they are only able to deal with single problems rather than complex problems. In such a categorical system, there is little opportunity to experience the collaborative strategies necessary to facilitate reform.

The Role of Collaboration

The concept of collaboration in the context of service integration can have a much larger meaning than simply creating methods to link services provided by various agencies. The latter more aptly describes a cooperating relationship, and only addresses a "services-oriented" reform effort. Reform such as this, "attempts to link clients to existing services and unite various service providers without altering the way the program officials budget and fund programs, service agencies' responsibilities, or agencies' organizational structure" (U.S. GAO, 1992, p. 3). Melaville and Blank (1991) point out a fundamental difference between cooperation and collaboration. In cooperative relationships, service agencies assist one another in meeting their individual goals, but do

not work together to establish common goals. Cooperating agencies may co-locate services in order to more effectively serve clients, but they do not collaborate to establish and implement the kinds of preventive and supportive services that will improve outcomes for children and families (Lawson & Anderson, 1996).

Service integration efforts that are "system-oriented" demand collaborative efforts to eliminate fragmentation and create a new system of comprehensive service delivery. Collaborative efforts require that agencies establish common and mutually agreed-upon goals. The GAO report (1992) further urges that we must, "change the way agencies plan and fund programs and eliminate conflicting eligibility and data collection and reporting requirements of programs serving similar clients" (p. 2). Collaborative efforts can change the configuration and delivery of services. Lawson and Anderson (1996) suggest that, "greater opportunity for change" exists, if agencies join together in planning and utilizing resources.

This is a timely juncture of two reform movements. The interest expressed by the social welfare system in designing a new form of service delivery, coupled with the opportunity presented with school restructuring efforts, opens up the possibility of a more systemic change. A reform effort that is more systemic does not focus on making the existing system operate more effectively, it aims at fundamental, not incremental, redesign and improvement of the system itself. The notion of developing connections among the community, families, schools, and the helping system, strikes a resonant chord with those who want to reform the system. There are many who look at schools as the logical base for implementing services that are preventive in nature, holistic and

integrated in approach, and accessible to children and families.

Although linking schools and social services has become a nationwide movement (Adler & Gardner, 1993), the process of linking these two different institutionalized networks of organizations is complex and difficult. A variety of definitions of what constitutes linking schools and social services has emerged. Adler (1993, p. 1) has organized the following comprehensive list of what almost all definitions include.

- Families and children ought to be able to access all necessary services at a center located at a local school or some other facility in their neighborhood.

- A wide variety of services should be available such as health, mental health, recreation, job development, child development and care, education, and housing.

- The service providers should work collaboratively to meet all the needs of children and families in a holistic way.

- The services should stress community development and family support that prevent problems rather than being crisis-driven.

- Planning to meet the needs of the community should empower both families and the line workers who provide direct services.

- Organizations that provide community and family services will have to develop new ways of working together.

- More flexibility must be created in how categorical funding can be used; or, ideally, new blended funding streams should be created to support collaborative services on an ongoing basis.

- Professionals who work in community and family services will need training to develop new skills, and the preparation of professionals also needs to be changed.

- To achieve these goals system wide changes will be necessary.

Linking schools and social services is an ambitious reform movement.

Attempting to bring people together from their various networks, steeped in their norms, missions, and traditional way of doing things, with the expectation of collaborative efforts toward common outcomes, will create a fertile ground for challenging coalition building. Knapp (1995) aptly captures this inherent complexity in noting:

> The sheer numbers of players, stakeholders, and levels of the system, as multiple services lodged in different agency or disciplinary contexts, each operating from its own premise about good practice and the "client" or "consumer", join forces in some fashion to influence the life prospects of high-risk families and children. (p. 5)

Whatever shape alliances take, a problematic organizational concern will be that of "turf." Turf, described by Lugg and Boyd (1993) as "the overlapping and sometimes conflicting boundaries of agencies and civic groups" (p. 256) presents issues that will have to be resolved if interorganizational alliances are to be effective. In addition to professional turf issues, it is critical that the reformers consider the interests and beliefs of the stakeholders who will be "receivers" of new authority, or risk dooming themselves to years of struggle (Weiss, 1995). The wisdom expressed in this statement underscores the importance of this research study which seeks to gain from the participants their views of the service integration project they are experiencing.

Educational Reform

Integrated Services in Schools

The United States has a long history of providing "noneducational" services to children in school settings (Tyack, 1992). In the late 19th century, health services were provided by medical doctors who volunteered their time, while breakfasts, lunches, and school-centered recreation programs were provided by various philanthropic women's organizations. Tyack (1992) claims that during the Progressive era,

> reformers pressed for school lunches, medical and dental inspections and
> clinics, classes for handicapped and sick children, vocational guidance
> and placement, school social workers to counsel wayward youth and to
> assist their parents, summer school to provide recreation and learning for
> urban youth in the long hot summers, and child welfare officers to deal
> with truant and delinquent youth (p. 20).

Reaction to the programs varied. Conservatives worried that the school's academic mission would be compromised but progressive educators celebrated the provision of services they believed would prevent school failure. Despite the controversy, by the end of the 1930s, cooperative social service programs were entrenched in public schools (Tyack, 1992;Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1995).

The concept of school-linked service integration programs delivered via "full-service" schools, school-linked, or school-based social services is part of the current wave of educational reform. The "crisis" in American education has become an increasingly public issue since at least the publication of the Carnegie Foundation's A Nation At Risk in 1983. We cannot deny its indictment of schools for failing to do their "job" of educating American youth. But schools are facing numerous crises. They were not

designed, nor are they prepared, to meet the complex needs of students today. Teachers are overwhelmed by the demands of teaching for academic excellence to children who are underprepared, hungry, do not see the value of receiving an education, and often are too distracted and distraught to learn. It is clear that many children will not succeed (even survive) without radical changes in the way both their educational and social, physical, and emotional needs are addressed in schools (Dryfoos, 1994; Kirst & Kelly, 1995; Schorr 1988, 1997).

Expanding on the education reform movement, educational restructuring is occurring in an effort to prepare children and youth for the world of tomorrow. One of the pushes for this movement arises out of the Goals 2000 document. This statement of goals for youth was created at the 1991 President's Education Summit during the Bush administration. The establishment of goals, such as school readiness, which sets the expectation that all children will arrive at school ready to learn, or the goal of bonding students to the value of education, can be accomplished by collaboration among the community residents and their associations along with the education, community health, and social services agencies.

Current efforts directed at educational and social reform recognize that many children are at risk. It is unacceptable to simply live with the information from The National Commission on Children (1991) that 40 percent of children are in danger of educational failure because of a complex mix of social, economic, and emotional problems. We cannot afford to ignore these children. The notion of developing connections between schools and the community to improve outcomes for children and

families strikes a harmonious note in the minds of most people. The twenty-fourth annual Gallop poll provided further evidence of the popularity of collaborative integrated services when it found that 77 percent of adults favored using schools as centers to provide health and social welfare services by various agencies (cited in Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1995). Effective delivery of a network of collaborative social services linked to the schools has the potential to do more than just facilitate a child's education. It strengthens families, builds community, and in turn supports children in developing characteristics and skills that foster personal success and the capacity to contribute meaningfully to society.

It is well known that a child's learning is not confined to occurring only within the walls of a school. It is also a generally accepted truth that what a child learns outside of school will effect his/her school experience, and conversely, what occurs in school influences his/her feelings and experiences outside of school (Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997). We are not likely to achieve the goal of learning, including healthy self-development, if we continue to fragment and compartmentalize the meeting of basic human needs necessary for a child's well being. How different it would be if we consciously and planfully integrated a child's education with their overall healthy development, and if rather than blaming parents for the problems, we viewed them as partners in this endeavor.

A unique opportunity for social work to re-engage with its original mission to social reform, as well as individual services, is possible at this point in history. The restructuring of schools, combined with the current interest in redesigning service

delivery, offers the potential for collaboration among various education, health, and social service systems, and with communities and families. Social work needs to intensify professional visibility and articulate a position in this movement.

Pennekamp (1992) suggests that social work could serve a "glue function" that connects community resources and services that are linked to schools. That is, school social workers are strategically placed to act as bridges between residents of a community, service providers, and schools, because they possess the knowledge and skills to facilitate the development of collaboratives. All that remains is for social work to recommit to its original mission (which includes system reform) and define how it will contribute to shaping this new form of service delivery.

Chapter 3 presents the design and implementation of my constructivist inquiry conducted in an elementary school that was the site of a school-linked service integration demonstration project. In this inquiry, parents of children who attend the school were interviewed in order to gain the perspective of the consumers who experienced this approach to service design and delivery.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

There is the same difference between the learned and the unlearned
As there is between the living and the dead.
Aristotle

The primary purpose of this study was to promote an understanding of the nature

and effects of the School-Linked Service Integration demonstration project from the

perspectives of the consumers/families. This research was designed to create an

opportunity for participants in the study (in this case, parents with children who attended

Craft elementary school, where the project was housed) to describe their experiences

and provide their views related to the School-Linked Service Integration demonstration

project and its impact on them and their children.

Given that the predominant emphasis in social science research has tended

toward quantitative outcome measures, researchers have rarely attempted to formally

solicit information from consumers with the intention of using the consumers'

experiences and insights to inform program development or to shape or revise programs

(Rapp, Kisthardt, Gowdy, & Hanson, 1994; Schorr, 1997). Rapp et. al. (1994) claim,

"One of the reasons for the dominance of person-blaming interventions and research is

that the people we seek to help have not been judged to be important informants or

collaborators in the execution of the research"(p. 384). In addition, research has

traditionally been guided by the needs of outside funding or governing agencies, not the

needs of the local program planners, providers, or consumers. As Schorr

(1997) describes,

> I believe that the big funders, public and philanthropic, whose pressures were shaping evaluation might have long ago questioned the evaluation industry's assumptions had they not been captivated by the aura of science and the glitter of certainty that surrounded traditional evaluation. The idea that social sciences could be as precise as the physical and biological sciences, using an experimental approach approximating a laboratory setting, was so seductive that the private and public funders went for years without seeing how much the requisites of traditional evaluation were skewing program design and failing to produce usable knowledge on which to build new and more effective interventions. (p. 144)

This has resulted in a paucity of contextual, local information and indicates the

need for, and the timeliness of, conducting an exploratory research study that provided

an opportunity for consumers' (a voice not often heard in research) to articulate their

perspectives. Therefore, this inquiry was aimed at capturing the perspective of the

participants, the parents, as they described their experiences and at giving voice to their

thoughts about the SLSI demonstration project. It is my hope that the information

gathered from this and other similar research studies can be used to create and shape

social service agencies, programs, and policies, as well as in the education and training

of helping professionals.

We are living in uncertain times. As Schorr and Both (1991) describe, we no

longer enjoy the luxury of, "an atmosphere of boundless optimism" (p. 26), with its

stimulating effect on the development of new social programs, that we experienced

twenty-five years ago. America has struggled with a huge budget deficit and citizens

fear wasting money on social problems that seem beyond solution. Although it is

frequently claimed that the fear of perpetuating dependency underlies their parsimonious

response, American taxpayers are ambivalent (at best) about helping the poor (Schorr,

1988; Schorr & Both, 1991). The current pessimistic mood in this country

regarding social programs has had an impact on the thinking of researchers and

evaluators.

The necessity to produce solid evidence of program effectiveness in order to

gain and maintain support for social programs has escalated. In combination with the

overarching press for accountability for all social programs, comprehensive service

initiatives have presented new obstacles to producing this evidence, and have forced the

issue of developing and applying appropriate research methodologies. As Schorr and

Both (1991) suggest, "the attempt to achieve the quantitative precision of research in the

biological and physical sciences has interfered with meaningful evaluation of many

kinds of human services" (p. 26). And, as previously discussed, the nature and unique

elements of comprehensive service integration initiatives pose significant challenges to

researchers.

However, this is not the first initiative to confront the established quantitative,

"scientific" research methods. The critique of positivist science gained considerable

momentum with Kuhn (1962, 1970), who challenged the very premise of positivistic

science when he proposed that all forms of knowledge depend on their cultural context

for meaning and interpretation. The previously held belief that scientists can *discover*

objective knowledge has been threatened by scientists who participate in a community

of inquiry that *constructs* knowledge (Ravetz, 1971; Stake, 1995). Applying Kuhn's

(1962, 1970) point to our work in the social sciences, Skrtic, Sailor and Gee (1996)

propose,

This means that the scientific knowledge that guides and justifies professional practice is not objective knowledge of reality; it is subjective knowledge based on a particular and, at best temporarily useful perspective. Although the rise of subjectivism creates a crisis in the professions, it also represents a positive opportunity for change and renewal because, from this perspective, a crisis in knowledge is a natural and necessary precondition for growth of knowledge and progress. (p. 143)

Grounded on this foundation, it makes sense to perceive this challenge to the notion of a singular "scientific method" as an opportunity to advance methodological learning. With regard to utilizing the kinds of research methods that will allow us to make judgments about what works, researchers in the human service field could also gain some insights from the management literature. Peters and Waterman (1982) suggest that American business has been impaired by its tendency to consider only data that one can put numbers on, as facts. By operating on the assumption that a truly rational analysis bypasses "all the messy human stuff" (p. 31), research is reduced in scope, and the most important questions are ignored (Peters & Waterman, 1982). Based on a reasoned critique questioning the capacity of quantitative science to provide the necessary information to determine what works and why, I selected a qualitative method of inquiry for this study.

Naturalistic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Skrtic, Guba, & Knowlton, 1985; Skrtic, 1985) or constructivist (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) inquiry (hereafter referred to as constructivist) was selected as the methodological approach, because it allows a researcher to consider multiple interpretations of social events and processes in social settings, from the perspective of the participants. As is consistent with this research approach, I endeavored to identify relevant patterns or themes within particular life

settings, by collecting and analyzing participants' statements, expressed

thoughts, actions, and non-actions (Sells, Smith, & Newfield, 1997; Spradley, 1979,

1980; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This study beckoned the use of constructivist methods,

which have continued to be developed and articulated in recent years, in that the focus

was to understand another's experience and the meaning (s)he makes of that experience,

rather than to test a formal hypothesis. As the inquirer, I did not attempt to manipulate

or control participants in any way, because the point of the inquiry was to understand

naturally occurring events and processes in natural contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985;

Patton, 1990; Reinharz, 1979). The research was conducted in ways that minimized

manipulation of the participants and eliminated any prior constraining expectations

about the outcomes (Patton, 1990).

This constructivist inquiry utilized interviewing—what Dexter (1970) described

as a conversation with a purpose—as a primary method of data gathering in order to

describe real context and allow real voices (people) to be heard. The emphasis in this

study was on understanding the parents' perspective, which followed Marshall and

Rossman's (1989) proposition that "it is essential in the study of people to know just

how people define the situation in which they find themselves" (p. 46). Consequently,

my approach to the interviews emphasized a mutual process between the participants

and myself, and joint construction of meaning (Bruner, 1990; Hyden, 1994; Mishler,

1990). With the information that was provided from participants, I learned more and

more as I became immersed in the study. As is also consistent with the constructivist

paradigm, a grounded theory approach—that is, theory that follows from the data rather

than preceding them (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)—was used for the analysis.

The findings are presented in a case study report format (See Chapter 4).

The selection of the case study reporting mode is consistent with the research

design and methods outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Case studies are increasingly

used as a research tool (Hamel, 1992; Perry & Kraemer, 1986; Stake, 1995). The value

of a case study is its ability to generate understanding of complex social phenomena

(Yin, 1994). Because case studies have the unique strength of allowing the researcher to

deal with a full variety of evidence—documents, interviews, observations—they "allow

an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events"

(Yin, 1994, p. 3). With the information that accumulates in the building of the case

study, readers are able to make "naturalistic generalizations" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985;

Stake, 1995) from the "thick descriptions" contained in case study reports. Case studies

are used most frequently when the research question is a "how" or "why" question,

when the investigator has little control over actual behavioral events, and when the study

focuses on contemporary events (Yin, 1994). Because these conditions were obtained in

this inquiry, a case study report was considered the most appropriate reporting method

for representing the experiences that were described by the participants.

Design and Implementation

The design and implementation of this constructivist inquiry was based on the

ontological, epistemological, and methodological presuppositions of the interpretivist

paradigm of modern social science (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Ritzer, 1980; Skrtic,

1985). As noted in Chapter 1, Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe these five

axiomatic assumptions as:

1. There are multiple constructed realities that can be studied only holistically; inquiry into these multiple realities will inevitably diverge (each inquiry raises more questions than it answers) so that predictions and control are unlikely outcomes, although some level of understanding (verstehen) can be achieved. [epistemological]

2. The inquirer and the "object" of the inquiry interact to influence one another; knower and known are inseparable. [ontological & epistemological]

3. The aim of inquiry is to develop an idiographic body of knowledge in the form of "working hypotheses" that describe the individual case. [ontological & methodological]

4. All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects. [ontological]

5. Inquiry is value-bound by: (a) inquirer values, (b) choices of paradigm, (c) substantive theory, (d) contextual values, and (e) congruence or noncongruence among values inherent in problem, paradigm, theory, and context. [methodological & epistemological] (pp. 37-38)

These metatheoretical assumptions form the axiological foundation of doing

constructivist research. However, design and implementation of such an inquiry

requires more than these axioms for the conduct of research. Lincoln & Guba (1985,

39-43) describe fourteen synergistic implications, or "research postures" for doing

constructivist research:

1. Natural setting: The inquirer elects to carry out research in the natural setting

or context of the inquiry because naturalistic ontology suggests that realities are wholes

that cannot be understood in isolation from their contexts.

2. Human instrument: The inquirer elects to use him or herself as well as other

humans as the primary data-gathering instruments because it would be virtually

impossible to devise a priori a nonhuman instrument with sufficient

adaptability to encompass and adjust to the variety of realities that will be encountered.

3. Utilization of tacit knowledge: The inquirer argues for the legitimation of

tacit (intuitive, felt) knowledge in addition to propositional (knowledge expressed in

language form) knowledge because often the nuances of the multiple realities can be

appreciated only in this way; because much of the interaction between investigator and

respondent occurs at this level; and because tacit knowledge mirrors more fairly and

accurately the value patterns of the investigator.

4. Qualitative methods: The inquirer elects qualitative methods over

quantitative methods (although not exclusively) because they are more adaptable to

dealing with multiple (and less aggregatable) realities and because such methods expose

more directly the nature of the transaction between investigator and respondent.

5. Purposive sampling: The inquirer is likely to eschew random or

representative sampling in favor of purposive sampling because he or she thereby

increases the scope or range of data exposed (random or representative sampling is

likely to supress more deviant cases) as well as the likelihood that the full array of

multiple realities will be uncovered.

6. Inductive analysis: The inquirer prefers inductive data analysis because that

process is more likely to identify the multiple realities to be found in the data.

7. Grounded theory: The inquirer prefers to have the guiding substantive theory

emerge from the data because no a priori theory could possibly encompass the multiple

realities that are likely to be encountered.

8. Emergent design: The inquirer elects to allow the research to emerge rather than construct it preordinately because it is inconceivable that enough could be known ahead of time about the many multiple realities to devise the design adequately.

9. Negotiated outcomes: The inquirer prefers to negotiate meanings and interpretations with the participants from whom the data have been drawn because it is their constructions of reality that the inquirer seeks to reconstruct.

10. Case study reporting mode: The inquirer prefers the case study reporting mode because it is more adapted to a description of the multiple realities encountered in any given site.

11. Idiographic interpretations: The inquirer is inclined to interpret data idiographically (in terms of the particulars of the case) rather that nomothetically (in terms of law-like generalizations) because different interpretations are likely to be meaningful for different realities.

12. Tentative application: The inquirer is likely to be tentative (hesitant) about making broad application of the findings because realities are multiple and different.

13. Focus-determined boundaries: The inquirer is likely to set boundaries to the inquiry on the basis of the emergent focus because that permits the multiple realities to define the focus (rather than inquirer preconceptions).

14. Special criteria for trustworthiness: The inquirer is likely to find the conventional trustworthiness criteria (internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity) inconsistent with the axioms and procedures of naturalistic inquiry. There

exist substitute criteria (credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmabilty) that adequately (if not absolutely) affirm the trustworthiness of naturalistic approaches.

In the design and implementation of this study, I, as the researcher, followed these characteristics, thus meeting the expectations of constructivist inquiry. In addition to these research principles, constructivist research adds two additional points—the role of theory and the phases of inquiry, that are helpful to consider and were used to shape this inquiry.

Role of Theory

It has been previously mentioned that the intent of constructivist research is to permit the social constructions of the participants to emerge (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). To that end, the design and implementation of such inquiry is not based on a priori theory. In this case, theory is grounded in the data in order to accommodate the multiple constructions of reality that are likely to exist (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Given constructivist inquiry's emphasis on inductive rather than deductive analysis in the initial phase of inquiry, as was expected, I became more informed about the topic, and the design continued to unfold as the study progressed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Reinharz, 1979). With an understanding that the constructivist researcher seeks to refine and extend the design of the study, the initial "designing" inherently involved planning for broad general contingencies that then allowed me to move progressively from a discovery mode to a verification mode (Guba, 1978; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the

beginning stages of the inquiry, I operated primarily inductively, actively

receiving whatever emerged from the data collection and analysis. As the study

progressed, and patterns and categories of interest were revealed, I utilized both

inductive and deductive reasoning strategies. This allowed me to remain open to new

ideas and information, as well as attend to verifying and explicating the information that

had emerged.

Phases of Inquiry

In regard to phases of inquiry, Lincoln & Guba (1985) described how

constructivists approach a research study with the posture of "not knowing what is not

known" (p. 235), hence researchers must learn what needs to be studied, and then study

it. Lincoln & Guba (1985) outline a three-phase approach to constructivist inquiry: (a)

Phase I: orientation and overview, where the researcher tries to learn what is salient to

the participants; (b) Phase II: focused exploration, where the researcher tries to obtain

more in-depth information about what is determined to be salient; and, (c) Phase III:

final member check, where the researcher checks the credibility of the case study report

with the research participants. Although, in actuality, there was tremendous overlap

among these phases, this three-phase format was used to provide a planning framework

and an overarching structure for conducting this research study. A more detailed

discussion of the three phases is presented in a subsequent section of this chapter. The

brief description of the phases that follows is meant to give an overview of the general

design of the study prior to discussing the methods employed.

Phase I: Orientation

In this phase, I operated primarily from a "discovery-oriented" mode. Prior to Phase I (what could be considered as a pre-Phase I process), I had familiarized myself with the literature related to service integration, and had begun the process of familiarizing myself with this particular site. As part of this orientation and overview phase, I did observations in the school, met with the principal, teachers, and staff, and attended school events and functions. I had been hired as part of the School-Linked Service Integration (SLSI) Research Project team in February, 1995, and I began my work on the family study in March, 1996. Because of my previous year as part of the research team, I had taken advantage of many opportunities to familiarize myself with the site and participants in preparation for my research study.

In addition, a Needs Assessment study had been conducted by the research team, which revealed important concerns and issues as expressed by the parents. Lincoln & Guba (1985) state that "the object of this first phase is to obtain sufficient information to get a handle on what is important enough to follow up in detail" (p. 235). This case study provided a wealth of information based on interviews, observations, and verification checks with participants in the research study. Consequently, the Needs Assessment case study was used extensively in the Phase I process, as it contained the salient issues expressed by the participants in this inquiry.

Phase II: Focused Exploration

The purpose of this phase was to explore in greater depth the salient issues that were identified in Phase I. I used the information gathered from the Needs Assessment

case study, plus my previous year's work on the SLSI Research Project, to focus this study and develop protocols for interviewing the parents. More in-depth data were gathered and analyzed, and at the end of this phase, a draft of the case study report was produced to synthesize the information that was collected and analyzed during Phase I and Phase II.

Phase III: Member Check

Up to this point in the constructivist research process, data gathering and data analysis had worked interactively to produce tentative interpretations and findings. At this point, my preliminary case study report was written and returned to the participants in the study. The participants were asked to read the report and assess its credibility.

The remainder of this chapter discusses the procedures used in this constructivist inquiry. For clarity of thought and presentation, the procedures are presented in linear fashion. However, in the actual inquiry, many of these procedures overlapped and occurred simultaneously and interactively. The procedures included: sampling, instrumentation, data collection and recording, and data analysis. Also included is a discussion of techniques that were used to establish the trustworthiness of the study.

Sampling

For the purpose of this study, I selected my research sample utilizing a blend of three of the six purposive sampling techniques as described by Patton (1980). These included the sampling techniques of: (a) maximum variation sampling, (b) extreme

cases, and (c) typical cases. Lincoln and Guba (1985) support the use of maximum variation sampling, and implementation of this method of sampling was important to this inquiry. Maximum variation sampling directs the researcher to select a sample that allows for the broadest range of information possible.

As the researcher, I was interested in gathering information from the broadest possible range of participants. To that end, I selected families with variation in terms of: family composition/structure; ethnicity; income; level of education of the parent; level of need of their child or children; and, degree of service utilization (both traditional public services and project services). Service utilization is the area where my interest was to sample extreme and typical cases. In terms of extreme cases, I interviewed families that had extensively utilized services and those who had hardly used any services. I also interviewed families who were typical cases of families who used this service. In this research study, I gathered data from a sample of eight families. I was willing to expand the sample; however, once the themes began to emerge, redundancy of information was reached, and the data gathering was limited to eight families. This is consistent with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) contention that,

> It is likely that, in sharp contrast to the usual situation in conventional inquiry, sampling can be terminated after a rather small number of elements has been included; for example, in interviewing members of some particular group (respondents in research, or stakeholders in evaluation and policy analysis), it is usual to find that a dozen or so interviews, if properly selected, will exhaust most available information. (pp. 234-235)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that participants in a research study can be nominated by gatekeepers or knowledgeable informants. Based on the information I had gained from my previous year of experience in the school, I easily recognized that

the community services educators (the two people hired through the

demonstration project to provide services in the school) possessed a great deal of

knowledge about the families at Craft. Therefore, in consultation with the lead

researcher on the project, I approached the community service educators, explained my

interest in interviewing a diverse group of parents regarding their experiences with the

SLSI project, and asked them to identify and nominate parents to participate in the

study. They produced a typed list of ten families who they thought were representative

of different family compositions, experiences, and life and living situations, and who

could provide diverse viewpoints.

I was not totally naïve about the possibility of bias and considered that the

community service educators might "cream" the sample. To counter this possibility, I

had intended to utilize "snowball sampling"(Ford, 1975; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) which

involves asking participants to identify additional participants to interview. However, as

I moved through the process of serial sampling (Skrtic, 1985), wherein I interviewed a

family, then gather and analyze the information to assist in the selection of the next

family, two things occurred. One was the reluctance of participants to give another

name. As part of the interview I would ask if they had talked with other parents about

the "services available through Jim and Sara," the community service educators. (I

rarely referred to the services as "SLSI demonstration project", as most parents had little

idea that the work of the community service educators was attached to a state-funded

demonstration project.) No one reported that (s)he had any conversations with other

parents about the services that were available through the schools. In addition, at the

end of the interview, when I asked if they knew of a parent they could suggest that I interview, no one gave any names.

The second occurrence that allayed my concern about sampling bias, and consequently my intended sampling strategy, was that it became apparent that Sara and Jim had not offered me a list of only their "best" families or efforts. This became obvious when several of the participants indicated that they had had very little contact with the community service educators. One stated during our initial phone contact that she might not be "worth" interviewing, because she had never even talked to them (although during the interview she recalled that they had brought her and her grandson a Christmas tree, food, and presents). My experience throughout the process of contacting the parents and conducting the interviews confirmed that the community service educators had followed my specifications and had developed a list based on my interest in family variation, and in extreme and typical cases.

When a parent had been identified as a potential participant, I initiated contact with a telephone call, briefly explained the nature of the research and my role as the researcher, and invited her participation. Upon securing her agreement to be interviewed, a time and place was arranged that was convenient and comfortable for her. Based on the idea of serial sampling (Skrtic, 1985), which insures maximum variation, I contacted a family, conducted the interview in order to gain family demographics as well as salient information for the study, analyzed what I had gained, and then selected the next family. I continued this process until redundancy of information was reached

and my sampling criteria had been met. I also had to remain mindful of my time and energy as a researcher, which is always a concern in qualitative studies.

In order to safeguard the rights of the study participants, informed consent was obtained from all who participated in this inquiry. I utilized an informed consent and sign-off form approved by the University of Kansas Advisory Committee on Human Experimentation (Appendix A). At the beginning of each interview, I also requested and subsequently gained their permission to audio-tape the interviews. It was my habit to keep the tape recorder out in the open and within reach of the participant. They had the option of turning off the tape at any time. There was only one occasion when one of the parents indicated a desire to have the tape turned off momentarily while she spoke of a personal issue with her child. In addition, in order to further protect confidentiality, which is a central component in ethical research, I also assigned pseudonyms for all the participants and their children.

Participant Characteristics

The interview participants were all female. There was one occasion where I was conducting an interview in the evening at the participant's home, and I met her husband. Although I invited him to participate, he declined. However, during the Phase III member check, a father participated in the dialogue. This man had been in prison, and I had interviewed his mother, who was raising her grandson [his son] while he was away. He had been released between the time of the first interview and the member check. He was interested in the research [She had talked with him about my visit], and was willing

to sign an informed consent form, so we scheduled the meeting at a time when he could participate.

Of the eight families interviewed, there were five single-parent families (three divorced, one never-married aunt raising a nephew, and one grandmother raising her grandson) and three two-parent families (one married to the same spouse across time and the father of her children; one who had recently remarried her second spouse who was the father of the two children still in the home; and one blended family). Five of the women I interviewed were white, one was of African American descent, one was Hispanic/Panamanian, and one woman had some Native American heritage. In terms of income, the families ranged from those who were low-income and lower middle-income (the five single women) through middle-income, to fairly wealthy.

The level of education of the women I interviewed ranged across the spectrum. The level of education for the eight participants included: (a) no high school diploma or GED; (b) high school diploma; (c) high school diploma plus paraprofessional training; (d) high school diploma plus in her second semester at KU, aspiring to be a surgical nurse; (e) high school diploma and in her third year at KU pursuing her BA in Speech and Language with the intention of completing a Masters Degree; (f) BA in Fine Arts; (g) BA with Para-Legal training and hours toward Masters Degree at KU; and (h) BA in Psychology and MA in Public Administration.

In terms of service utilization, six of the eight families have children identified as having "special needs," some of which have required a plethora of educational, health, and social services. Of the families interviewed, four were currently receiving some

form of traditional public service (AFDC, food stamps, medical cards) and

four others had received forms of public assistance in the past. Four of the eight families

indicated that they had used the services of the community services educators, and all

the families acknowledged that their children received services. The extent and variety

of services received ran the gamut of human need. The services provided ranged from

those as essential and significant as providing an apartment for a single mother and her

four children, to ensuring the safety and security of children in transition, to simply

lending a stocking cap to a child so he could walk home in the cold [a simple thing his

mother dearly appreciated]. In addition, my experience on the project informed me that

the community service educators often did things for the children (as well as the parents,

teachers, and other staff) at Craft school of which parents were not aware. Table 1,

which utilizes pseudonyms for the participants, summarizes the family demographics.

Table 1. Demographic Description of the Family Participants

Name	Hazel	Paula	Helen	Ava	Debbie	Susan	Beth	Mary
Marital Status	Single	Single	Married	Single	Single	Single	Married	Married
Race	Multi	Caucasian	Caucasian	Hispanic	Caucasian	African American	Caucasian	Caucasian
Number of Children	1	4	2	3	3	1	3	2
Child with Special Need	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Educational Level	No H.S. Diploma	H.S. Diploma	H.S. Diploma	H.S. Diploma +1	H.S. Diploma +3	MA	BA	BA+
Income Level	Low	Low	Middle	Low	Low	Low Middle	Upper Middle	Upper
Current Public Assistance	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Past Public Assistance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Family use of CSE*	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Child use of CSE*	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

* CSE—Community Service Educators

Instrumentation and Role of the Researcher

In constructivist inquiry, the researcher is the initial and continuing main instrument for data collection and data analysis. Although I utilized mechanical and material devices, such as tape-recorders (with permission from all of the participants), computers, and field notebooks, to ensure reliable and efficient documentation, the "research instrument" is the human being. In order to effectively conduct this kind of research undertaking, a researcher needs to possess certain knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experiences that inform him or her on the topic as well as the research methodology. The following is a brief discussion on my background and experience that have prepared me for this research endeavor.

My knowledge, attitudes, experiences, and skills with the theory and methods of qualitative research were initially acquired in graduate-level research classes. As part of my doctoral studies, I completed one qualitative research class in the School of Social Welfare that was primarily theoretical. As part of this class, I studied a number of qualitative research texts, including Naturalistic Inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I also had the opportunity to partake in an applied research class, in the form of a Research Practicum through the School of Social Welfare, where I conducted a qualitative inquiry under the supervision of Professor John Poertner. In addition, I completed a course in Historical and Descriptive Research that was offered through the Communication Studies Department. This academic and experiential training with research

methodology helped to equip me with the necessary axiological disposition and research skills to conduct this constructivist study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As the researcher in this study, I had been hired by the University of Kansas to work with a team of researchers who were conducting the School-Linked Service Integration Research Project which was studying many facets of the service integration demonstration project at Craft Elementary School. As a member of this research team, I received a wealth of information and ongoing training in qualitative methodology, specifically constructivist (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), participatory (Brown, 1994; Usher, 1995; Weiss, 1995; Weiss & Jacobs, 1988), and empowerment evaluation (Fetterman, 1994; Fetterman, Kaftarian, & Wandersman, 1996; Ware, 1995) methodologies. The education and training of the research team was conducted primarily by Dr. Linda Ware. Dr. Ware has extensive education, training and experience in research methods. She was honored for her qualitative research skills by the University of Kansas in being selected as the recipient of the 1994 Dorothy Haglund Award for Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation for her dissertation, Innovative Instructional Practices: A Naturalistic Study of the Structural and Cultural Conditions of Change. In addition to Dr. Ware's research talents, as a researcher on this project, I also had access to the expertise of Dr. Tom Skrtic, who is a noted practitioner and teacher of Naturalistic Inquiry. He conducted, with Guba, the first large-scale naturalistic study (Skrtic, Guba & Knowlton, 1985; Skrtic, 1985), teaches the naturalistic inquiry course, Naturalistic Interpretive Inquiry, in the KU School of Education, and was co-principal investigator on the SLSI Research Project. In my role as part of the research team, I was afforded the opportunity to

become acquainted with the site, as well as to develop and hone my

knowledge and skills as a researcher.

In addition to my educational experience, I have professional experience within

the social service system that extends across a twenty-five year history of social work

practice. My social work practice includes an early experience of working three years

for the State Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS) providing direct

services to children and families. It was this initial career experience that opened my

eyes to the disparaging and punitive treatment that consumers of services routinely

endure in their pursuit of needed services. I became increasingly dismayed by working

for such a degrading and ineffective social service system, and after three years, I left

my position to return to graduate school.

Over the last nineteen years, I have been teaching in higher education, working

with students who want to become helping professionals. Many of the students that I

have worked with in the last eight years are (or have been) consumers of services. In

this capacity, I continue to work with people who use public assistance, disability,

welfare to work programs, and various other social service programs. The stories of

embarrassing moments, humiliating experiences, and devastation of spirit and hope at

the hands of social service providers and systems continues to frustrate, sadden, and

alarm me. My interest in system reform is genuine, as is my desire to research and study

innovative programs and alternatives to what currently exists in the name of helping. To

this end, this research study culminates twenty-five years of believing in and searching

for strategies and methods to reform the social services system, with the hope of

providing more effective services and enhancing outcomes for children and families. This study has afforded me the opportunity to apply the education and skills I have worked so hard to acquire.

Researcher Bias

The experiences I have had as a social worker and human services educator have inevitably led to bias in my attitude toward the social service system. The events that I have witnessed in my twenty-five years of work with consumers of services has left me with the impression that there is a great deal that could be done to enhance the delivery of services. I am biased in my belief that many people who receive public assistance have become further oppressed and disempowered by the traditional social service system, and have been negatively impacted by the stigma attached to receiving such services. I believe that people who need help deserve better treatment than what they typically encounter from the traditional social service system.

At the outset of my participation in this study, I was acutely aware that my perspective created a bias that I would have to consciously keep in check. To that end, I scrupulously prepared and posed my questions and carefully worded my responses in order to avoid "leading" participants in any direction. In addition, I used member check techniques at the end of each interview, between interviews, and after the case study was written in order to assure that I was reporting the participants' views. As Wolcott (1992) has noted, bias is a natural and essential component of interpretive research. However, it was very important to me to guard the integrity of the research against the possibility of

my biases influencing the outcome. Therefore, I constantly endeavored to approach this inquiry, and especially the interviews with the parents, while operating from my belief that the participants, not the researcher, must be given the opportunity to tell their story, while also employing the methodological safeguards to guarantee that this would occur.

Data Collection and Recording

The data collection methods used in this study included interviews, observations, document and record analysis (most of which were themselves constructed from prior interviews, observations, and document analysis), and unobtrusive informational residues (these are more often referred to as unobtrusive measures; however, Lincoln & Guba (1985) argue against this, stating that this source of data cannot literally be interpreted as measures). I tape-recorded (with permission) all the interviews. All the audio-tapes were transcribed verbatim by experienced transcriptionists who worked for the University of Kansas on the research project. They were all experienced personnel who understood the nature of this work, and who respected the need for confidentiality. I edited all the tapes to correct inaccuracies and misspellings, as well as to eliminate some of the interruptions (e. g. "uhms", "ahhs", "ya know", "well anyway") and false starts of spoken communication that were irrelevant to the content of the interview, and were often somewhat embarrassing to the communicator.

I also used handwritten notes in the field in order to keep track of and clarify important points, and to be able to check for accurate understanding with the participants

before leaving the interview. I also maintained a reflexive journal and

research logs to record the collected data.

Interviews

The purpose of the interviews was to gather information about the service

integration project and its impact on children and families. Specifically, the input of the

consumers of services was gathered through interviews which were designed to allow

parents to freely describe their experiences and voice their thoughts and opinions about

the service integration initiative. Interviews offer particular strengths that were useful in

this inquiry. In particular, they allow researchers to gather large amounts of data

relatively quickly, as well as to seek clarification and to ask immediate follow-up

questions to ensure accurate understanding (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). In this study,

interviews or "conversations with a purpose" (Kahn & Cannell, 1957, p. 149), utilized a

combination of looking, listening, and asking, to "get at" what the parents described as

their experience with the project (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). I also relied on my

nonverbal attending skills and the techniques of active listening to maintain engagement

with the participants and to ensure the acquisition of meaningful and useful information

(Corimer & Corimer, 1979).

In designing and conducting the interviews, I followed the steps suggested by

Guba and Lincoln (1981), to guide the interview process:

1. Use purposive sampling to select interviewees (participants).

2. Prepare for the interview by (a) becoming as fully informed about the participant as possible, (b) determining and confirming logistics of

the interview, and (c) deciding on the inquirer's role and level of formality.

3. Set the tone of the interviews by asking "grand tour" questions (Spradley, 1979), i.e., questions that present a broad overview of the subject and create a relaxed atmosphere and an opportunity for the participant to warm up.

4. Pace the interview and keep it productive by focusing on salient points, probing for more information, and asking questions that require embellishment of concepts.

5. Terminate the interview and gain closure when it ceases to be productive or when information becomes redundant. Before parting, review notes with the participant to clarify understanding and set the stage for possible follow-up sessions.

As previously mentioned, I sincerely respected and consequently adhered to the mandates of ethical practices which demand that interviews be fully overt. Prior to beginning the interview, all participants were briefly informed about the research project, and fully informed of the importance of their involvement in this research. They were asked to read and sign informed consent forms (with a "permission to quote" clause) prior to the interview, and I provided them with a copy of the form (See Appendix A).

Interviews were conducted over a five-month period, from March 1996 through July 1996. I was able to schedule two interviews in each month during March, April, and May, and then one in June, with the final interview in July. The scheduling of the interviews was dependent upon two issues. The first issue was the time required for the recursive process of data collection, data analysis and question development that occurs with each interview. Second was identifying the next parent to be contacted, coordinating schedules, and arranging a meeting. Location of the interview was always

arranged based on what the participants preferred. Four participants chose to be interviewed in their homes, three interviews took place at Craft Elementary School, and I met one woman at a quiet restaurant that was near her workplace.

After the introductions and explanations about the research and interview procedures, I would pose a broad, open-ended question. This is consistent with Spradley's (1979) suggestion of using "grand tour" questions to begin the interview. Questions such as, "Tell me how you became aware of Jim and Sara," or "What is your perception or understanding of Sara and Jim's role in the school?" or "What is it like to work with Jim and Sara?" were used in order to allow the parent to speak freely and thereby become comfortable with the interview process. Interviews typically averaged one hour, although on most occasions our conversation continued after the taped interview for another twenty or thirty minutes. Although I did not use any quotes from these informal conversations, the information the parents shared did help me gain a better understanding of them and their perspectives. I was very respectful of their busy lives, and therefore willing to end the meeting in a timely fashion. However, when they apparently wanted to continue the conversation I was happy to give them my time.

My approach to the interviews, consistent with my chosen research methodology, was based on my belief about how consumers/research participants/humans deserve to be treated. It is important to me as a researcher (also as a social work practitioner and human being) to develop a collaborative stance with the participants in this, as well as any other, inquiry. My unshakable belief is that my

research participants are "informants," never "subjects," and I appreciate that they are willing to take the time to tell me what they know about this topic (Spradley, 1979).

I have found support for my position among feminist scholars and researchers who are increasingly reticent to interview people, especially women, as subjects or objects of a research endeavor (Fine, 1994; Fonow & Cook, 1991; Gitlin & Russell, 1994; Nielsen, 1990; Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992). Although I have found justification for this approach in more contemporary literature, the older research methodology texts suggested a much more "distanced" approach to interviewing. Oakley (1981) cited extensive examples from these older methodology textbooks, which provided very particular directions for interviewing. This literature was rife with warnings to the researcher about the dangers of "overrapport" with respondents (Moser, 1958, cited in Oakley, 1981). In addition, their directions for interviewing also mandated professional distance and provided advice on how to avoid answering back questions asked by respondents (Galtung, 1967; Goode & Hatt, 1952; Sellitiz et al., 1965; Sjoberg & Nett, 1968, cited in Oakley, 1981). A provocative and extensive critique of the textbook "recipes" for interviewing was provided by Oakley (1981) which merits a thorough reading by those interested in using interviews, not to just "take the information," but also to validate people's subjective experiences. In addition, my collaborative interviewing approach was methodologically consistent with the precepts of participatory and empowerment research methods that I firmly believe in, and were

indicated as the most appropriate research method for comprehensive, collaborative initiatives.

Upon completion of each taped interview, I briefly explained the next steps in the data gathering and data analysis process, and requested permission to contact the participant if there were any questions or need for clarification. I also indicated that I would like to meet with them again after I had produced a draft of the information from the study, so they could have the opportunity to see it and to check it for accuracy and credibility. I reminded them that my phone number was on the copy of the informed consent form that I had given them, and that they were welcome to call me if they had a question or something they wished to tell me. And, most importantly, I would always thank them for their time and willingness to cooperate with the research.

Observations

There were two types of observations used in this study. First, the participants' nonverbal behavior was observed as part of the interview process. I noted discrepancies between their nonverbal behaviors and what was being communicated verbally in my field notes and reflexive journal. This was done with the intention of using the nonverbal cues only as supplementary information to indicate areas that might warrant further exploration at a later date.

Opportunities for structured and unstructured observations (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) were enhanced during this inquiry because of my involvement in the SLSI Research Project study. Due to the comprehensiveness of this

research project, I was afforded many opportunities to be on site, and I had

access to the information gained through observations conducted by other research team

members. I conducted unstructured observations when I attended events at Craft school,

such as the Annual Fall Chili Feed or carnival, and when I visited the building. During

unstructured observations, I would attend an event and observe everything that

happened at the event and document whatever took place. Many times I attended these

events or visited the school with another research team member, which allowed me to

reflect on what I had observed and "compare notes" with the other researcher.

Structured observations occurred in the school when I would spend time in Jim and

Sara's office. At these times, I had a specific agenda. I was interested in observing and

documenting behaviors and interactions in order to gain insight into the important issues

or to triangulate data gathered through the interviews or documents, with my

observations.

Documents and Records

Lincoln and Guba (1985) advocate the use of documents and records, although

they acknowledge that they are often ignored in basic research. They (Lincoln & Guba,

1985) cite five reasons why documents and records are "singularly useful" sources of

information:

1. They are available, and usually at low-cost.

2. They are stable sources of information for two reasons, they reflect the past,

   and they can be analyzed and reanalyzed.

3. They are rich sources of information that are contextually

   relevant.

4. They are often legally unassailable.

5. They are nonreactive [unlike humans], yet there is interaction between the

   source and the investigator. (pp. 276-277)

Although the terms are frequently used interchangeably, some distinction

between documents and records is made for research purposes. Lincoln and Guba

(1985) define records as "any written or recorded statement prepared by or for an

individual or organization for the purpose of attesting to an event or providing an

accounting," and documents as "any written or recorded material other than a record that

was not prepared specifically in response to a request from the inquirer" (p. 277).

Documents and records are useful sources of information in that their content reflects

the social culture and context, the general language, and specific idioms and events of a

certain context and time frame.

The records that were used in this inquiry included transcriptions from meetings,

records of consumer contact with the project, and all the raw transcripts of data that were

collected from the participants in this research project (consumers, teachers, the

principal, social worker, school psychologist, service providers, and community service

educators). In addition, three case studies that were developed for the SLSI Research

Project constituted records, and were used as such. The case study records used were:

the Needs Assessment case study, the Interim case study, and the Teacher Dialogue case

study. The documents that were primarily used include the community and school

newspaper articles, community newspaper editorials, and informational

flyers that were sent to families by the school.

Unobtrusive Informational Residues

Throughout this study, this researcher has been in a position to gather

information that "is there for the taking." This informational material included the way

an office or home was decorated, items on a table or desk, displays on the bulletin board,

or the kinds of slogans or mottos that were displayed. Although these bits of

information were highly inferential, and thus suspect relative to their trustworthiness,

they were simple, direct, non-disruptive, and nonreactive pieces of information that

often had face validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I continued to note (observe and

record) this inferred information as it was encountered, but remained conscious that its

value and utility would be determined later during data analysis, report writing, and

through member checking.

Recording Modes of Data Collection

Tape Recording

Data collected from the interviews was tape-recorded, with the permission of all

the participants, using a portable, battery-operated tape recorder, which was placed

within reach, and in plain view, of the participant. I had weighed the positive and

negatives associated with the question of whether or not to tape. Lincoln and Guba

(1985) outline the advantages of taping interviews as:

> Providing an unimpeachable data source; assuring completeness; providing the
> opportunity to review as often as necessary to assure that full understanding has

been achieved; providing the opportunity for later review for
nonverbal cues such as significant pauses, raised voices, or emotional outbursts;
and providing material for joint interviewer training and reliability checks. (p.
273)

Despite these advantages, there is also a standard argument against the use of a tape

recorder because of the possibility of creating participant discomfort and/or distrust.

However, without discounting this possibility (and making plans to overcome it), I

elected to seek permission to record for two reasons. One was based on my previous

experience with conducting interviews. I have learned that I prefer to attend and

respond to the participant and record only quick notes, rather than the laborious note-

taking required to adequately capture the participant's message. The second factor

shaping this decision was my desire for verbatim transcripts because I intended to quote

the participants at length in this case study report (Weiss, 1994). In my experience, the

tape recorder did not inhibit the conversation. In fact, after the initial few moments

required to set the recorder in place and get it accurately recording, we seemed to forget

its presence. On the one occasion when a respondent seemed hesitant (to talk about a

personal issue), I turned the recorder off and when she finished her comment, she turned

it back on.

Field Journals

As part of my research, I also used handwritten notes in field journals during

interviews and observations. These notes allowed me to record things I noticed, to keep

track of important points made by the participant, and to note the issues or questions that

needed further clarification. A personally important record for me during this research

process was kept in the form of a reflexive journal, which was stored in computer files. My reflexive journal was used to record listings and descriptions of interviews and observations. It also served as a place for me to process and record any introspection, personal insights, feelings, or reactions relative to what I was experiencing and learning in the research process. I also maintained a log of research activities in which the date, time, and location of interviews and observations were recorded.

<div style="text-align:center">Data Analysis Procedures</div>

In constructivist inquiries, data analysis is a continuous activity rather than a specific event. Skrtic (1985) described data analysis as "an ongoing process that happens at several levels and for different purposes" (p. 193). Consistent with this observation, I found that data collection and data analysis occurred in an integrated and cyclical process, where the analysis of one day's interviews and observations shaped the next day's research activities. Questions and categories became more focused as I learned more about the topic, and as fewer new issues and categories emerged.

The constant comparative method of qualitative analysis proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and reconceptualized by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was used to develop codes for specific issues and an understanding of broader concepts and themes. Using this method of analysis, the concepts, categories, and themes were developed inductively from the interview and observational data, and then tested out at each step by going back to the data to determine their accuracy and appropriateness. Data were collected, key issues and concepts were identified, and broad categories began to

emerge; after several iterations of clarification and revision of categories, I constructed tentative themes to capture emerging patterns. The modified version of the constant comparative method that I used in this data analysis process entailed three procedures: unitizing, categorizing, and case study construction (Skrtic, 1985).

Unitizing

The purpose of unitizing was accomplished by systematically searching the accumulated data to identify and record units of information that were relevant to the focus of the inquiry. I persistently reviewed the interview, observation, and documentary data with a focus on the parents' communications, understandings, actions, and experiences that were relevant to some aspect of their perceptions of the SLSI demonstration project. A unit of information can be as short as a few words or a phrase, or as long as several paragraphs. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define a unit as, "the smallest piece of information about something that can stand by itself, that is, it must be interpretable in the absence of any additional information other than a broad understanding of the context in which the inquiry is carried out" (p. 345). Thus, for a piece of information to be considered a unit, it must be completely self-explanatory and understandable to someone with general knowledge of this topic, but not necessarily of this particular setting.

For example, in my study, a unit of data might be as simple as the four-word phrase, "they think in advance." Or a unit of data might extend for several sentences in order to capture a more complex idea, for example, "If you stop and think about it, those

test scores and everything are effected by and partly due to the home environment, and what kind of environment you live in. Do you live in a loving family or do you live in a family where you get beat all the time? If your parents don't love you, you are not going to care enough to make good scores on these tests. You're just not going to put out the effort."

For the purposes of this study, most of the identified units of information were copied from the computerized verbatim transcripts from the parent interviews. However, units of information were also copied from field notes and the reflexive journal, and all the units were coded so as to distinguish their source, the participant, and for the interview data, the transcription number and page. A total of 967 data units were produced in this manner based on my decision to "overinclude" data that later might be seen as less important or even irrelevant.

Categorizing

The purpose of the categorizing process is to organize the units of information that are related to the same content into provisional categories. Using the modified version of Glaser and Strauss' (1967) constant comparison method, a reasonable construction of categories took shape based on grouping together like units of information. Throughout this analytic-inductive process, as units of information were added to a category, the appropriateness of the category was evaluated and reevaluated in order to produce category sets that were internally consistent (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The units of data were organized into the following eight major conceptual categories:

(a) descriptions of what consumers had received, (b) characteristics of the providers, (c) characteristics of the program, (d) descriptions/issues related to service availability, (e) descriptions/issues related to service accessibility, (f) descriptions of experiences with traditional service systems, (g) descriptions/ideas related to the difference this program makes, and (h) reflective and self-reflective comments. The process of unitizing and categorizing the data was the means by which I was able to identify what was salient to the participants in this study, consequently rendering the inquiry a progressively more focused data collection and analysis process.

Case Study Construction

Throughout this constructivist inquiry, I used the iterative process of data collection and data analysis to focus the inquiry and progressively develop a more complete and comprehensive organization of data into integrated categories. Ultimately, the focus of the investigation shifted from viewing the category scheme as primarily a guide to further data collection, to viewing the loose taxonomy as information in need of scrupulous and conscientious organization in order to begin drafting the case study report. Undeniably, the writing of the case study report facilitated further analysis and synthesis of the data, which necessitated further data collection, but the case study was the avenue for reporting the data that had been collected, synthesized, and analyzed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Skrtic (1985) reminds constructivist researchers that the writing of the case study report is yet another step in the data analysis process.

Lincoln & Guba (1985) take the position that for constructivist inquiries, "the reporting mode of choice is the case study" (p. 357). Therefore, they provide a rationale for case study reporting and outline the particular advantages of this mode of reporting for constructivist inquiries. One advantage is the ability to reconstruct and present the multiple perspectives of participants and the complexity of the social situation as respondent constructions (emic posture), rather than as what the researcher brings to the inquiry a priori (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Case study reporting also provides the "thick description" which, building on the reader's tacit knowledge, increases the possibility of individual "naturalistic generalizations" (Stake, 1980) to other sites (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Also, case studies provide an unparalleled means for describing contextual information that grounds the study in the context in which it occurred, and gives the reader a vicarious experience of the context of the inquiry.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Skrtic et al. (1985) provide useful operational recommendations for organizing and writing case studies, which guided the development of the case study report presented in Chapter 4. My first step for this process was the organizational task of coding and indexing all data and documentary materials so that information could be recovered quickly as needed. A major portion of this task was accomplished through the processing of data in the unitizing and categorizing stage of data analysis, that provided an overall framework in the form of the existing categories and a means to access the original data.

The second organizational task was to develop a provisional outline of the case study report based on the purpose of the inquiry, and some decisions regarding the

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"story line" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) as it was constructed by the

participants, albeit, via my reconstruction. Because the provisional outline proved to be

a rather lengthy and detailed document, the researcher also developed a "short version"

containing only the major categories, which simplified the last stage of this organizing

process. As expected, the actual writing and case study development proved to be the

most arduous task, and included constant shifting of the category scheme and revision of

the provisional outline. This was a natural part of case study development, in that the

writing process itself revealed gaps in information and indicated alternative

organizational strategies that logically worked more effectively (see Skrtic, 1985).

Consequently, additional information was collected when needed, and I had to remain

willing to alter the outline as the story unfolded.

One additional concern that arose as part of the writing process was my desire to

protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. Lincoln & Guba (1985)

and Skrtic (1985) speak to this concern, and describe how constructivist researchers

must attend to issues of both internal and external anonymity. Internal anonymity

concerns protecting the identity of the participants within the site from each other,

whereas external anonymity refers to protecting the identity of the site and its members

from an external audience. Although it is not possible to guarantee anonymity, I

changed the names of the participants and the elementary school in order to protect

participants from the internal and external audience. In addition, member checks of the

case study report were handled individually, rather than in a group format, to maintain

the confidentiality of the parents who participated in the study.

Phases of the Inquiry

Up to this point, Chapter 3 has provided a linear explanation of the procedures that were used to conduct this study. The following sections will provide a description of the phases of the inquiry, which is intended to give the reader an overall sense of the progression and flow of the research. As previously described in this chapter, Lincoln & Guba (1985) state that constructivists enter the research endeavor, "not knowing what is not known" (p. 235), hence researchers must learn what needs to be studied, and then study it. The strategies to accomplish this are outlined in Lincoln & Guba's (1985) three-phase approach to constructivist inquiry. These are: (a) Phase I: orientation and overview, where the researcher tries to learn what is salient to the participants; (b) Phase II: focused exploration, where the researcher tries to obtain more in depth information about what is determined to be salient; and (c) Phase III: final member check, where the researcher checks the credibility of the case study report with the research participants. Although there was some overlap among these phases, this three-phase format provided a planning framework and was used as an overarching structure that guided this study.

Phase I: Orientation and Overview

In this phase, I was interested in finding the important issues related to social services, service delivery, and school-linked services integration, as defined by the participants in this inquiry. In order to determine this, I operated primarily from a "discovery-oriented" mode, seeking to find out what the issues were, and what I needed to know about those issues (Skrtic, 1985).

As part of the pre-Phase I preparation, I had become familiar with the literature related to service integration, and with this particular site. Because I had been working with the research project team for the previous year, I was able to take advantage of many other research opportunities associated with this project. These included: opportunities to observe in the school; to meet with, interview, or engage in critical dialogues with the principal, teachers, and staff; to attend school events and functions; in essence, to participate in a great deal of data gathering and data analysis. There were also documents that the research team produced that proved very useful in the Phase I process. In particular, a Needs Assessment case study had been produced by the research team which revealed many of the concerns and issues that were important to the parents. As a document for analysis in my study, the Needs Assessment was used extensively in the Phase I process.

Phase II: Focused Exploration

The purpose of this phase is to explore the salient issues that were identified in Phase I in greater depth. I used information gathered from the interview and observation transcripts and case study reports produced by the research team, particularly the Needs Assessment case, and my previous year of work on the research project to focus my study and develop protocols for interviewing the parents. Through structured interviewing and observations, and through targeted probing of documents and records, more in-depth data were gathered.

My approach became more deductive during Phase II, wherein I

focused on expanding and verifying information and exploring patterns that were

emerging, but not at the expense of open-ended questions. Although there were

particular salient issues that had emerged during Phase I, and I was interested in

pursuing them to gain a more complete understanding and clarification, I endeavored to

remain open to new information or perspectives that parents might present at this phase.

Information was gathered from interviews with the parents who participated in the

study, from persistent observation, and from continued review of transcripts and

documents produced by the research team. At the end of this phase, a draft of the case

study report was produced that synthesized the information that was collected and

analyzed during Phase I and Phase II.

Phase III: Member Check

Up to this point in the constructivist research process, data gathering and data

analysis had worked interactively to produce tentative interpretations and findings. At

this point, I drafted a preliminary case study report and then returned to the participants

in the study. The purpose of the member check phase was to obtain feedback from the

participants relative to the credibility of the information and findings in the case study

report. Because the participants in this study had not identified themselves to each

other, and in an effort to guard their right to confidentiality, I met with the parents

individually rather than in a group format. The participants were asked to read the

report and assess its credibility. There was consensus related to the overall credibility of

the study, and participants were willing to expand on the ideas, categories,

and themes that I had reconstructed and presented in the case study report. In this sense,

the member check process represented another round of data collection and analysis

(Skrtic, 1985). The individual member check meetings were also audio-recorded (with

permission), the tapes were transcribed, and the case study report was revised based on

the member check feedback.

Trustworthiness

A basic concern for all social research is establishing the credibility of the

inquiry. In constructivist inquiry, the major factor in establishing credibility is technical

rigor, or as Guba (1981) explains, the extent to which consistency, truth value, and

applicability of the research and the results can be established. In constructivist inquiry,

trustworthiness is the term used for testing the rigor of the study. For Lincoln & Guba

(1985) and Skrtic et. al. (1985), trustworthiness depends on the use of procedures to

increase (a) credibility (an analog to internal validity or truth value in quantitative

research); (b) transferability (an analog to external validity or applicability); (c)

dependability (an analog to reliability or consistency); and (d) confirmability (an analog

to objectivity or neutrality).

Credibility

Credibility refers to producing findings and interpretations that are perceived as

credible by the participants in that they are derived from the data and not the

researcher's interests, biases, or motivation. Credibility was addressed in

this study through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation of data,

peer debriefing, and member checks as recommended by Lincoln & Guba (1985) and

Skrtic (1985).

Prolonged Engagement. Prolonged engagement, as a technique to increase the

probability of credibility, was achieved through my involvement in the overall research

project. Prolonged engagement refers to an investment of time on site to learn about the

"culture" of the context, build trust, and test for misinformation that may be introduced

through distortions of the inquirer or participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As

previously noted, my ongoing work with the research team in conducting the overall

SLSI research project allowed me to be present in the research context for an extended

period of time.

I began my work with the research project in February, 1995. I spent over a year

working with participants on the project (the community service educators, project

coordinator, building principal, teachers, social workers, community providers, and

consumers), interviewing and observing participants on multiple occasions, reviewing

documents and records, and gathering unobtrusive data, prior to beginning the structured

interviews with the parents in March, 1996. I then spent the next fifteen months (March

1996-June 1997) interviewing and observing participants, conducting follow-up

interviews, member-checking, and collecting documentary and unobtrusive data.

Spending this much time at the site provided me with ample opportunity to establish

trust, as well as to develop tentative understandings that were tested and revised across time.

Persistent Observation. Persistent observation is concerned with the dimension of salience. It is a technique that requires a researcher to focus intensely on aspects of the research context that are most characteristic or pervasive from the perspectives of the research participants (Skrtic, 1985). As Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe, "If prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth" (p. 403). The issues that participants identified in Phase I were the focus of the investigation, and were expanded and extended in Phase II. The level of intense focusing that is consistent with persistent observation, necessitated that I sort out what was irrelevant information while focusing on what was salient to the participants.

Triangulation. The technique of triangulation was used to further enhance the credibility of this study. Denzin (1981) suggests that there are several modes of triangulation. One mode of triangulation used in this study involved comparing a variety of data sources. For example, the variety of sources used in this study included the multiple interview respondents, as well as the variety of perspectives presented based on the diversity of parents interviewed. In addition, documents were also used as another data source. A second mode of triangulation involved use of different data collection methods. To this end, interviews, observations, and unobtrusive residues were used with one another to verify data, interpretations, and assertions that were made.

Peer Debriefing. Peer debriefing has been used throughout the inquiry to "keep me honest" (aware of my own biases) and to allow me to explore meanings,

interpretations and biases that were pertinent to this study. I engaged

knowledgeable cohorts, members of my dissertation committee, and other research

colleagues in discussions and dialogues that provoked me to consider other meanings

and possible interpretations and that challenged me to reevaluate and critically examine

my perceptions. Another critically important function of debriefings, for me, was the

opportunity for catharsis. By engaging my debriefers in meaningful dialogue around my

study, not only was I able to gain clarity regarding the research process and my

interpretations of the data, I was also able to receive support and ideas as I moved

through the difficult, sometimes overwhelming, and often lonely process that is endemic

in constructivist inquiry (Reinharz, 1979).

    <u>Member Checks</u>. Member checking was a process I used in order to test data,

analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusions with the participants from whom

they were collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Skrtic, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985)

stress that, if a researcher wants to assert that her reconstructions are "recognizable to

participants as adequate representations of their own (and multiple) realities, it is

essential that they be given the opportunity to react to them" (p. 314). To this end, I

carried out member checks at the end of each interview to check the accuracy of my

understanding by summarizing the pertinent information and main issues participants

had stressed, and by seeking verification or clarification. In addition, as I moved from

interview to interview, I incorporated the perceptions I had gained from one parent into

my questions and discussions with the next parent, seeking their comments and thereby

checking for credibility. These two methods constituted a more immediate

and informal method of member check.

The second, more formal level of member check occurred when the participants

reviewed the draft of the case study for its accuracy, relevance, and completeness. In

this situation, after the information was gathered through interviews, observations, and

document analysis, and with the continued data gathering and data analysis involved in

drafting a case study report, I then returned to the participants with the case study I

drafted and had then assess its credibility. The case study was revised, (primarily

expanded rather than changed, given the consensus regarding its credibility), based on

the additional information and insights that were provided by the participants during this

member check.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the potential applicability of study findings to other

contexts. It is not possible to specify the transferability of this inquiry. The reader who

is interested in making a transfer must reach a conclusion about the degree of similarity

between the sending and receiving contexts. In order to address this issue, I used

purposive sampling and provided thick description, are two techniques recommended by

Lincoln and Guba (1985). Thick description and purposive sampling provide rich

information that will assist the reader in determining the degree to which the findings

and insights might be transferable to another context (Skrtic, 1985).

The technique of purposive sampling was utilized throughout my inquiry to select participants and observation contexts. It is incumbent upon constructivist researchers to provide the widest range of information possible to include in the thick description. In order to accomplish this (and other research goals), I primarily used maximum variation sampling, and included extreme cases and typical cases, in order to generate the maximum amount of information.

The technique of thick description insists that researchers provide detailed and thick accounts of the research setting, demographic information, and the participants' perspectives. According to Erlandson et. al. (1993), use of thick description requires that researchers detail the data in such a way that they, "bring the reader vicariously into the context being described" (p. 33). Thus, the purpose of thick description in the case study report is to provide sufficient detail to enable potential users of the research to judge the transferability of the findings to other settings.

Dependability and Confirmability

Dependability and confirmability, the two remaining criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), were used to maximize the trustworthiness of this research study. Dependability (its analog in quantitative studies is reliability or consistency) refers to determining how methodologically sound the inquiry was. In constructivist inquiries, Skrtic (1985) explains that dependability refers to, "appropriateness of all methodological decisions, degree of evident inquirer bias, and utility of overall design and implementation steps" (p. 204). Confirmability (its analog in quantitative studies is

objectivity or neutrality) establishes confidence in the truth of the findings

based on the degree to which assertions are grounded in the data. According to Skrtic

(1985), confirmability is determined by the utility of the category scheme that was

developed, and the logic of the inferences that were made, as well as determining that

the findings and interpretations in the case study report are grounded in the raw data.

The major techniques that Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe that are used to

establishing dependability and confirmability in constructivist inquiries, are a

dependability audit and a confirmability audit. In the past, an outside auditor, usually

someone familiar with constructivist methodology but independent from the research

study, would conduct the dependability audit. The dependability auditor reviews the

researcher's various methodological logs and journals and supporting materials, records

of the steps taken, and methodological decisions and procedures, in order to determine

the logic and appropriateness of those methodological decisions. The dependability

auditor endeavors to assess whether a researcher employed methods that fall within

professionally acceptable standards of practice in constructivist inquiries.

In the case of the confirmability audit, where in the past the auditor was typically

contracted independently from the research, the auditor uses an "audit trail" to determine

the extent to which findings, assertions, and interpretations are grounded in the data

collected in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Skrtic, 1985). An audit trail is a coding

system that links case report findings, assertions, interpretations, and quoted narratives

to analyzed and raw data. All of the materials that were necessary for the confirmability

audit trail—raw interview data (tapes and transcripts), raw field notes and interview

notes, reflexive journal, site documents, unitized and categorized data, and

case study report—were organized and available in the present inquiry.

Although in the present study I developed and maintained all the materials

necessary for carrying out dependability and confirmability audits, I did not hire an

outside auditor to conduct the audits. In the matter of the dependability audit, I relied on

the members of my dissertation committee who are experienced qualitative researchers.

I consulted them throughout my research to ensure that my methodological decisions

were within the standards of acceptable practice. The confirmability audit was less a

priority for me because I had addressed the question of confirmability through the

procedure of continually checking emerging insights and interpretations with the study

participants. I did, however, make all the materials ordinarily used to construct an audit

trail and carry out dependability and confirmability audits available to my research

methodologist and the members of my dissertation committee.

In summary, it is my hope that the constructivist inquiry described here,

comprised of a stance of engagement and valuing the participants, has led to more

equitable roles between the researcher and the researched. It has been my intention to

defy Gitlin's (1990) contention that the research process "silences those studied, ignores

their personal knowledge, and strengthens the assumption that researchers are the

producers of knowledge" (p. 444). This research methodology, was designed to value

the participants and validate their perspectives. I was motivated toward this method of

inquiry, particularly for this study, based on Lather's (1986) suggestion of the need for

"research as praxis," as an approach committed to a more just social order.

Her stated assumptions for this position are:

> First, we are in a postpositivist period in the human sciences, a period marked by much methodological and epistemological ferment. There has been, however, little exploration of the methodological implications of the search for an emancipatory social science. Such a social science would allow us not only to understand the maldistribution of power and resources underlying our society, but also to change that maldistribution to help create a more equal world. Second, research that is explicitly committed to critiquing the status quo and building a more just society—that is research as praxis—adds an important voice to that ferment. (p. 258)

What a provocative thought about the possibilities for research this idea presents! With these inspiring words seared into my consciousness, I seized the opportunity to conduct a research study that would address the unequal distribution of power and resources in this country. Not only was the study designed to look critically at the structural and systemic problems that create and sustain individual problems, the research methods employed were consciously chosen to challenge standard research practices and to create more equality among all the participants (including the researcher) in this inquiry.

In the following chapter, the data that have been collected and analyzed in this inquiry are presented in a case study report. The case study describes and illustrates the perspectives of the participants in the research. The data involved in rendering this case study were drawn primarily from the eight families who were interviewed. However, my extensive involvement in the overall research project afforded me access to a wealth of information that I used to further illuminate and explicate the context in which this study occurred.

Note to the Reader

The intent of the case study presented in Chapter 4 is to accurately portray the

parents' descriptions of their experiences and perceptions of the School-Linked Service

Integration Demonstration Project that was implemented at Craft Elementary School.

The case study has been written to allow the reader to understand the experiences with

both traditional service systems and the SLSI Demonstration Project, as they were

described by the consumers who participated in the study. Although the primary

informants in this study were the parents, data were also gathered from other participants

who were part of the overall SLSI Research Project. In the interest of supporting,

expanding, and further illuminating the parents' experiences, information that was

gathered from interviews with the principal, the social worker, and the community

services educators was used. Also, twelve of the teachers and the school counselor at

Craft participated in a series of seven critical dialogues (described below), and this data

also contributed to the construction of this case study.

Critical dialogue is an approach to research that uses open-ended dialogue

specific to an identified research problem to engage research participants and researchers

in the process of inquiry in order to gain the perspective of the participants (Ware, 1994,

1995). Critical dialogues take shape over time (six to twelve months, typically) and

enable researchers to probe the needs of participants across various communities and

contexts, thus emphasizing the participants construction of meaning at the local level.

Ware (1995) suggests that the significant issues of the participants emerge as part of the

dialogue process, and although agreement among participants is sometimes reached, it is

not necessarily the goal. A central feature of the dialogue approach is the recognition that individuals' possess points of view, and their multiple perspectives can be revealed through this data gathering method.

All of the participants in this research inquiry were fully aware that they were involved in this study. All had agreed to participate, and they all had signed informed consent agreements approved by the University of Kansas Advisory Committee on Human Experimentation (ACHE), which included the agreement that they could be quoted. Pseudonyms have been used throughout the case study.

It was my intention to present this reconstruction of the parents' experience, along with the additional data from the other participants, in enough detail that if readers were to suddenly to be transported to Craft elementary school they would experience a feeling of having been there before. Although the level of detail may seem tedious at times, thick description is required to make the experience real. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a thick description, at a minimum should:

1. Be directed toward an emic posture—a reconstruction of the participants' construction.

2. Build on the reader's tacit knowledge and provide a vicarious experiences by presenting a lifelike description that is like what the reader would encounter in experiencing the world.

3. Demonstrate the interplay between the inquirer and the respondents in order to allow the reader to judge the extent of bias of the researcher.

4. Provide readers an opportunity to probe for internal consistency by allowing the reader to test the interpretations.

5. Provide the reader judgments of transferability by developing a sufficient base to permit comparisons of similarity for application in another setting.

6. Provide grounded assessment of the context from which meaning is derived. (pp.359-360)

Thus, attention paid to detailed descriptions was deemed necessary in order to build sufficient knowledge for readers to achieve personal understandings and make comparisons or "generalizations" of similarity to their own experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

I believe that I have accurately represented the multiple perspectives of parents as they described their experiences with the traditional social service systems as well as with the School-Linked Service Integration Demonstration Project. The reader, however, must remain mindful that I imposed a conceptual framework and structure that allowed me to organize the information and derive meaning through a process of data analysis and data reduction. Although in the formal member check this rendering was approved by the participants as accurately reflecting their perspectives, other structures or formats might equally serve to tell the parents' story. Consequently, despite the various levels and types of member checks and approval by the participants, I am ultimately responsible for how these ideas have been organized and presented in this following case study.

CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY

Well I think it's really difficult sometimes to be the initiator because you're so preoccupied with the problem at hand and the day to day activities involving a disability child. I mean, A to Z, not only the clothes that they need, but what about socialization? You worry about your child and having a friend; it's just really difficult to keep track of all the needs that the family has and that the child has and so it makes it tough to go for help. In my situation I tend to do a lot of things on my own simply because the system hadn't provided a lot of help, and I've been with the school system and the health care system, and I've just been very discouraged about the kinds of help that we have, or the lack of help that we have experienced. So it feels that you're really kind of isolated, that you're out on your own and it's "me against the world" kind of thing... it really is... It's really a scary feeling, it kind of generates something—a distrust and ... even anger. My god the system sucks. You try, and you're very subjective if you have children who are involved in the system, either because of a disability or a health problem or a mental health problem, you can't help but be subjective, but after you've been burned for a period of years, you become more objective and then you really don't want to have anything to do with the system. So in my case, I'm kind of a parent who's become an initiator on my own. I seek out things for my son on my own pretty much. But I think, in talking about the whole system and how I'd like to see it change, I think that when families have significant difficulties such as if one of their children has a drug addiction or you have severe mental health problem or significant cognitive disability, the pressure that that causes on a family is really almost indescribable because it affects the whole, entire family. So I think it would be nice, it would be really nice, to have a mechanism in place where if a family is identified as having trouble, the community would be the people to initiate on-going help and let the resources know. You know, a program of community outreach and they do this on a sliding scale. Parents are basically unaware, they're uninformed consumers. And most parents are not in a position to really access all the resources because they just don't know and again, I go back to that preoccupation of the problem -- it's overwhelming. I think that what is happening at Craft, it should be set up in the whole, entire community. Otherwise, it's almost like the system blames the parents when things go wrong.

—Mary, 5/19/97

The story that Mary tells of her experience with the traditional helping system aptly illustrates the problem that school-linked service integration is attempting to address. The school-linked services effort is part of a larger movement that is attempting to coordinate and integrate education, health, and social services for children and families. As families in America continue to confront complex and escalating demands on their time and their resources, they need more support, not less. The social problems that are leading to substantial difficulties for children and families are persisting at distressingly high rates despite decades of intervention and the existence of extensive and expensive services systems. Proponents of integrated services believe that the current service system is unable to respond in a coordinated, comprehensive, and timely fashion to the multiple and inextricably intertwined needs of a child and his or her family. Consequently, ineffective service delivery has contributed to the increasingly dismal education, health and social outcomes for large numbers of children. The result for the parents, as Mary has so poignantly articulated, is that they feel blamed for situations that are beyond their control.

Context

A model program of school-linked service integration (SLSI) was implemented at Craft Elementary School. Craft is located in an established residential neighborhood in Lawrence, Kansas. Lawrence supports a population of nearly 80,000 full-time residents and is considered to be one of the more progressive communities in Kansas. This is partly due to the university located in this city, which brings in many recreational

and cultural events. The city of Lawrence, which is steeped in a rich pioneer and civil war history, is located on the Kansas River. Because of the reputation Lawrence has as a great place to live, it has gained popularity as a "bedroom" community for Kansas City, a large metropolitan area that exists in close proximity to Lawrence. Although Lawrence is renowned as a progressive community, social class distinctions are evident. Particularly obvious are the differences between the east side of Lawrence, which is the older, more well-established neighborhood that houses more residents with lower socioeconomic status, and the west side, which is rapidly developing into exclusive neighborhoods and private golf clubs. Craft is located on the east side of Lawrence.

Craft is one of the oldest elementary schools in Lawrence. The newest wing of the school was added to the original two-story structure in 1951, and many of the classrooms are located in the newer part of the building. There are about 250 students who attend Craft, and 55 percent of the students are from low-income families. Of the 50 professionals who work there, 15 are itinerant teachers and related services staff who serve more than one school building. Craft has a historical relationship with the school district's special education programs, and has been a cluster site for students with disabilities for a number of years. The school profile reports that 50 percent of the students are receiving special services in addition to regular education, and that these students remain in the regular classroom 94 percent of the time. Many of Craft's students come from economically disadvantaged situations, with 20 per cent living in homes with no employed adult.

Craft has long been recognized for its cooperative/collaborative environment. Its historical involvement with special education was considered instrumental in creating an atmosphere that facilitated cooperation and a collaborative ethic among staff members. This was an important factor in the implementation of the SLSI demonstration project, given that collaborative efforts, such as those required by the service integration philosophy, could hardly exist without a supportive culture. Craft Elementary School is actively involved in site-based management, and also incorporates a smaller leadership team (comprised of the principal and teacher representatives) who meet frequently to make more immediate decisions about school matters. There is also a strong and active PTA at Craft.

Craft Elementary School does not conform to a conventional organizational structure with hierarchical authority and well-established power structures. The principal, Mr. Kenny, employs an unconventional management style based on his conscious disregard for the traditional top-down organizational style. He described his beliefs about the organization and operation of schools as follows.

> I think a lot of it deals with the personality and leadership style of the administrator in the building. You know, I'm smart enough to know that I don't run this building. My job is to keep things moving forward and to make sure that I do everything I possibly can to make the teacher's job easier. If I can do those two things, then lots of good things are going to happen in this building. I think in buildings where you have an administrator who has a different style—who has to be the leader—that creates a lot of ill feelings among the staff. That sometimes they feel like they're not being treated professionally, or that they are being watched over, and I think when that happens, that effects the entire program in the school, not just a program like Jim and Sara's, but also the academic programs.

Mr. Kenny was a highly-regarded classroom teacher for more than twenty years and his approach to leadership was a testimony to his allegiance to classroom-centered and teacher-focused concerns. The year the SLSI demonstration project was initiated at Craft was his first year as the building principal.

When the community service educators, Sara and Jim, were hired for the SLSI demonstration project, they brought with them a long history of educational and service work. Together they possessed over thirty years of experience working in schools. Sara worked in a number of schools, first as a special education paraprofessional, and later as a speech paraprofessional. Jim also had a rich experience in service work, with his most recent experience having been in the parent room at the junior high where he facilitated the volunteer parent empowerment program. Their experience in schools contributed to their understanding of the culture of schools and was a valuable asset in the implementation of the SLSI project.

There was not a "job description" for the position of community service educator when Jim and Sara were hired. Job descriptions were expected to emerge reflective of the unique characteristics of the school, the students and their families, and the community. Although there was general consensus among the project staff that the focus of the SLSI project was to improve the relationships among the school, families, and community, and facilitate the acquisition of needed resources and support for the children and families at Craft, how this would occur was not clearly defined. The community service educators were afforded the discretion to define the problems, to

identify and brainstorm possible solutions, to intervene in the resolution of problems as appropriate, and to terminate their involvement and/or support as appropriate.

Because of Sara and Jim's understanding of the culture of schools, Sara recalled that they both knew that, "the first semester was going to be [a period when] developing relationships with staff and with parents [would] set the tone for the rest of the years we might be here." Sara stated her hope that the students, families, and staff at Craft would come to rely on she and Jim and view them as "valuable tools" to enhance the success of the school. To accomplish this goal, they surveyed the Craft families and staff early in the school year to determine an agenda for action. According to Jim, this provided something of a "thumbnail" sketch of the individual needs of the children, families and the school. The "favor bank" was another initial process implemented to promote the development of trusting, reliable relationships with the Craft staff. As Jim explained:

> This favor bank notion harkens back to my suffragette family ties. It is a concept that my grandmother shared with me, and what it means is that you have got to make yourself available. In our case here, maybe just being out in the hall. Maybe just being visible. Being a good listener to the kids. We volunteered to work in the breakfast room first thing so we could start having access to the kids.

The success of these initial efforts was verified by the families, teachers, and principal at Craft Elementary School.

The Family Participants

As previously described (see Chapter 3) there were eight families who participated in the inquiry. All the initial interview participants were female. However, during the Phase III member check, a father participated in the dialogue. Bob had been

in prison when I interviewed his mother who was the caretaker of his son while he was away. He had been released between the time of the first interview and the member check. He was interested in the research, and willing to sign an informed consent form, so we scheduled the meeting at a time when he could also participate. I have provided the following brief narrative description of each of the families.

Hazel. Hazel, a divorced grandmother, was functioning as a single parent for her grandson, Greg, at the time of the first interview. Her grandson's father [her son, Bob] was incarcerated, and although she was Greg's legal guardian until Bob's release, she made concerted effort to fully involve Bob in decisions and issues in Greg's life via the telephone. Her ethnic heritage is a blend of Native American and Caucasian. In spite of the fact that Hazel has never completed high school or attained a GED, she is outspoken, articulate and highly values her experiential education. Hazel is no longer able to work because of disability and described how she ekes out an existence based on the meager check she receives from Social Security Disability benefits. She also receives medical cards for herself and Greg, but hates the involvement with public services and the reliance on "the system."

Paula. Paula is a divorced mother of four children. She graduated from high school, although she stated she had dropped out and returned to school twice to do so. Paula works full time as an accounts supervisor at a credit bureau. Her income is also supplemented by Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC). Although she is distressed by this, she needs the help, especially the medical cards for her children. She recently returned to Kansas after having lived for several years in another state. Her

decision to move resulted in a need for emergency shelter for herself and her children, as she was unable to afford any of the available houses, and there was a waiting list for Section 8 (low-income) housing. Her children do not receive special education services, but she has utilized the services of the community service educators.

Helen. Helen is a married, Caucasian mother of two children. Her older child is in junior high, and the younger one, who has serious health problems and learning challenges, attends Craft. Helen graduated from high school and received training as a sign language interpreter. Her family has in the past used public services, but no longer receives any public assistance. She holds a part-time paraprofessional position as a sign language interpreter, and her husband works full time and has medical insurance for the family. Although Helen has not relied on the community service educators for herself or her husband, she recognized their involvement with her child with special needs.

Ava. Ava is a divorced mother with three children who is working very hard to make a life for herself and her children. She had recently moved to Lawrence, and somehow, enroute, lost her verbal agreement for the house she had rented. Consequently, when she and her children arrived in town they had to live in the emergency shelter for several months. She has graduated from high school, and is currently attending Kansas University, aspiring to be a surgical nurse. She also works part-time at a medical supply company. She is of mixed racial heritage, Hispanic and Panamanian, speaks with a heavy accent and struggles somewhat with the English language. She receives public services in the form of a medical card for her youngest

child, Section 8 housing, and food stamps, and has relied on the community service educators for both emotional and tangible support.

Debbie. Debbie, a single mother of three, was still experiencing the after-effects of an extremely difficult divorce at the time of our interview. She described the struggle of trying to put their lives [her and her children's] back together while still seeking counseling for the children for their father's alleged abuse, holding a part-time job, and trying to finish her degree at KU. Debbie spoke with resentment about the treatment she has received from public welfare. She has recently had to seek assistance, primarily motivated by needing help with day care so she could work and go to school, and has found it to be a very unpleasant experience. Although none of her children have serious learning challenges, they have needed emotional support and two are involved in Chapter I reading services. She has also relied on the community services educators, especially Jim, for help with her oldest son who was having some emotional and behavioral difficulty because of the abuse by his father.

Susan. Susan, an African American women who has never been married or had children of her own, "inherited" her five-year-old nephew Doug while his parents were in legal trouble. She expressed appreciation for her advanced college education, as she believed her background in psychology and public administration were valuable tools for her new role as a single parent attempting to access necessary services. Doug is a gifted student, and with the exception of a few rough moments, Susan feels he is making a good transition to a new home and new school. Susan works long hours in her effort to avoid using very many public services, but has received cash assistance and a medical

card for Doug. Susan was very appreciative of the services available at Craft and had frequently consulted the community service educators for information, support, and parenting tips.

Beth. Beth, who is married and has three children, hesitated to be interviewed because she felt she had no experience to share. She no longer receives any public services, although she and her child had received assistance prior to her current marriage. Both she and her husband work full time in order to support their family. She also stated that she had very little experience or knowledge of the community service educators or their role at the school. Yet, her experiences with another school over problems with what she labels her "yak-aholic" son, have provided her with experiences and insights that were salient to our research. Also, upon reflection she recalled how she had relied on the community services educators as consultants for help and guidance related to concerns she had as a parent who transported children to after-school care at the Boys and Girls club.

Mary. Mary has recently remarried her former husband and the father of her two children who still live at home. Their family and marital life, had been temporarily shattered by the challenge of rearing and educating their second child, Jake, who has severe autism. However, Mary's experience with public services and social welfare also extends back to earlier, serious difficulties she had with her older child. Mary and her husband are both employed full-time, she keeps an office in her home, so the family does not receive public financial assistance. They are, however, involved in an array of service systems due to the demands created by their son's disability. Although Mary has

become rather independent and determined in securing needed services for her son, and therefore did not frequently seek the services of Sara and Jim, she was aware of the help they provided in the school and knew that her son benefited.

The experiences of these eight women and their families with the School-Linked Service Integration project at Craft, as well as with the traditional social service system, are described below in terms of four themes. The themes capture their experiences with and describe the characteristics of the SLSI project. The four theme include: (a) the parents' descriptions of what receiving services felt like, comparing and contrasting the SLSI project experience with traditional service system experiences, **Reciprocity and the Helping Encounter "They are Treating me with respect...not like some piece of garbage"**; (b) the parents' assessments of the community service educators, **Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge "Going way above and beyond the call of duty"**; (c) the parents' descriptions of the design/structure of the SLSI project, **Structure without Strictures "I get what I need for my kids and I don't have to fill out a form"**; and, (d) the parents' assessments of the project's support of the mission of the school, **Meeting Expanding Needs "Education is not just reading, writing, and arithmetic."**

Overwhelmingly, the participants' response to the SLSI demonstration project was highly positive and supportive. Parents were able to provide a wide variety of examples of the kinds of encounters they had with the community service educators, as well as many examples of the resources and services they had received.

Reciprocity and the Helping Encounter
"They are treating me with respect...not like some piece of garbage"

A fundamental factor behind efforts to integrate social services is the widespread recognition that people often encounter obstacles when they need, and consequently seek, help. History and experience have indicated that our fragmented, specialized system of service delivery, compounded by the negative social stigma that accompanies receiving public assistance has contributed to, rather than eliminated, the problem(s). It is easy to find examples of how a person's effort to secure services from the traditional system has elicited a response from providers that further inhibited, rather than strengthened, his or her capacity to handle his or her current circumstances.

All of the parents felt that it was a very different experience to receive services from the community service educators and through their school than anything they had experienced with the "traditional" helping system. Helen, who has a son with severe health problems, described her interactions with the community service educators by saying,

> It's so personal. And you feel like a person. Jim obviously has a great deal of respect for all people. And that is of primary importance to me. Respect. Everyone deserves respect. And he always conveys that.

In contrast, Helen recalled her experiences with the traditional service systems like this.

> Before I was married, I did get food stamps for awhile. And I remember standing in line at the Welfare office on food stamp day, and you'd just feel like you're less than dirt or something. The attitude of the people working in the offices, even the people that answer the telephones. It was awful. It was terrible. The paperwork. I mean, there wasn't even a central person. It was just a mess. And they would make mistakes. It's not designed for people who aren't really aggressive and organized.

Another parent, Paula, who is a single mother with four children, also receives services from the traditional service system and described how demeaning the process of receiving public assistance has been for her. She particularly struggled with how she has been made to feel so inferior because she needs a little help.

> And they do make you feel that way. You go in there because you have to talk to your caseworker or something. You ask the lady at the front what her extension is, then she just gives this really condescending look like, "You shouldn't be here." They put us mothers down for being on welfare when, yeah there are some that are abusing it, but for the most part we're working our butts off to get off it. They just make it so much more difficult to get off. They don't really give you a chance.

When Paula spoke about how she felt when she worked with the community service educators she said, "They don't look down on you. They treat you like anybody else."

She elaborated:

> And with them I felt much better about things. It made me feel like, "Wow, they're treating me with respect. They're not treating me like some piece of garbage because I'm homeless." That really impressed me.

Ava, another parent who had been living with her three children at the homeless shelter for two months and using public assistance to survive, described her experience with the traditional service system as "really sad." Her frustration was evident as she explained:

> I'm a full time student, a full time worker, and trying to be the best I can for my kids. And, of course, I report all this to SRS every month. So, I have been cut out from my food stamps and medical cards. There's only one of my kids that has a medical card now, and I'm just getting seventy dollars in food stamps, so it's really sad. Because I'm trying to raise myself. I don't want to abuse the system. Obviously, I'm going to school. I don't want to live in this system forever. But instead of encouraging you to keep going, they cut you off. And I'm not an easy taker. I don't take easily out of anything.

Ava stridently contrasted her treatment by the public welfare system to her experience

with the community service educators.

> Being here with them is totally different, because they are helping me,
> not based on what I make, but because they trust me enough that they
> know I'm a fighter, and they want me to get better, to better myself.
> They look at that. I don't need to make a report. I don't need to come
> and say, "This is how much I make. See if you can give me toothbrushes
> for my kids." You know, they are treating me like people. They are not
> treating me like I don't deserve this. They're judging me for what they
> see, how much I'm trying, and the need I have.

Debbie, a single mother raising three sons, also described how difficult it was for

her to be dependent on public assistance, especially because her need for assistance was

the result of her recent divorce. She explained that it was especially problematic for her

to seek services because, "When you have been married and supporting a family on your

own for ten years and then everything falls apart, and you have to ask for services... it's

really difficult." When asked to talk about what made it so difficult, she said:

> I think it's pride. It's the fact that I've got these kids. I'm an adult. I
> have an education. I should be able to support my kids without any help.
> And you know, when you have to swallow your pride and ask for help,
> it's kind of against what I guess my moral standards are. It kind of
> defeats a part of that to have to go to SRS [Social Rehabilitation
> Services—the public financial/social service system for the State of
> Kansas] and ask for help. I mean that was the reason for me to go back
> and finish my bachelors degree, is so that I wouldn't be dependent on
> SRS for the rest of my life. I want to get my four-year degree so I can
> get the job I need, so I don't have to get anything from SRS. But it's
> like... for example, when I first started, SRS was paying for all the
> daycare, and then they said, "Well we are not paying you daycare while
> you are in school if you don't graduate by such and such a date." So you
> know, there they've cut me down again. The people who are making
> these policies are not the people that have been on SRS, not been in the
> welfare system, and they don't know what it's like. They are people
> trying to get recognition for what they think they know, and they don't
> know jack shit. I could go on and on and on about this whole thing. I

don't want to ask SRS for help, but the only way for me to help myself was to go back to school, and ask them for help in the meantime. It's not something that I plan on using for the rest of my life.

Beth provided a similar story of her experiences of seeking assistance from the service system that is allegedly designed to provide help to people. She compared her experience with public welfare to what was available through the community service educators at Craft like this.

When I was in college, I did seek services from the welfare department, and it was just grueling. I mean, they ask you thirty questions, and then they deny you what you needed... and all of that. They are very short with you, and if you don't understand, you're sunk, you know, because they don't want to repeat themselves. I was thinking to myself, at that time, that if I had no education, I would just be lost; I would just be frustrated and give up. But I think that the services that Jim and Sara provide, they help you get into contact with the right people, and if you need help doing whatever you need to do, finding all the information, I think these two give those services. They're more able to meet your needs, because they know who you are, and you're not, "Take a number, and whoever you get, you get" you know? They [Sara and Jim] know who you are, and they know your kids; they know what kinds of needs that you have.

All of the parents expressed this sentiment about the difficulty they encountered when they sought services from the traditional system. The principal also added his observation that,

SRS is really hard to access. I don't know if you have ever had to go through that. It is a nightmare. And parents, I can see where they would get frustrated. And I think having an advocate like Jim and Sara to assist parents in going through that process is very beneficial. Otherwise, I think they would just give up and say it's not worth it.

Parents consistently described how their experiences with Sara and Jim were completely different from the frustration and humiliation of their experiences with the traditional system. All of the parents who had sought services through the community

service educators described their experience as one in which they felt welcomed and supported in their efforts. They knew that they could just drop by Jim and Sara's room at the school, and many commented that, "It is easy to talk to them" and, as Susan said, "pick their brains" for ideas. Helen summed it up by saying, "I just like talking to them whenever I'm in the school."

In addition, several parents discussed how comfortable they felt with their children at this school. The parents commented that it increased their comfort level to know that with Jim and Sara available, there was another layer of support for their children at the school. Parents expressed their appreciation for Sara and Jim's open door and friendly style because it allowed children to ask for things they needed and encouraged them to talk about things that might be troubling them. Whether it was something as basic as the sweaters and jackets in Sara and Jim's room that were available if the weather turned cold, or meeting more serious emergency needs that occurred during the day, the children knew they could go to Jim and Sara for whatever they needed. For example, Ava said:

> When I leave my kids here, I'm very peaceful. I know they are taken care of one hundred percent. I know that if they get sick, and I'm not home, I know that Sara will take care of them, or find a way to get a hold of me.

The positive experiences of the parents with the SLSI project was shared by the teachers at Craft. Consider the following three examples of how this project felt supportive and felt different from other service programs and projects that the Craft teachers had encountered.

> You know, at the beginning of the year, I think we were all kind of apprehensive because... we didn't know—well, in the past we've gotten

tired of asking for things and then being rejected. But Jim and Sara would just pop in your room and say, "If there is anything like this, or this, or this, just ask." So then it started, I mean we all started asking, and it was like, "WOW You get it!"

It has really helped the morale a lot because in this district, and I don't know how much or different from other districts this is, but a lot of times we feel like resource after resource is being pulled out from under us. And here is this resource that is wanting to help, and is actually helping. And that's just kept things balanced that wouldn't have been balanced otherwise in the overall atmosphere.

I don't know of any other program like this. Just your basic chain of command that you have to go through to get things [is different]. And even if you end up getting it, it takes a long time, or somebody says, "I'll get back to you." Well, Jim and Sara get back to you in a couple of days, not three weeks or months.

There was a great deal of agreement among the teachers that this was a uniquely different program. A veteran teacher aptly summarized this uniqueness when she said:

I would like to say that I have taught here almost twenty years, and we've always had an amazingly supportive atmosphere. But I can't think of any program that ever came into being, was implemented and worked so well, so quickly, to meet so many people's needs as this one.

The teachers' assessment, as well as their appreciation of Jim and Sara's work through the SLSI demonstration project, mirrored and underscored what the parents described.

Overall, the parents consistently described positive experiences when they talked about their encounters with the community service educators. Their positive experiences were generated not only by the services and support that were available, but also because they were treated with respect and trust. Compared to the encounters many had endured with the traditional helping systems, this was a vastly different experience. Paula thoughtfully summarized and conveyed the overwhelmingly appreciative sentiment of the parents.

I'm glad that they are here because I don't know how I would've gotten through a lot of things if they weren't. We really need their services. Not just me, but a lot of parents need their services, and they are a lot of help.

Attitudes, Skills and Knowledge
"Going way above and beyond the call of duty"

When parents reflected on the manner in which services and resources were provided, they said that the attitudes, skills, and knowledge of the community service educators were in large measure the reason they felt so comfortable seeking and accepting assistance. The high visibility and accessibility of Jim and Sara, as well as their attentive, sensitive and proactive approach, were central to the appreciation parents expressed for how the community service educators functioned.

Attitudes and Values

It is widely believed by helping professionals that attitudes and values are predominantly conveyed nonverbally. Jim and Sara's belief that they should be there for the children, families, and staff at Craft was effectively communicated by their concerted effort to make themselves available to the people they were there to serve. Parents provided many examples of how the community service educators were consistently available and accessible. Several described how visible Sara and Jim were, and remarked that they often could be found in the school, "walking the halls." Beth expressed the experience of many parents when she stated, "I pretty much see them everyday when I drop off my son." The teachers at Craft corroborated the parents'

assessment of how available and accessible Jim and Sara were in the school. One of the teachers captured this frequently echoed sentiment with her comment:

> I think they're just in the hall all the time. I'm really impressed about the fact that—well, I actually see Jim more than Sara—and maybe it's just because Jim's the one who got really involved with this particular child and some of the needs we had. But, he's the kind of person who's in the hall when a class is coming around and using the bathroom, or getting ready for lunch, and he helps monitor. He's just where somebody needs to be a lot of the time. It's really good.

The high visibility that Sara and Jim maintained was a conscious decision they made in order to be available to children, parents, and the building staff (teachers, principal, social worker, school counselor, and support staff). In explaining their belief about delivering service, and, consequently, their approach, Jim stated, "What that means is you have to make yourself available. In our case, maybe just being out in the hall. Maybe just being visible." The social worker, who served this elementary school building as well as five other buildings in the district, shared his assessment of the community service educators.

> I think Jim and Sara are very competent at what they do. I think they try to be very accessible, and I think most staff in this building experience them this way, as being very accessible. And I think they have tried to become part of the Craft community, as well as with the parents, by being very visible to them as well. And then, and this is sometimes missed, they've become very visible with the students as well.

The building principal also expressed his appreciation for how Jim and Sara had implemented an approach to service delivery with this program that effectively served the children, parents, and the teachers, without a great deal of direction from him. Mr. Kenny described Sara and Jim as, "very motivated; they are very autonomous, they have always kept me informed of who they're working with, what they are doing—all very

informally." In recalling how "they are constantly busy doing something," Mr. Kenny

provided some examples of how Jim and Sara approached the children and parents.

> Well, they spend a lot of time with the students one-on-one, visiting with them, particularly the ones they have worked with in the past, and continuing to develop that relationship so that students feel really comfortable going to them. And I would say probably twenty per cent of the time there's a parent in their room talking about something. We have a lot of parents who come to school to pick up their children—and they don't wait outside—they come in and wait in the hallways. That's an excellent time for Jim and Sara to use marketing their services, because that has enabled them to develop a very good rapport with a lot of parents. Both of them are fairly laid back and non-threatening, and so their developing a relationship with parents has been very easy.

The teachers also expressed their appreciation for the initiative Sara and Jim

evidenced, and provided examples of their own experiences with Jim and Sara's

proactive approach. One teacher commented that, "They made personal contacts,

followed up with personal contacts." Another added her observation that, "They were

very vocal and asked questions and made themselves known." A third teacher added

her opinion that, "They took the initiative to come to us and say, 'What help do you

need?' I think that has made a big difference." A fourth teacher agreed, and added:

> They definitely made the first contact and at that time they were very assertive about this program and disseminating information to the teachers and to make sure the parents knew. [At] every initial meeting there was a formal presentation—they really did a good job of establishing that.

Thus, teachers described the community service educators as having the same

genuine willingness to make themselves available to them (the teachers), as the parents

had experienced. Several of the teachers recalled Jim's statement during their initial

introductions to the faculty, that is: "We're here, so let us know anything you want, we will try to do it, and if we can't do it we will find out how to do it—or who can."

Their self-identified goal of making themselves available to the children, parents, and teachers facilitated a proactive approach to Sara and Jim's work. Of particular significance to several parents was how frequently Jim and Sara would offer services rather than waiting for people to ask. According to Susan:

> I really didn't know they were here. I had no idea that they provided this kind of service. He [Jim] just came up to me in the hall one day when I was dropping Donnie off, and he said, "You want to talk?" and I said, "Sure, I'd love to talk. I could use someone to talk to."

Susan elaborated on how easily she could talk about everything, "from discipline, to motivation, to independence," and how she appreciated Jim as a resource, "That's been really helpful for me." Ava made a similar assessment emphasizing the generous support extended in the absence of direct appeals for help.

> They just offer. No, I never have to ask for anything. They offer everything, and Sara's so giving. They will open doors all the time. I would come, lost, totally, and they would be just like an open book. Everything I needed was there, and they always offer. I mean, I never said, "You think that you can give me...?" No. They always said, "Well, you know, there's these resources. Use this here. Use that."

Sara and Jim's approach to providing services and resources to the children, families, and personnel at Craft Elementary School was a reflection of their belief about how people should be treated. Their willingness to literally position themselves in places where they could be of help—in the breakfast program, in the hallways, and at the doors when children where arriving at and leaving school—signaled their genuine desire to be truly available to consumers, and indicated their interest in "spotting"

situations that would benefit from early intervention. Moreover, because they

recognized how difficult it is for people to ask for assistance, they adopted a proactive

approach that would allow them to offer their services, including referral to other needed

resources, to people when they noticed a potential need. Based on the accounts

provided by the participants in this study, it is apparent that Jim and Sara consistently

demonstrated certain attitudes and values related to identifying needs and providing

services. Their attitudes and values, which were based on their belief that people have a

right to services and should not be made to feel inferior or inept because they need

assistance, were evident in their empowering, proactive approach to their work with the

SLSI demonstration project.

Skills

The participants in this study identified many skills that the community service

educators practiced in their work with consumers. The ability to facilitate connections

between needs and services was of particular importance to several parents. In

describing her assessment of how parents seek and receive services through Jim and

Sara, Helen said, "It just kind of happens, because of the way the conversation goes."

She continued with her observation that the skillful manner in which the community

service educators engaged people in a natural conversation allowed parents to express

their concerns and needs without feeling inadequate. As Helen described it:

> Jim, especially, is adept at just drawing things out. You don't feel like
> you're asking for help. You feel like he brought it up, and it was his idea,
> and you're doing him a favor to accept the service, and it is such a
> complete turnaround. It's a wonderful thing.

Jim and Sara's willingness to offer assistance is especially significant when one considers how difficult it is for most people to ask for help. Several of the parents expressed a reluctance to ask for anything. Expressions such as "It's not in my nature to reach," "I'm not the type that is going to ask," "I'm not an easy taker," were common. This was well illustrated by Debbie, when she said:

> Well, I'm not the type of person that's going to go out and ask for help. And it really helped. I mean, it made a better Christmas for my kids. But they had asked me, and I never ever would have done that, no matter how down in the dumps I got, or poor, or whatever... I never would have asked for that, but since they offered it, I went ahead and did it, and my kids had a nice Christmas. It was really nice.

Several parents commented on how sentient the community service educators were and how they were able to "pick up a lot" and identify the children and families who might need help. As Susan described, "Jim was really thoughtful about it, but he was really watching for things... and he had ideas." One of the parents, Helen, who said she had very little direct contact as a recipient of support, observed:

> I haven't experienced it myself, but I think that Jim and Sara are very aware of the kids. It's a small enough school, and they've been there long enough that they have an idea about which kids go together in families, and what's going on with the families, and I feel like they would be real good trouble shooters. That if they saw something, they would ask the right questions to find out, and be able to move in and provide some resources.

According to Debbie, "It's like they know what people are worse off, and they're actually offering the help." She continued:

> The hardest part is asking for something and I think that Jim and Sara realize, or they see it in a child... I haven't figured out how they do it, but it's like they know when there's a child that needs something, or a parent that needs something. They're willing to offer, which makes it easier, in parents like me where we would never ask. So I think that's really good.

Anything you can make available to a child, or a parent, you know, you need to do it. That's all I can say.

The teachers also saw Sara and Jim as being very attuned to and sensitive to people and their needs. In this regard one of the teachers said, "They seem to know when to step forward or when you need to back off." Another teacher agreed, and further elaborated, "They sense when to back off, they sense when help is needed, they sense how to ask, they read personalities." A third teacher commented on Jim and Sara's sensitivity by saying that:

> They're very perceptive. There's been a couple of times when it, there's this sort of invisible line where, you know, you're trying to make contact and keep track of what all your students are doing, and if someone steps into that process uninvited, it can get awkward. And there've been a couple of times when that happened just a little bit, but the least suggestion that it was happening and it was over. So, you know, they're very perceptive and sensitive to what's enough, what's too much, and the like.

The social worker reiterated this perspective by saying that, "I think they have a pretty good sense of the pulse of the building and a sense of what's going on with individual kids in the building." The comments from parents, teachers, and the social worker indicated that Sara and Jim had repeatedly demonstrated their ability to skillfully and sensitively identify and address needs of the children and families they served.

Sara and Jim's willingness to arrange, or directly provide, services often surprised parents who had experienced the typical indignities of the traditional service delivery system. Paula, unable to contain her amazement, commented with near reverence, "It kind of blew my mind. Sara's going way above and beyond the call of duty." Paula described numerous examples of information that was offered, referrals

that were made, and services that were provided. She summed up her experience with Jim and Sara by saying, "If you need anything they will try their best to get it."

Susan contrasted her experiences with the community service educators with her efforts to obtain help from SRS. In describing her experiences with traditional public services she recalled:

> It's not easy. You don't really find that people are rushing forward with information. They've been a big help to me here at school, but, in general, help is hard to find [in the traditional system].

Susan continued to describe her experiences with SRS.

> They are not the most helpful people. I haven't figured out why. I've thought about it and I'm not sure...I mean, if you show up and you point blank ask them a question, they will answer it. They will not usually volunteer anything. So if you don't know what to ask, you are going to be in trouble before you get there. They do not do any more for you than they absolutely figure they gotta.

With this account, Susan detailed a much different experience from what had occurred with Jim and Sara. Parents consistently indicated how Sara and Jim's approach was so different from their typical experiences with public service systems. Debbie illuminated this difference by saying that, "When Jim and Sara helped, it was more personable, I mean they seemed to care a lot more, and they seemed to follow through."

It was difficult to distinguish Sara and Jim's intervention skills from their personal values and beliefs about how they should do their work. In Jim and Sara's case, attitudes and skills seemed to go hand-in-hand. The skills that Jim and Sara possessed, their willingness to offer assistance, their thoughtful and respectful approach, were a dynamic combination of both a belief system about how people ought to be treated, and deliberate and practiced intervention techniques.

Knowledge

Sara and Jim were also considered to be "an enormous wealth of information."

In this regard, Susan said:

> Jim has lots of ideas about all kinds of stuff. I mean, just amazing things.
> We go through those pamphlets and books; I borrow parenting manuals
> and read them, and then come in and talk about this approach versus that
> approach. He always had ideas, not necessarily a service, maybe just a
> parenting tip. "Oh, you are having trouble getting him up in the
> morning, maybe you should try this. If that doesn't work, try this." Or,
> "If you need someone to talk to, this is a good way to go about that." Or,
> "Did you know they had this available at school?" He was like a
> magician. He was always in this hat, and there is always something
> coming out of this hat. And again, when you are using traditional
> services, if you don't really know, you may never know. It's one of
> those things like when you are going to go visit some place and you
> don't know that this tourist site is there. Unless you happen to stumble
> across it you're never going to find it. But he was standing there going,
> "Okay, there's this, and there's this, and there's this." So that helped me
> a lot, especially in my situation where I had started off without kids, then
> all of the sudden a five-year-old comes to live with me, and I had no
> preparation time. I had nothing. So I sort of stumbled my way through
> it, and Jim and Sara helped me so that I didn't stumble quite so badly.

There was a great deal of agreement among parents that, as Paula put it, "They usually

know, and if they didn't know, then they would find out." According to Beth,

> Jim and Sara provide services, and they help put you into contact with
> the right people. And they help if you need help doing whatever you
> need to do, or finding all the information. They don't just provide; they
> are not a cash hand-out. They'll help you find education, or early
> childhood screening things, where to go for hearing tests, and stuff like
> that, whatever you need. You know, they're a whole wealth of
> [information]. If you want to know something, you go ask them. And if
> they don't know, then they will find out who you need to talk to. It's a
> nice thing.

The knowledge that Jim and Sara possessed included factual information about

the developmental and emotional needs of children. Their room was stocked with

informational brochures and pamphlets. According to parents and teachers, they know how to engage people, establish a trusting relationship, and utilize a wide range of appropriate intervention techniques. They also were aware of the services and resources available in the community. As part of initiating their work at Craft, Sara and Jim made contact with many of the existing social services agencies. Therefore, not only did they learn what each agency provided, they also knew who to contact at the agency. In addition, they possessed the knowledge necessary to problem solve and seek answers to questions and problems that had never surfaced before. In summary, their knowledge, their ability to provide services, support and information, and their skill in finding resources and delivering services, were as important to the parents as were Sara and Jim's attitudes and values toward helping, which were reflected in their friendly, flexible, and approachable style.

Structure without Strictures
"I get what I need for my kids and I don't have to fill out a form"

Although, in the minds of many of the parents, Jim and Sara were the program, there were characteristics of the design of this School-Linked Service Integration initiative that distinguished it as a unique form of service delivery. In effect, the design of the program facilitated the opportunity for Sara and Jim to function in their unique and responsive manner. These characteristics included the high level of provider autonomy; the wide range of resources and services available; no application process; no restrictive eligibility requirements; and, an intervention approach that operated from a family-focused, holistic perspective.

Autonomy in Providing Needed Resources

The first crucial design characteristic was the high level of autonomy granted to the community service educators to define problems, identify possible solutions, and to intervene where and when they considered it appropriate. This unrestricted opportunity to serve allowed the community service educators to take specific action to meet individual needs and to resolve specific problems.

The parents provided a wide range of examples of the various ways the program in Paula's words, "helps me get things I need for the kids." Parents described an array of services and resources that Jim and Sara provided. For example, tangible goods such as clothing, snow boots, glasses, backpacks and school supplies, even a place to live, were provided to families. Parents were also informed about scholarships so their children could attend art classes, and given information related to what they needed to do to acquire passes for movies and educational and recreational events. There were many examples of how Jim and Sara also had arranged rides or had provided transportation for them and their children. Parents also appreciated and utilized the informational material and resources that the community service educators made available, as well as the referrals and connection to other needed services and agencies. And most parents commented on the comfort and support they had experienced because Sara and Jim's services had been available and easily accessible through the school. The participants indicated their belief that Jim and Sara's freedom to offer an array of services was an asset of this project.

Teachers at Craft also were able to provide examples of the variety and range of services and resources that were available because of Jim and Sara. In regards to what Jim and Sara had done for Craft elementary school, one teacher said:

> I don't think I could sum up their job in one sentence, but a lot of it has been that link between the school and the community of all the things that teachers don't have time for, or don't know enough resources out there. There were a couple of students last year that they helped with— who were really going through some really personal problems—so they were able to get us some names and then talk with the parents themselves, and give the parents the names of some agencies that could help.

Another teacher added that:

> I have some personal experience with them and view them as resources—or the provider of resources for me. They have brought resources into the school—for the classroom—the police department came in, the bike safety program for all the students. I think a recent example is trying to help one family find daycare after school, and to find out what resources could be used for that family.

Elaborating on her experiences with Sara and Jim, this teacher added:

> Jim worked a lot with a child last year who was really having difficulty in the classroom as far as behavior, temper, things like that. It started out as a place where he [the child] could go and get help—Jim could help him be really able to get back into the classroom. And Jim was there to talk with parents, or give me names and say that parents want to talk to me. Those type of things.

Another teacher described her encounters with the community service educators.

> I have a lot of similar experiences. Jim and Sara did a lot of one-on-one things with the kids. And because they were here early in the morning, or in the breakfast room, they can spot problems coming in, or keep an eye on someone that they know may be walking in with a difficulty, and then follow them into my room and whisper in my ear what's going on. And if they need to, they will make a phone call. It kind of bridges the arrival at school and the home with our beginnings with the kid walking in the classroom door. They often know what's happened right before they've walked in our door, or what happens right after they walk out our

door. You know, did mom pick them up? Did they go to daycare? Did they make it to the bus, or did they get thrown off the bus? Those things we don't have time to follow up on, they would follow up and communicate with us.

And lastly, a particularly poignant comment was made by a teacher, who said:

As a resource teacher, my job is to support other people. But I feel that Sara and Jim support me and it's really a good feeling because there are so many times that they are just there. And with students that need some time to talk things through, it's not always a behavior issue as much as someone who has just a little extra time to talk—to have some conversation with—or talk through some kind of incident that needs to have a lesson made of it—you know, something like that. Some of the kids are incredibly needy, they just about wear you slick because their needs are so huge—Jim and Sara have helped to take care of those things. They are there with the time and the resources and they know who to call—the kind of things to help some of these really needy kids that just always need you.

The ability of a service provider to identify what needs to occur and to act on what she or he identifies, is a dynamic of both capacity and opportunity. Even the most skillful service provider would be unable to provide necessary services if she worked within a system that limited her opportunity to act on what she identified as needed and was capable of accomplishing. The fact that, by design, this program allowed a great deal of autonomy, provided the community service educators with the freedom to identify what was needed and to do what was necessary. The Craft parents and teachers viewed this as a critical asset of the program.

Eliminating the "Red Tape"

Another important advantage of the SLSI program, according to parents, was the fact that there was no application/eligibility process or forms they had to complete. The fact that the program did not set eligibility criteria or require an application process

undoubtedly contributed to the perception that the community service educators were willing to provide whatever assistance was needed. The absence of restrictive eligibility requirements and the flexibility of the program design allowed the community service educators the freedom to create and offer an innovative form of service delivery. The teachers commented on the advantage of having a program that allowed this level of provider discretion. For example one of the teachers said in this regard:

> It seems to me like the program has given people that work for it the freedom to help as much as they can. And there aren't a lot of boundaries or restrictions to what they can do. That's a blessing of the program, that they can let Jim and Sara go and do whatever they need to do to help.

Another teacher explained this point by saying that flexibility and an absence of red tape were the "criteria of the success" of this program. She explained, "I can't think of anything more frustrating than that the guidelines they had to work under would restrict them from doing things that they saw they needed to do." Another teacher noted that she was "thoroughly impressed with Jim and Sara's performance" particularly with how flexible they had been, adding that "There is no job description—you could not write a job description. They just do what needs to be done." The principal echoed this sentiment and his support of the freedom that Sara and Jim had been allowed because of the design of the program, noting that "I think that whatever they can do to help a student out, then that is part of their job."

Thus, in order to meet the unique needs of individuals and families, Sara and Jim provided direct services or brokered services through other agencies. Paula provided an example of this based on one of her experiences.

One of the other big things that they did last year was when I got them [her children] enrolled and they needed school supplies. Well, being homeless I had no money, and I just mentioned that I was gonna need help with school supplies. Jim called down there [to the distribution center] and put my name on the list so when I went down there I didn't have to worry about the application or anything. I just told them that Jim put me on the list. I didn't have to fill out anything; they just went ahead and gave me the school supplies that I needed for the kids.

Teachers shared their relief that the SLSI project was not bound by the typical rigorous bureaucratic structure that defines, and consequently limits and encumbers, many social programs. In this regard, one of the teachers remarked, "I appreciate that I don't have to fill out a form and hand it to Jim," a sentiment that was shared by many of the teachers. Elaborating on the idea of flexibility being an essential element of the program, another teacher commented:

I think that if this program ever turns bureaucratic it will be useless, because schools can't function that way. Our commodity is children, and you don't just put children in a room and tell them to wait while you fill out this form. If it ever turns into that we can only get their services by some kind of formality—this program will simply fail.

Unrestricted Eligibility

The question of eligibility provoked a universal response among the participants that services should be available to people because they need help, not because they fall within a specific category or live below a certain income level. Debbie adamantly defended her belief that social service programs should not be based on income eligibility.

No. Because if you designate it as a program just for a specific structure of people, they're going to get the same stigmatizing you do when you go to SRS for the same kind of services. I don't think that should happen because it doesn't matter if you are rich or poor. I mean, everyone has

problems, and everyone has to go to someone at some point and ask for help. So, no, to me it doesn't matter what your income status is. I mean, everyone has problems.

Susan reflected on her own situation as the primary caretaker of her nephew, and how

she had used the services available at Craft, to shape her opinion about service

eligibility.

> I think it should be open to everybody. A lot of the services I used were not related to income. If I had been making $100,000.00 a year, I would still have been as lost, I still would have had the same questions. It would not have been different, so I don't think it's about money. It's just about being people.

Bob, whose mother had been caring for his son while he was incarcerated, also

thoughtfully considered the question of limiting services based on restrictive eligibility

criteria and related it to his own experiences.

> I think even when a family has a decent income... you know... you hear stories of where they end up homeless, right? From riches to rags kind of stories, and you wonder, "How did this happen?" I know there's times when I didn't need assistance all the time, but those times when I needed help, when they came I wouldn't be eligible, because for the last year, I was doing okay. But that one period of two months that I needed help and didn't qualify is what actually contributed to furthering that downward slide. So I can see where this kind of program could help eliminate it [a crisis] from ever occurring. It's more preventative.

And when the question of whether there should be eligibility requirements was posed to

Helen, she emphatically exclaimed:

> Naa!! I think the thing that makes it neat is that there isn't. Anybody who goes into the school... it doesn't matter if they're coming from up on the hill... I mean there are some rich families... there is a whole spectrum of economics here in this district, and it doesn't matter which family you are coming from. It doesn't matter if you have a lot of money, or a little money. Everybody's under the time crunch thing, and so someone who can just go ahead and use the services through the school, that makes their life easier. And there shouldn't be a stigma. I mean, we all need

good health, we all need help. We're all humans, and that's what community is, to work together, and to help each other have a good life, especially for the kids.

The participants were consistently pleased that the SLSI project had been able to function without the typical red tape and restrictive eligibility requirements that permeate most social service programs. The inability of many traditional service systems and service providers to respond to unique and immediate needs because a consumer "does not fit the criteria" is a pervasive problem confronting service delivery. The participants in this research indicated that eliminating the bureaucratic red tape that binds and limits service would enhance the opportunity for individuals and families to receive needed services without the stigma that is currently attached to categorically restrictive, means-tested programs.

Family Focused Holistic Intervention

Parents also expressed appreciation that the program had been designed in a manner that allowed the community service educators to work from a family focused and holistic perspective. This helping perspective not only addressed the multiplicity of individual student needs, but by incorporating a family focus, it provided services directed at the parent and family, not just at the identified student. The awareness that a student might need an array of services was well articulated by Helen.

> I think the whole person is important, you can't expect to educate kids if they're hungry, or if their parents are splitting up, or if they're living in an abusive situation, or if they didn't get their shots, or... I mean... let's get back to some reality here... a child can't be taught if he doesn't have breakfast, you know? And I think it is really important to overlap services as much as possible.

An equally important component of the program identified by parents was that resources and services were provided for their children who were not (or were not yet) Craft students. Ava spoke with great appreciation about her experience with this phenomenon. She described a situation in which, after her school age children were not allowed to go out for recess because they did not have snow boots, the community service educators were able to provide coupons for a local shoe store so they could get their snow boots. As Ava continued, she stated with some amazement, "and they even got one [coupon] for my little one, the one that is not even in Craft yet." With sincere gratitude, and a bit of pride that she might have been special, Ava provided examples of the range of services and opportunities that Sara and Jim had provided for her and her children, whether or not they were Craft students.

Although the participants did not label these characteristics of the SLSI project as issues related to program design, the notion that services ought to be universally available or that entire families should be eligible to receive needed services, are examples of provider discretion and autonomy that is related to the flexible design of a service program. The opportunity that these community service educators had to identify consumer needs and to be able to provide services from a holistic, universally accessible, family focused perspective, rather than from the typical fragmented, categorical, individual approach, was perceived as a real strength of this program.

Meeting Expanding Needs
"Education is not just reading, writing, and arithmetic"

The participants in this study believed that social services in schools contributed to the school-wide goal to ensure quality educational experiences for all students. The parents, teachers, and the principal all commented that schools were logical places to offer services to children and families. Many parents and teachers commented on Craft's unique school climate, and expressed their belief that Jim and Sara's program complemented the warm, collaborative culture of the school. The parents provided many examples of how the program had contributed to the school's overarching goal.

Craft Elementary school, like many other schools, continues to struggle to identify the range of services necessary to achieve the goal of providing "quality educational experiences" for students. The staff recognizes that grade level advancement and good test scores are not the only criteria used to measure successful school experiences. Moreover, they know that educational advancement will not occur for many students if schools continue to do "business as usual." They also know that schools have absorbed, both wittingly and unwittingly, more responsibility for the lives of children, not just their education, and that national and state level educational reform and school restructuring have contributed to alternative ways of thinking about the purpose of schooling.

During this era of school reform many schools now include expectations related to school readiness, parental involvement, and purposeful facilitation of students' valuing education, to name only a few examples of new priorities. Consequently, any program that enhances the comfort level of students and parents and works to create

more open lines of communication between families and school personnel, is viewed as

supporting the mission of the school. The Craft parents lent support to the belief that

collaborative and supportive relationships between them and school personnel were

enhanced by the work of Sara and Jim.

Educating Students for Successful Lives

Many of the parents believed that providing services in schools might offer

children more chances to be successful. As Debbie reflected on the value of having

services available in schools to supplement what might be missing in a child's home, she

said:

> If you stop and think about it, those test scores and everything are partly
> due to the home environment, and what kind of environment you live in.
> Do you live in a loving family, or do you live in a family [in which] you
> get beat in all the time? I mean, if your parents don't love you, you're
> not going to care enough to make good scores on tests. You are not
> going to put out the effort. You're just going to mark an answer because
> they tell you that you have to do it. You don't care about it. And when
> you're in a family that cares, and asks about your homework, and tests,
> and things like that, I think that makes a big difference as far as
> encouraging kids to do the best they can. I think if schools had a place
> where a child could go, away from the classroom and everybody, and
> just have quiet time, have someone on hand to offer help, or someone to
> listen to them, or something like that. I think it would help.

Comments from several of the parents reflected how they thought this opportunity for

support and attention was available to the children at Craft based on what Jim and Sara

offered through this project.

Many parents talked about their belief that the primary way to avoid a life of

poverty is through education. Several parents directly expressed thoughts related to how

offering support to children in schools could enhance their possibilities for academic

success and ultimately for brighter futures. Beth described how part of her support for

this project, even though she had not used many of the available services, was based on

her concern that, "A lot of people on welfare aren't very educated." She elaborated:

> I think that's part of the problem. There was a speaker at the[University]
> I think the school district helped put it on, it was about reading. The
> better you read, the more you learn. The more you learn, the more
> money you make. The more money you make, the longer you live. And
> so on and so on. So you get those kids who need help at the first level.
> You know, if you have people like Jim and Sara who are finding them
> tutors, helping them, so that they can read. If they can read, they're
> going to get an education. If they get the education, they're going to get
> the money, and if they have the money, they don't need welfare. I mean,
> it's the whole thing. And then if you're on welfare, you have less
> money, if you have less money, you have less books, you have less
> access to the library, you have less food... and less confidence. And that
> in turn leads to slower learning, and if there is no one there to break that,
> somewhere... like if you see a child coming in every day, and you know
> they're not getting any breakfast, then take them aside and say, "Hey,
> let's go get a piece of toast," or "Here's a bottle of juice," or whatever.
> Without it they can't learn. If they can't learn, then they're still in the
> same boat that their parents and grandparents are in. And you're never
> going to get out of it. The only way to get out of it is through education.
> Schools start at the ground level. They're going to start with the kids.
> So even if the parents are on welfare, if that kid can stay in school, if he
> can be educated, and continue educating himself, then he's got a chance.
> And unless you get at that level, and you get at the kids... the smaller
> kids, I think, are easier to target, because they're just more adaptable to
> change.

Susan also was insightful about her belief that it would be to a school's

advantage to work together with social service systems to better serve children in order

to enhance their opportunities for lifetime success. This was an investment that she

believed was well worth making.

> Right off, I don't want to sound like one of those people who talks like I
> expect the school to raise my kid, because I don't. I don't think that's
> fair. But I think, if they're kind of watching for the beginnings of the big
> problems, and you could cut that out, you save the kid and the family—

everybody in the long run—a lot of time and a lot of anguish. I think education is so important. I don't want to sound like I'm expanding the role of school too widely, but I think it's kind of short-sighted to pretend that a kid not having snow boots doesn't have some impact on them. Because if you don't have snow boots, they probably won't have a coat, and they might not have... it's not like they are coming to school all bright-eyed and ready to roll. It's like this kid's going, "Okay, I didn't get to sleep last night, and I'm still hungry, and... don't even talk to me, because I'm not listening." So I think to a certain extent, it's in the school's best interest to [get involved]. Because if you let the child coast through and don't do anything, at some point this child is going to be a grown-up, and society will have to deal with this grown-up, be they functional, non-functional, whatever. They're going to be there, and we're going to have to deal with them. If we make this small investment now, and we support the child, we get it back.

This expanded view of how schools could do more to enhance outcomes for children and families was also expressed by Mary, who passionately stated:

If we think for one minute that schools are not responsible for at least putting forth a good faith effort to try and help families come to an understanding of the possibilities, I think that we are neglecting our duty. I mean, we say "educate," well educating is not just reading, writing, and arithmetic. Educating is the whole person, it's integrating successfully into society, and contributing and learning about reciprocity and the pragmatics of give and take and contribution and feeling self-esteem. The bottom line is those little guys going to kindergarten, they're very needy. They're needy in lots of ways. They need to learn how to spell their name, and read, and all that, but they also need to learn how to get along, and to be successful. And I think that needs to be addressed in the teacher competencies and the curriculum that meets those competencies. And I think parents need to be involved in that process; build in reinforcement mechanisms for them and start looking at the school as a community resource. I know I may be a little bit redundant here, but I keep coming back to this. There's a lot of at-risk kids, and I'm not talking about only kids with disabilities, I am talking about at-risk kids who do not have the middle-class advantages that you or I have. So if we don't do it in the schools, where are we going to do it? It isn't done at the SRS office, you know... there's going to be higher drop-out levels, the community is going to be at risk, the whole community ought to do something. It will be cost-efficient because the buildings are already there. You've got great staff already there, it's just a matter of reorganizing and bringing in some of those missing links, and coming up

with a plan of how it all fits together. We've already got an operation,
we have a structure that is designed to meet a lot of needs. It's just
further developing it. It's not like we are creating a whole new building,
all new staff. We've already got a good working model. We just have to
figure how to bring in the missing pieces and have it all work together. It
would be a lot less expensive if we invest early.

Many of the Craft parents, as well as the teachers and the principal,

communicated the belief that schools can and should do more to meet the needs of

children. Helen, among others, stressed how logical it seemed to her to provide services

in the school.

> When I first saw the School-Linked-Community Services table set up at
> parents night, or whatever it was, I thought, "Man, that is such a great
> idea." Because I know from a lot of the kids that my kids play with, that
> there are a lot of families that just aren't aware of what's available to be
> taken advantage of.

Regarding the idea that schools are an ideal place to house such services, Helen added:

"It's perfect! You go there every day." One of the teachers concurred.

> I have always thought that the model of having a school as the basis for
> community services is the way that we will go, even though it's taken a
> long time. We've just always seen that legal and health care, further
> education and all those needs, you know—mental health, SRS,
> whatever—should be based somehow in a school setting. And I see this
> [the SLSI project] as the first link in that bridge making that model come
> true—someone here in the school that can get those people here, or
> people who are here to do what may need to be done.

Principal Kenny, contributed his thoughts on the idea that schools "are really

changing, and they really are becoming more of a community than just a school." He

continued:

> Other people might say, "No. Schools already do more than they should.
> Our goal is really to educate and not to provide for those other types of
> needs that they have." But I guess I totally disagree with that, because
> unless you provide for those other types of needs, we are not going to be

workshops on parenting, and events that were occurring at Craft. Debbie said, "They've been the ones to keep in contact with me," and Mary observed them "working with parents all the time. There's always parents in their office." Beth commented on what she saw as the advantage of having the community service educators at Craft like this:

> I think communication [with Sara and Jim] exists. So that if you need something, or if there's a problem, then you've got someone to talk to that's not the teacher, but someone else.

Paula pointed out that the program helped children succeed academically because, by attending to the social and emotional needs of children, it freed teachers to be more focused on educational concerns.

> I think it helps because they [teachers] don't have to worry about the kid not having a jacket or this or that. And if they do have a concern, they go to Sara or Jim and they can look into it and see what needs to be done.

The teachers concurred that the services and resources that Jim and Sara provided the students, families, and themselves had undoubtedly enhanced their capacity to be more effective in their role as educators. The following exchange among the teachers illustrates what Jim and Sara did to support them as teachers and what would be lost if their services were no longer available at Craft. One teacher began the discussion by telling how Jim and Sara providing a student with a backpack helped the student and the school.

> It seems like kind of a small thing, but it turns out to be pretty significant in a child's life. For example, this year there's a child who has no back pack, and it would be a desirable thing for all children to have a back pack, and I would want to provide one if I could, but chances are I wouldn't get it done. But not only has this child been given a backpack, but when that one disintegrated, Jim and Sara found another one. One that would work, and it makes this child's life successful on a bigger level than you would think a back pack could do. And even things like

that, they take time to track down those things, and in that way become an integral part of our success.

Two other teachers then elaborated on the value of the services provided by the SLSI project for meeting the needs of children who "fall between the cracks" of the traditional helping system. One said:

> They really help me with those kids that are very difficult to meet their needs in the sense they don't qualify for help, or they don't have a connection to the social worker, it's that gray area, those that we call "cracker" kids sometimes. I mean, who do you go to when they haven't had a bath for two weeks. Well, that's not official neglect, okay. And their clothes smell of urine. Well Sara calls and gets clean clothes brought to me. Nobody shows up to school, no note, no call, it's the second day. Sara keeps calling until we make contact, trying to find out why they're not here. And often it's these kids that are very needy, but they don't require or fit into help in another area. But those kids really have a need, and I know I would feel more frustrated. Because these are things that, I can't keep doing this, calling and calling until I finally make contact.

The other teacher followed with another example of the value of the SLSI services.

> It [the SLSI project] is that in-between, it helps with the ones that exhaust teachers the most, you know, it's that solution that instead of waiting for the crisis, the label, the social worker, the disaster, the intervention from SRS who may not need to be called in. Yeah, it's the whole idea that those kids that exhaust teachers the most, that put the biggest strain, it's not the identified kids that are the biggest strain, it's the ones that Jim and Sara take care of—it's those kids. It's gotta make a difference.

Two additional teachers expressed their concerns about what would be lost to them, and consequently the children and families, if the project ended and Jim and Sara were no longer providing their services at Craft. One expressed her concern like this:

> You know, I'm not sure it's different from any other time, but right now most of us feel really overburdened with things we have to get done in addition to teaching, like paperwork for QPA [the state-mandated school

accountability system], and we aren't going to do the little extra things. It's not gonna get done. I view it almost like budget cutting. You know, you would still have the core of what you are doing and what you are supposed to be doing. You'd still be teaching children in your classroom, and conveying information to them, but you would be losing things around the perimeter. You'd be losing this child that you hadn't made the home contact with and you'd be losing this child who was missing too much time because they didn't get to school on time. And Jim and Sara are kind of like shepherds out there gathering those little border people up and bring them back in so that they can be included in this central core of instruction you have in your class, and you stay there doing your thing and they're bringing in kids around the borders for you.

The other teacher expressed a similar concern about how difficult it was for the school

to address range of needs of the children. She recognized the growing tension between

their responsibilities as educators and the expectation that schools must expand support

for students' social and emotional needs.

> In my mind, if we say we are truly educating the emotional, the physical, and the intellectual needs of children, then truly it is the school's responsibility to meet all those needs. But, then you have to look at it realistically. Is there enough time? Are there enough resources? How do you prioritize? And it won't get done. I mean, it's not that any one teacher is ever neglecting... it's just more than the job can handle.

She continued by considering aloud what would be lost if the school did not continue to

offer the services provided through the SLSI project.

> My first reaction if Jim and Sara weren't here is, "It wouldn't get done." There would be some effort made to get parents to come into the classroom or to follow through with the child who is having difficulties. But the school would just be missing it; it wouldn't be a whole effort. We can't do it. Another thing that would fall by the wayside, partly because social workers and counselors are so overworked, is that home contact. We have a real advantage. Sara and Jim will go out, they will meet with the parents on a Saturday here, or do what ever they need to do. Because we all make the best effort we can as teachers, but very few of us are going to say, "Okay, Wednesday I'm going after school and I'm driving up there, and I'm gonna bang on the door until I make

contact with the parents." It's just a series of little things that would be missed. And I just don't see anyone picking up the slack.

Several teachers also expressed their appreciation for Jim's effort to be a role model for the students at Craft. As one put it, "Often our students don't have any male role models in their lives, and he's willing to make himself available for that role when he can."

Overwhelmingly, the teachers and parents conveyed the belief that the community service educators' services and resources enhanced the educational opportunities for the students and fostered better relationships with the parents. The teachers recognized the importance, even the necessity, of expanding the role of schools to meet the social/emotional needs of children and their families. Although the teachers were obviously aware of the growing needs of children and expressed the desire to see those needs met, as one stated, "We can't do it." They felt that, in order to adequately address this important responsibility to children and families, services such as those that have been provided through the demonstration project need to be available. One teacher expressed her sense of the vital contribution the SLSI program has made to the school by saying, "What did we ever do without it? What would we ever do if it ends?"

The Uniqueness of Craft

As parents reflected on the SLSI project and their uniquely positive experiences at Craft, several described experiences with other schools that had left them feeling like, as Hazel described, "They are putting the kids through like cattle." Another parent, Paula, had recently moved from another state and described her experiences at Craft as

having been very different from those at the previous school her children had attended. For her, the previous school was, "not like this at all." She explained:

> They just worried about getting kids through the system. They didn't really care whether the kids learned anything or not. That really ticked me off. That's no place to raise children.

Paula spoke with restrained anger as she continued, "It has taken a long time to get over this feeling and be able to trust people again. I've just gotten to that point now." When asked if she felt as though she could trust Sara and Jim, she responded with heartfelt candor:

> My children had a bout with head lice. It is one of the worst things that kids can get. It was terrible. I could not get rid of it because I just did not have enough hours in the day to get the house done and pick them all out of their heads. So I told Sara my problem. Her and a couple of girls got together and went through their hair for me. It really helped out a lot to get it done and keep it gone. I know I can ask her for help.

Parents described many situations where they had trusted Jim and Sara and the other staff at Craft for help with their children. Many situations, like the recalcitrant case of head lice, cause children to be out of school altogether or to miss the value of being present. As Debbie described the importance of Jim's role with helping her son stay in school, she also described a very cooperative working relationship among the staff at Craft. All were aware of her son's difficulties, and all provided support for the family. Although she no longer resides in the Craft school district, she petitioned for permission to continue her children's enrollment there for several reasons. One of the most important reasons was her perception that the community service educators, the teachers, and the other staff were willing to help: "They're willing to listen, you know, they go the extra mile if you ask for it." In addition, she values the continuity.

When my children started here, they were living with their father, and he did live in this school district, and I didn't want to take them out. And most of the reason is, a lot of the teachers and adults in this school are aware of their situation. It's nothing that I have to come in and explain time after time after time. I mean, it gets easier, but I don't like to do it. So they're all aware of what has happened.

Parents provided several examples to substantiate their belief that Craft was unique. Mary offered this explanation.

It's a lot more collaborative and open-minded. I think that they realize that no one person has all the answers, that no one person has all the right set of skills to be able to make the difference, but it takes a whole team effort. And I think that should be part of teacher preparation. I think they need that philosophy; it's that mindset that needs to be instilled in teacher preparation courses. The family is who you are working for and you're here to make a difference for that family. If you look at that, then you're much more open-minded as to bringing other people in. Craft definitely has a very collaborative approach.

Helen also described Craft as having a very special atmosphere. She moved into the neighborhood so that her children could attend Craft because it felt comfortable and had "never felt like an institution." She remarked, "I think we've definitely picked the right school, and I'm really grateful because I know not all schools are like this."

Beth said that she thought the fact that children with differences were not singled out, nor were people clustered together based on their differences, contributed to people at Craft's seeing differences as diversity, not as a "bad thing." In this regard she said:

I think it's the diversity. It's very diverse, as far as culture, and economics. I think it's 50 or 60 per cent low socioeconomic status. It also has very needy children, special needs, autism, and others. I don't think those kids are singled out like they are in some schools. In some schools, I think the lower SES kids kind of band together, because they are treated differently. I'm sure a lot of times it's not intentional, but by children, and teachers, and staff. And you don't see that here at Craft. You don't. If you walk through the halls, you would have a hard time

trying to figure out, "Okay, now, which one's low SES, and which one's...?" You know. There's no difference.

Beth's perspective on the unique nature of Craft is not uncommon. One of the teachers commented on the fact that a lot of the parents realize the value of the diversity at Craft. She stated:

> I think a lot of our parents realize that it [diversity] is benefiting [their children]. I think they purposely stay at Craft if they move out of the district because they realize that their child is getting to know a variety of people and how to work with a variety of people which is a basic life skill that a lot of adults don't have.

When Susan inherited her nephew Doug a few days after school had started, she was unsure, and in somewhat of a panic, about where to enroll him. She decided on Craft initially because it had a full day kindergarten program, but she "quickly came to have a tremendous amount of confidence" in the school because of the support she received from Jim, the teachers, and the principal and because of how comfortable the environment was. In her words:

> All the teachers know every kid. They know everyone. All of them. I love that. The first day, I was terrified, but I very quickly realized, if he's got to go to school, this is it. Doug really felt it too. He was very comfortable with Craft. Craft is quite a ways from the house, and at the end of his kindergarten, we had a discussion about whether he wanted to keep going to Craft for first grade, and make that long drive, or... there's a little elementary school about four blocks from the house. We kind of stood outside that elementary school, and he really didn't want to go in. He said, "You know, I feel really comfortable with the way Craft has gone. It's like, you know, everybody's really cool, and everybody's really nice to me, and I really want to stay there." And I said, "Okay. I'm really comfortable with it too, but I just wanted you to know we had different options." He's like, "No, no, that's okay. We're fine where we are." So we stayed, and it was great. It was wonderful.

Hazel indicated that Craft was the second school that her grandson had attended while in her care. In the other school she "did not feel comfortable. There was a caste system there, very strongly." Hazel spoke in more detail about her experiences at Craft.

> I have to say, for years, I have never been in a school, I have never gone to a school, had a child in a school, like Craft. I could call that school any time I wanted to, and I never got an attitude of, "Oh you're bothering me. I'm busy. Leave me alone. What's your problem?" And I have to give Craft a lot of credit for that.

The teachers also spoke of the uniqueness of this school, and indicated their agreement with one teacher's comment that "There are a lot of factors that we take for granted here at Craft that are just in place, and you can call it a culture or whatever, but it's not in place at other schools." Many of the teachers agreed with the sentiment of this teacher regarding "the support, the willingness to cooperate, the attitude" at Craft. Another teacher elaborated on the cooperative spirit at Craft.

> I think they [Jim and Sara] entered a building where it is not abnormal to do what you have to do to get the job done. There are very few of us that check in at the last minute and check out at the first minute you can leave. You do the extra meetings and the general kinds of things, we do it and we do lots more than we have to do, we don't count our minutes. Very few people in this building do that. So they entered an environment of joiners and doers and they joined in. They've jumped aboard and gone along with us altogether.

When another teacher commented that, "paraprofessionals are regarded really highly in this building," it provoked the following thoughtful response from a colleague.

> That [comment] just created an idea in my mind. I wonder if it's because Craft has this long history of having special ed classes. We had special ed paras before other schools had paras, and they had a lot of responsibility and were very competent at what they were doing and stayed long term in some of the jobs. They're seen as respected members of the staff, not just pawns or add-on's that you changed every year and didn't have a professional job. So Jim and Sara have stepped

into an environment where they are included as a respected part of the staff.

Another teacher described how she viewed Craft's historical identity as having an impact on the overall culture of partnership within the school.

> There's still a sense of community that is very different than other schools that I've taught in—it's among the children; there's a different feel for how they treat each other. Also, there's a different feel on the part of the parents. You don't see parents being overly concerned that a child with special needs is going to be in their child's class [threatening] to take away from what their child should have. That may exist, but it's not like it is in some places where there could be near revolt if a special needs child is included in the regular classes. And out of that has grown all of the collaboration that people just do naturally. It's just a way of life at Craft.

The teachers concurred with the parents' perspective on the uniquely collaborative climate that exists at Craft. Many of the parents and teachers credited Craft's historical relationship with the district's special education programs for creating an atmosphere that fostered such a cooperative and tolerant environment for children, families and staff. Parents and teachers also credited the administrative style of the principal, Mr. Kenny, as contributing to the uniquely supportive and collaborative climate at Craft. One of the teachers summed up the sentiment of most participants when she stated:

> I was new to this building last year. I taught eleven years prior to this in public schools, and I honestly never experienced a faculty that I thought was more cooperative than this one. I think it's partly a compliment to the faculty that's here, I think it's a compliment to Mr. Kenny and his leadership as a principal. He's definitely skilled in many ways, and he's very supportive. I think it's also a compliment to Jim and Sara's own personality and the comfort with which they work with us. I don't ever get the attitude that somebody thinks they're superior to somebody else around here, or that you should know this, or whatever. It just doesn't happen.

The atmosphere at Craft was described by several of the parents as a feeling of community. In Debbie's words, "Craft seems to be a real tight-knit, tight community, where everybody pitches in and helps out other people." Many teachers said, "We're like a family here," an observation shared by the social worker in the building. When talking about Jim and Sara's rapid adjustment to Craft school, the social worker said, "I think that they feel that they are part of this family here, and I think that this family feels that they are part of them too." The unanimity regarding "the amazingly supportive atmosphere here" certainly is a distinguishing characteristic of this school, and likely has contributed to the successful incorporation of the SLSI project at Craft.

Inquirer's Constructions

From the perspective of the parents, the School-Linked Service Integration project was a very useful and valuable program. Even parents who had not directly received services or support were able to articulate the project's contribution to the overall mission of the school. Helen, a parent who had not received direct services, but knew of the program explained:

> I think it's great. The more that you can make available there, the better it's going to be for all the people and their families. So, I think it's very important. Really vital to a community.

There were several characteristics of the community service educators and the project design that were identified by the parents and teachers as contributing to the success of this project. One crucial component, perhaps the most important to the parents, was the consistent respect, support and validation that parents received when

they worked with Jim and Sara. Parents unanimously described that, with the SLSI project, they were respectfully and effectively treated as deserving consumers of services, and these helping encounters were very different from anything they had experienced with the traditional social service system. The other participants in the research—the teachers, school counselor, social worker, and the principal—also confirmed this perception and reiterated their appreciation for the approach Sara and Jim utilized in their work. Teachers offered that they, too, were impressed to discover that support and resources were actually available with Sara and Jim providing services in the building. They also pointed out and appreciated how having this service had really helped the morale among staff at Craft.

The availability, and hence easy accessibility, of services located in the school was consistently identified by the parents as a sound idea. In addition, the high visibility of the community service educators—positioning themselves in the hallways, greeting people coming and going at the doors, and working in the breakfast room—was another key factor that participants indicated was important to the success of the SLSI project. Parents concurred that having approachable, skillful, and knowledgeable service providers who were easily available and positioned where they could "keep an eye on things" allowed for a much more proactive and preventive approach to the needs of children and families. Most participants agreed that because Jim and Sara were good troubleshooters, they noticed what was occurring and often took the initiative to make initial contacts and follow-up. As such, services were provided on a more timely basis and in a manner that made help easier to get and to accept. All of the parents who had

received services from the traditional system said how wonderful it felt to receive

assistance from Sara and Jim and not be made to feel "like garbage" for needing help.

The autonomy and role flexibility of the community service educators to respond

to individual needs and concerns was consistently viewed as an asset of the program.

The program's flexibility allowed Jim and Sara to fill gaps, respond to immediate needs,

and provide timely assistance that could mitigate the damage caused by problems that

accumulated over time. In addition, services were not limited to an "identified client" in

the sense of restrictive eligibility based on a label or category, or to assistance targeted

only toward the child or children excluding their families. The idea of universal access

and services offered from a holistic perspective resonated with the Craft parents and

staff, who believe that help should be available without restrictive limitations because

everyone needs help at some point in their life. Ava aptly summarized her experience

with the SLSI project by saying that:

> It's not just a kid-school relationship. It's more human. It's everybody's.
> Not just because my kids are in this school. No. It's about being people,
> and helping others. They are not just for my kids. I know that.

And lastly, the parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the idea that services

in schools could help ensure that all students have an opportunity to be successful in

their educational experience. Parents also indicated that they believed that education

involved more than just reading, writing, and arithmetic. In the parents' view, children

needed to be educated for successful lives, which meant learning more than just

academic skills. Many participants suggested that meeting the social/emotional needs of

children in schools was especially critical considering the unpredictable home

environment in which large numbers of children currently reside. Many parents shared

the view that schools, although not necessarily the teachers, could do more for children

and families. The teachers also recognized the connection between the home

environment, the parents' involvement, and a child's success, but many indicated that

teachers could not do more than they currently do. Teachers spoke very highly of what

this demonstration project had brought to their school in terms of services and resources,

and viewed the services as very helpful and supportive of their roles as educators.

All the participants in this study emphasized the uniquely collaborative culture

of Craft School. They indicated that the SLSI demonstration project was both supported

by, and supportive of, the community of caring that existed at Craft. Efforts to integrate

services and link them to schools necessarily require a cooperative/collaborative

environment, if they are to be successful. The participants consistently pointed to the

fact that Craft Elementary School provided this essential environment because of its

culture, and because of the way it was structured and the way it functioned.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study and offers some
interpretations of what can be learned from them. First, I will present my findings and
interpretations in the form of the "lessons learned." Then I will present implications that
these findings hold for social work education and practice, for social policy, and for
public schools. It is my belief that the lessons from this study provide knowledge and
direction, as well as offering hope and some fresh ways of thinking about old ideas.
Hope and revitalized thinking can motivate action to develop a more effective service
delivery system and can enhance services for meeting individual and family needs. The
parents' descriptions of their experiences with this service integration project support my
belief that, with revised strategies, both interpersonal and structural, for service delivery,
we can mitigate risk factors, and simultaneously enhance opportunity for brighter futures
for children and families.

The Lessons Learned

Lesson 1: People are affected by the way they are treated by helping professionals and helping systems; the interaction between consumers and providers of services can have either a positive or negative impact.

Participants in the study provided a great deal of evidence related to the
respectful, conscientious, and genuinely helpful treatment they experienced with the

community service educators. As parents described their encounters with Jim and Sara, they made statements such as, "It's easy to talk to them," and "They don't look down on you," and that "They're actually offering the help." Paula summed up the sentiments of many of the participants when she commented, "If you need anything, they will try their best to get it." Parents identified the consistent demonstration of respect for them as individuals, and the flexible responses to their unique needs as two critical components of the success of this project. This is a critically important lesson that addresses both of the overarching themes from this research; (a) issues related to the delivery of services, and (b) issues related to the design of services. The experience of receiving services is a complex and interwoven dynamic of both the manner of services delivery during direct interaction between consumer and provider, and how the larger systems operate to either enhance or complicate the encounter. This lesson, in many ways, encompasses all the elements of the other lessons learned. Therefore, the discussion of this lesson is expansive and sets the stage for the discussion of the other lessons.

All of the participants in this research who had used traditional services, described experiences with the traditional helping system that mirrored the victim-blaming attitude that has pervaded our current social service system. Parents spoke of feeling as though they were "less than dirt," and "so inferior" when they used the typical service system to get help. An intertwined and dynamic combination of three circumstances has created the social services system that currently exists. The first issue that effects the "felt experience" of using public services is the prevailing negative attitude in this country toward people who seek assistance from outside the informal,

extended family or friendship system most of us can rely on. This judgmental and

pernicious attitude has contributed to the creation of a formal social service system that

is predominantly punitive and victim-blaming. A second factor that has contributed to

the problems with our current helping system is the emphasis on professional

specialization, which has increased the fragmentation of social services. The third factor

is related to the development of intervention approaches which have grown primarily

out of the medical model, with its focus on deficits, weakness, and pathology.

Therefore, by regarding the individual as the source of the problem, we maintain and

perpetuate the belief that the social structural problems that persist are the fault of the

individual.

The combination of these three factors has created a climate in which many

people believe that receiving help from formal social service systems is a privilege for

those deemed "worthy" and not a right as a citizen. The debate over "worthiness" rages

on, meanwhile creating and/or augmenting feelings of unworthiness among those who

must turn to the social service system for help during times of need. The findings of this

study indicate that all of the participants who had experiences with traditional helping

systems were left feeling confused by the maze of agencies and, as one parent described,

feeling "like garbage" because they needed help.

The findings from this study confirm what can be found in the literature

regarding how the current social service system is viewed by most as punitive and

inaccessible (Barker, 1995; Collins, 1996; Gans, 1995; Gordon, 1994; Kirst, 1991;

Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997; Melaville & Blank, 1993; Specht & Courtney, 1994).

There also is some explanation in the literature for how the social service system evolved to this state. There are those who suggest that our welfare system has become "a national scapegoat, accused of supporting, even encouraging, individual weakness, sin, and laziness" (Hoops, Pinderhughes & Shankar, 1995, p. 14). There has been scant attention directed toward the role of structural problems (which include larger social issues such as the economy and unequal access to job opportunities and earnings, as well as the fragmented and inaccessible social service system), and the direct effect of systemic problems on an individual's life. Consequently, we are left blaming individuals for situations that are oftentimes outside of their control.

With this as the backdrop, Hoops et al. (1995) describe an ambivalence and lack of national commitment toward meeting the needs of those who are less fortunate. They contend that another painful outcome of this attitude is that, "Clients are likely to present with feelings of unworthiness, having internalized many attitudes that the public has toward them" (p. 15). It would not be an overstatement to say that there is no longer "a war on poverty" in this country. What seems to be occurring, given the existing intervention philosophies, policies, and strategies that exist, could more aptly be described as, "a war on the poor." In this study the participants' experiences with traditional services made them feel as though they were the problem, rather than feeling like a human being in need of help. It made a dramatic difference to the parents, in terms of their self-efficacy, that the community service educators with the school-linked services integration (SLSI) project treated them, "like a person, they are not treating me like I don't deserve this."

Several things will have to occur if public opinion and the actions that follow are going to change. First, let it be said that, although there are many social services available to citizens in this country, people more commonly associate social services with "welfare," narrowly defined as Public Assistance. As we witnessed the build-up of angst and rhetoric for "welfare reform" that proceeded the repeal of the welfare system in 1996, it became obvious that hardly anyone defended the welfare system. Clinton's presidential campaign in 1992 provides an excellent example of how myths regarding the problems of the poor continue to be perpetuated. Clinton ran on a promise to "end welfare as we know it," and although the crowds loved it, this mantra creates a much different mindset than the promise of ending poverty. What happened, despite what may have been Clinton's sincere interest in real reform, was a reification of the simplistic view of poverty as the result of individual failings. In Schorr's (1997) opinion, Clinton made two serious mistakes.

> First, he talked about welfare in ways that validated distorted views of the nature of the problem and the solution. Second, having caught the voter's attention, he failed to use his unique opportunity to educate the American public about what it would really take to "fix" the welfare system. At a time when the political costs might not have been prohibitive, he did not fight vigorously for what he knew was right. (p. 159)

Schorr (1997) details the many ways that Clinton reinforced the middle-class perception that, for example, the high rates of female-headed households and teenage parenthood were evidence of individuals making poor choices, and of irresponsible individual behavior. And more importantly, in Schorr's (1997) opinion, "The president, and the American people, paid dearly for his failure to use the bully pulpit to rally voters

to support and fund the fundamental changes that I believe he genuinely favored" (p.

160). Clinton missed the opportunity to inform, and to educate people to understand

how complex and difficult life has become, especially for those who must depend upon

public assistance. Instead, he reinforced the popular conservative perspective, and

"sanctioned a simplistic view of poverty as the result of individual failings, and of its

cure as greater individual effort" (Schorr, 1997, p. 160).

This view of "fault," noted by Schorr (1997) and others (Collins, 1996; Gans,

1995; Ginsberg, 1996; Ryan, 1971; Salleebey, 1992) was evident in this inquiry as well.

The parents who had to rely on the traditional helping system hated and resented using

the assistance because it increased their feelings of personal failure and sense of

inadequacy. Parents who had experiences with this system consistently characterized it

as, "terrible," "awful," "really grueling," and "really sad," a system in which clients are,

"not given a chance," "cut down," treated condescendingly as if they "shouldn't be

here," not encouraged "to keep going," and "cut off." Characterizations such as these

support and reiterate what is commonly reported to be the typical experience associated

with receiving services through the traditional system.

The prevailing negative attitude toward those who need assistance coupled with

our professionalized/specialized approach to formal helping, results in a social service

system that feels punitive and disempowering to consumers. In addition, direct services

are often delivered in a manner that reflects similar victim-blaming attitudes held by the

providers who work in the system. In order to address this lesson, I will introduce the

issues related to the design and organization of the service system (and how it effects the

environment in which professionals and consumers operate), which will be more

thoroughly covered in Lesson 3. Then, I will introduce ideas related to intervention

approach, which will be more fully addressed in the discussion related to Lesson 2.

Service System Design

With respect to service design, the social service delivery system has been

complicated by procedures that are designed to ensure that people do not "take

advantage" of the system. Some of the established procedures complicate receiving

services. For example, means-testing, eligibility requirements, lengthy applications, and

the requirement to produce documents that prove diagnosis or disability, were designed

to prevent people from receiving something they are not eligible for and hence do not

"deserve."

The helping system has also been made less responsive and more complicated

by the emphasis on specialization that has resulted in the fragmentation of services. The

influence of Newtonian science, a reductionistic approach to the study of complex

phenomena by breaking them down into their smallest components, is evident in our

approach to complex social problems (Lewis, Lewis, Daniels & D'Andrea, 1998).

Medical science is based on this paradigm, and medical science has subsequently

influenced social science. Medical specialization has fragmented health care to the point

that people must go to one doctor for their throat, another for their hand injury, another

for their stomach problems, and on and on. Likewise, social services, with all its

subspecialties finely categorized by group characteristics or specialized by "the

problem," exist and operate as if they had no connection to each other.

Fragmentation of services will be dealt with in greater detail in Lesson 3.

However, the point to be made here is that the impossibly complicated and fragmented

system routinely results in heightening the sense that individuals are inept and incapable,

thus compounding an already difficult time in their lives. Repeatedly, the present study

found that participants who had utilized the traditional system also experienced it as a

reticular maze of services and programs that seemed nearly inaccessible and often hardly

worth the trouble. Recall how Helen described the traditional service system: "There

wasn't even a central person, it was just a mess...it's not designed for people who aren't

really aggressive and organized." Or, as Beth recalled, "If you don't understand, you're

sunk...I was thinking to myself, at that time, that if I had no education, I would just be

lost, I would just be frustrated and give up." One begins to wonder if endurance is a

prerequisite for eligibility to receive services.

Intervention Approach

The second component of this first lesson is related to the intervention approach

of the direct service provider. Participants in this study identified critical differences in

the helping approach of the community service educators and the services provided

through the SLSI project. Social work has been concerned about the nature of the

helping relationship since the inception of our profession. A great deal has been written

throughout our history about this topic in an effort to articulate the "proper" role of the

helper, and focus of the helping process.

Although the history of social work has been peppered with a cyclical swing

between an emphasis on individual treatment and an emphasis on social reform, the

profession has primarily moved in the direction of increased "professionalization" in order to obtain professional respectability. As we have learned from Robinson (1978), the influence of psychology and psychiatry was evident in social casework as early as 1910. However, after Flexner challenged social work to legitimate itself as a profession in 1915, social work practice has demonstrated the steady and increasing implementation of a medico-scientific approach with a focus on individuals and their problems.

This orientation carries with it a connotation of social worker "as expert." The helping professional then behaves as if (s)he knows more than the person who seeks services and must therefore diagnose a consumer's pathology and prescribe a treatment approach, usually designed to "rehabilitate" the person (Rapp, Kisthardt, Gowdy, & Hanson, 1994; Saleebey, 1992). We have done a great injustice to people by forwarding this notion for two reasons. First, it denies the innate human strength and capacities that people do possess, and second, it ignores the larger social structural problems that have a profound impact on people's opportunities and choices.

To counter this orientation, many social work scholars and practitioners are advocating for an empowerment perspective (Gutierrez, 1990; Pinderhughes, 1994; Rose & Black, 1985; Simon, 1994; Solomon, 1976) and a strengths-based approach (Saleebey, 1992). These ideas will be discussed in Lesson 2.

This first lesson identifies the complexity of the current social service system and the confusion and discouragement that people experience when they must turn to this system for help. The fact that many people who seek help from the public service

system report that they are often left feeling worse for needing assistance, should not be tolerated. The profession of social work can no longer be content to painstakingly "piece people back together," when we are aware that people are being further damaged by the system that they have turned to for help. It is incumbent upon the profession to take a critical look at its intervention methods and system of social service delivery, and to take steps to remedy this faltering helping system.

Lesson 2: The education and training of helping persons needs continuous development in the direction of fostering helping approaches which further strengthen and empower consumers.

Parents in this study reported that, in their various encounters with the community service educators, they were recognized and valued as individuals. They felt respected and trusted, and they were not judged harshly for having difficulties and troubles. What the parents described was a helping approach that worked to maintain or enhance people's capacity to make decisions and remain "in charge" of their own life circumstances. Parents shared many examples of how the approach of the community service educators let them know that these helpers acknowledged and affirmed their efforts to be self-sufficient. In the parents' opinion, Jim and Sara's supportive approach communicated that, "They trust me; they know I'm a fighter; they see how much I'm trying." The active demonstration of belief in the inherent strength and capacity within people is a basic component of a strengths-based approach. Consumers who encounter

this approach experience it as being very different from the deficit approach that underpins the traditional model of helping.

The findings of this study support the argument of Saleebey (1992) Smale (1995) and others, that social workers need to adopt an approach to intervention in which the professional works in partnership with people. There is ample evidence that the posture of "expert status" creates a distance between service providers and consumers that is not conducive to an empowering helping encounter. As Smale (1995) argues:

> Much social work theory assumes that the citizen is a "client," "service user," "patient," or "customer." In any of these roles the person is defined through their relationship with "the professional" or "service provider." The implication is that the person has less knowledge, information, expertise, or resources than the professional. The "citizen" is not an equal person, but the object of concern and so of professional attention. These perceptions of social workers and their "clients" are now obsolete. (p. 72)

I believe that the parents in this study would agree with Smale's assertion. Their comments suggested that the empowering approach utilized by the community service educators had made a substantial difference, in that parents experienced their interventions as supportive and helpful.

An empowerment framework and strengths-based approach could be potentially as "freeing" for social workers as it would be for consumers. A helping approach that respected individual and family strengths would require a redefinition of professional roles that would be more individualized and responsive to unique individual and family needs. Nelson and Allen (1995) describe a potential future in which professionals "no longer seen as the experts responsible for 'fixing' families, use their skills and

knowledge to increase the options families have for dealing with problems and help

remove barriers to change" (p. 112). Given that the professional role is imbued with

power, providers will need to consciously work to equalize and neutralize this inequity

in power in order to operate from an empowerment framework and a strengths-based

perspective.

This lesson underscores the importance of valuing the inherent strength and

capacity that people carry within them. The participants in this study felt supported and

respected by the community service educators who, as Helen put it, made them "feel

like a person. Everyone deserves respect and Jim always conveys that." Several parents

spoke of the respect they sensed from Jim and Sara. The approach that the community

service educators used tapped into the parents' potential and created fertile ground

where they could grow stronger. Their capacity was enhanced, not diminished, by

having had the opportunity to receive services through Jim and Sara.

Lesson 3: We must direct attention toward the social service delivery system to

eliminate fragmentation and to facilitate cooperation among the various social agencies,

in order to meet the multifaceted needs of children and families in a comprehensive,

respectful and timely fashion.

The movement to integrate social services and to link or locate them in schools

has grown out of the recognition that the traditional system, as it currently exists,

presents many obstacles to both consumers and their helpers. The parents who

participated in this study, especially those who had had personal experience with the

traditional system, provided many examples of how difficult it had been to find and access needed resources. Susan's comment that consumers "don't really find that people are rushing forward with information," typified many of the parents' experience. The Craft teachers also spoke of how effective it had been to have services "on hand" compared to what they had routinely encountered. The principal at Craft Elementary School agreed with the parents and teachers, noting that, "SRS is really hard to access...it is a nightmare." The participants in this study unanimously agreed that "the system" needs revision.

It is unrealistic to expect that people who are experiencing stress in their lives will be able to successfully traverse the maze of separate agencies and to endure the reams of complicated paperwork required to receive needed services. Dunkle (1995, cited in Schorr, 1997) presents a poignant example of the daunting task seeking assistance has become when she retells the story of a demonstration staged by the Institute for Educational Leadership.

> In early 1995, the Washington, D.C.-based Institute for Educational Leadership invited federal and state legislators and their staff to step into the shoes of a hypothetical working poor family in San Diego, and apply for help from the major federal, state, and local programs they were presumably eligible for. It turned out that "none of the Ph.D.s, lawyers, elected officials, administrators, or assorted policy wonks participating in the exercise could deal competently with the mounds of paperwork that would face the barely literate Hernandez family." It also turned out that "just about everyone participating in the exercise lied, cheated, or purposefully withheld information (because) it seemed like the only sensible thing to do." (p. 82)

Although it is not likely that agencies have purposely obstructed services, the problems created by the existing bureaucratic strictures must be solved if children and families are to be effectively served.

One of the parents in this study, Paula, reported that she had been able to receive school supplies for her children, "just by mentioning that I was gonna need help with school supplies." As a single mother with four children, Paula had no source of income and was living at the homeless shelter at the time. Her appreciation and genuine relief were evident as she recalled, "When I went down there [to the distribution site] I didn't have to worry about the application or anything. I just told them that Jim had put me on the list... I didn't have to fill out anything, they just gave me what I needed for my kids." Although it seems obvious that a single mother with four children who was new in town, homeless, and unemployed should be eligible for an array of services with a minimum of obstacles, that accessibility is not what the traditional social service system offered. It was only after she had encountered Jim and Sara that helpful connections with available resources were made that allowed her to "get back on her feet."

The complexities of the service delivery system are well documented in the literature (Adams & Nelson, 1995; Adler & Gardner, 1994; Collins, 1996; Dryfoos, 1994; Funiciello, 1993; Gardner, 1994; Hopps, Pinderhughes, & Shankar, 1995; Morris, 1986, Schorr, 1997). Hopps et al. (1995) aptly summarize how the problem effects providers.

> Clinicians must deal with the many complexities in a service delivery system
> that was designed to treat specific categorical problems (food, shelter, disability
> compensation, financial aid) when in reality a holistic, cluster service approach

is needed to address the multiple problems that burden the vast majority of clients. Eligibility for services differs from one program to another, and practitioners must spend an inordinate amount of time unraveling rules and determining what services and what benefits clients are entitled to receive. The location of programs in geographically distant parts of the city complicates access and coordination. Since there is little confidence in public transportation and clients do not usually have reliable cars, clinicians spend hours driving clients to agencies or arranging transportation. (p. 16)

The findings from this study support what Hopps et al. (1995) have asserted. Parents described many situations in which the community service educators functioned as information and referral sources to needed services, helped them get what they needed from agencies and programs, and provided transportation to appointments. They thereby helped to minimize the fragmentation and lack of coordination that existed in the traditional service delivery system.

The literature indicates that one of the primary reasons for the fragmented and uncoordinated system is the categorization of funding based on different client groups and directed toward specific problems. This funding approach also often precludes prevention work, because services are only available after there is a problem, or more often, a crisis. Egan and Cowan (1979) referred to prevention work as "upstream work" based on the well-known metaphor of the difference between rescuing drowning people one at a time (crisis intervention) or going upstream and finding out why they are falling in the river in the first place (prevention). Smale (1995) took this metaphor to another level as he extended the story to demonstrate how categorical funding effects service delivery.

Categorization of funding... leads to a picture of a row of lifeguards lined up on the riverbank, each with a different color hat. Each is able to enter the water

only if the drowning person wears a matching color. People without clothing that matches a colored hat go on down the river. Because they only get paid when they enter the water, none of the lifeguards goes upstream. (p. 59)

Several participants in this study indicated that they viewed the SLSI project as preventative in its orientation. They valued the fact that services had been offered in such a timely manner that smaller and more manageable situations had been prevented from escalating into big problems. The parents explained that because the community services educators had been consistently visible and available in the school, they had noticed that certain children needed help, had identified the need, and had offered services. Parents said that there were times when they did not asked for help; it simply was offered and "really made a difference." The findings from this study supported the idea that a proactive approach and early intervention could prevent troubling situations from escalating into large problems (Adelman, 1996; Bruner, 1996; Gardner, 1996; Hooper-Briar & Lawson, 1994; Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997). As one of the parent's noted, "I can see where this kind of program could help eliminate it [a crisis] from ever occurring. It's more preventative."

This lesson demands that we take a serious and critical look at the design of service, especially the fragmentation of services and intervention based on an existing problem or crisis, which exists in the current system. The fragmentation of services impacts consumers and providers in ways that frustrate and unnecessarily complicate timely intervention. Much of this problem is related to the categorical funding of most social programs, which also typically requires a diagnosable problem, and thus provides

no services aimed at prevention. These are issues that the service integration movement intends to directly address.

Lesson 4: Direct service providers need autonomy and discretion in determining, in partnership with consumers, what consumers need and how their needs will be addressed.

One of the distinct advantages of the project, which was identified by parents and teachers alike, was the freedom that the project granted Jim and Sara to identify needs, and to implement strategies that they determined to be appropriate. Their ability to provide services was not restricted to narrowly defined categories of need or criteria of eligibility. They also were freed from having to channel all their decisions through a burdensome hierarchy of authority in order to get "approval" from supervisors to provide services. Consequently, the community service educators were able to do things that needed to be done, to provide a range of services that was tailored to meet the unique needs of the children and families they served, and to ensure that families got what they needed from the available services in the community.

Parents spoke enthusiastically about the range of resources and services they received directly through Sara and Jim, as well as about the referrals and connections to other services and resources that were available in the community. The teachers who participated in this study also remarked on how unique it was that Jim and Sara were able to "just do what needed to be done," and how important their freedom had been to the success of the program. The teachers also provided examples of how the flexibility

and discretion that Jim and Sara had been granted to identify what was needed and then to act on it, had resulted in a wide variety of services that was available to them, as well as to the children and parents at Craft.

Such flexibility is an unusual occurrence in the traditional social services system. The bureaucratic red tape that exists in many organizations makes it nearly impossible to provide the types of services or interventions that could actually make a difference in a family's situation. Light's (1995) report of a Veteran's Administration hospital with sixty-three layers of decision-making between the nurses and the top administrators is a sterling example of the maze of rules and clearances that confront many front line workers.

The rules and regulations that permeate government and other social agencies were originally created to prevent corruption and to ensure that, with standards and consistent application of universal rules, all people would be treated equally. However, as Schorr (1997) noted, agencies are getting in their own way by creating layers of regulations that interfere with getting the job done.

> We are so eager, as a body politic, to eliminate the possibility that public servants will do anything wrong that we make it virtually impossible for them to do anything right. The restraints we impose on those entrusted with public funds to help us educate our young, keep them healthy, protect them from abuse and neglect, keep our streets safe and our communities livable, and buffer families against economic distress may keep them from doing bad things but will more surely keep them from doing good things. We have pretty much set it up so that only risk-takers and saints are able to accomplish public purposes. (p. 65)

Too often, direct providers are left feeling as though their hands are tied and they are unable to provide what families really need. The delivery of needed services is

further constrained by providers who then become locked into focusing only on the function that is prescribed by their agency or job description. Hagedorn (1995) contends that this concentration on specialized functions could cause providers to overlook the needs of the whole family and/or to not deal with the immediate problem. As director of child welfare in Milwaukee, Hagedorn sat in on a meeting with three professionals working with one family. In this meeting, the social worker from the Department of Social Services addressed the teenager's gang activity, the school social worker expressed concern about how frequently the seven-year-old was absent from school, and the school nurse complained that the children's clothes were not clean when they did come to school. Hagedorn asked the mother what she was concerned about, and she said it was the electricity. Although all three of these professionals had been aware that this family had been without electricity for six weeks, none had intervened with the electric company to get the electricity turned back on, because it was not in his or her job description. Even the most caring and conscientious service providers could become unsure about what they are "supposed" to do in unique situations, if they are not granted the opportunity to make decisions about appropriate interventions.

This lesson teaches us that the helping system is paying a huge price in terms of effectiveness and relevance in order to protect itself from being accused of doing anything wrong. The bureaucratic strictures and red tape have bound this system so tightly that direct service providers often cannot act on the immediate and unique needs of consumers. Freedom to think creatively, flexible rules and roles, and discretionary

funds and decision-making must be available to direct providers if they are expected to provide effective service packages to meet the multifaceted needs of families.

Lesson 5: The role and mission of schools must be reconsidered in light of the expanding needs of children. Public schools offer an existing organization that could be restructured and utilized to better meet the needs of children and families.

Participants in this study overwhelmingly believed that schools could and should provide more services to meet needs of children and families. Several of the parents expressed the concern that there are many children who are not able to take advantage of their school experience because of troubles and problems at home. Because these parents truly valued education as an avenue out of poverty and toward a brighter future, they did not want children's educational opportunities to be compromised by difficulties at home which could be overcome by services at school. The parents' belief in the school's ability to make a difference is echoed by Schorr (1997) when she declared, "Today we know that schools are able to change outcomes among children from profoundly disadvantaged family backgrounds" (p. 141).

There is extensive support for expanding the role of schools to include social services that are commonly needed by children and families (Adelman, 1996; Adelman & Taylor, 1996; Adler & Gardner, 1994; Alexander & Entwisle, 1996; Barbour & Barbour, 1997; Bruner, 1996; Cibulka & Kritek, 1996; Crowson & Boyd, 1993; Dryfoos, 1994; Epstein, 1995; Gardner, 1996; Gaston & Brown, 1995; Hoover & Achilles, 1996; Kirst, 1991; Kozol, 1991; Lerner, 1995; Rigsby, Reynolds, & Wang,

1995; Sailor, Kleinhammer-Tramill, Skrtic, & Oas, 1996; Skrtic & Sailor, 1996; Tyack, 1992). As Dryfoos (1994) stated,

> Agreement is strong that the school should be an active partner in collaborative efforts, and the idea that school facilities should serve as the place for the provision of noneducational support services of all kinds is rapidly gaining support. (p. 11)

Educators recognize that schools face a daunting challenge in educating students who suffer so many conditions of risk in their lives. Rigsby (1995) asserts, "School leaders have come to understand more than ever before that they must seek collaboration with agencies of the larger society because educators lack both the expertise and the resources to effectively control forces external to schools" (p. 4). The participants in this study all supported the idea of providing social services in schools.

Many of the parents expressed the expectation that education should encompass more than "reading, writing, and arithmetic." Based on this perspective, they articulated a belief that schools already had an obligation to educate children for successful lives, not just for academic accomplishment. However, several parents, teachers, and the principal at this school, acknowledged that even the more modest goal of academic success might not be possible for some children if there were no support services available to help them. There are strong and articulate voices advocating for services in schools. Dryfoos (1994) speaks for many of these voices in her comprehensive examination of this situation.

> During the final decade of this century, the pendulum is swinging far back to school-based programs as schools struggle to educate children who can only be educated if they also receive a wide array of health and social services. Currently, the AMA, as well as every other major national social and health

organization, supports the concept that community agencies should bring services into schools. This does not imply that the arrangements that produce collaborative school-community programs are easily organized and implemented, but merely that there is little opposition in the private sector to developing innovative responses to what are increasingly viewed as crisis situations. Along with these changes in perceptions about roles, there is a growing demand for "integration" of services, reducing the fragmentation of existing service systems for families. (p. 42)

This lesson forces us to recognize that we are not likely to achieve our goal of successfully preparing children for the future if we do not reconsider the importance of public schools and support them in restructuring their mission to include integration of social services. The findings of this study support the position of Dryfoos and others that, "Children's achievement and overall success at schools cannot be divorced from the rest of their lives" (Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997, p. 8). We also know that schools cannot be all things to all people, nor can they "do it alone." New relationships among schools, families, communities, and health and social agencies will be required in order to share the responsibility of effectively educating children for successful lives.

Summary of the Lessons

The lessons learned from this study center around the notion that the design and delivery of social services is in need of an overhaul. It is essential that social work recommit to its longstanding dual-focus mission of assisting consumers in obtaining resources and of working to make social institutions more humane and responsive to human needs. The implications of this study, confirmed in the literature, suggest that the current movement to address the need for systemic reform in service design and

delivery, is achieving some success. The school-linked service integration initiative entails new partnerships among families, community agencies, government, universities, the private sector, and schools. To create these interactions will not be an easy or simple process. This movement presents an opportunity for social work to assume a leadership role that supports reform initiatives. The history of our profession is rooted in such integrative, community-based thinking.

There is widespread interest in creating a more effective social service delivery system. This includes a vision of schools as viable centers for service delivery and as hubs of a community. The lessons from this study indicate that better future outcomes for families hinge on children's learning and performance in schools. Their success in school depends on their health, development, and well-being, which, in turn, hinges on the well-being of their families and communities. Because the problems that individuals and families face are complex and interrelated, we must think of the helping system more like a web of connected services and resources—formal and informal—that is easily accessible and can respond to unique individual and family needs. Creating this kind of responsive, accessible and effective social service system will have implications for social work education and practice as well as for social policy.

Implications/Recommendation for Social Work Education and Practice

The helping professions, whether health related, educationally focused, or directed toward meeting social service needs, are confronting ever-increasing numbers of at-risk families, while simultaneously witnessing a decrease in public support and

financing. There are initiatives being tested that are designed to address the needs of children and families who lack access to needed services. These initiatives also direct attention to reforming the traditional social service system which has become punitive, fragmented, agency specific, and nearly inaccessible. The school-linked service integration demonstration project at Craft Elementary School is an example of these initiatives. From the research I developed the following implications/recommendation for social work education and practice.

First, **social work must emphasize an empowerment framework and a strengths-based approach to practice**. The participants in this study consistently identified the intervention style of the community service educators as a critically important, possibly the most important, aspect of this project. The fact that parents had been treated with trust, respect, and "like anybody else " rather than having been labeled, diagnosed and stigmatized enhanced the experience of receiving services for the participants in this study. This finding reinforces social work's need to reconsider its intimate connection with the medical model of intervention. This diagnostic approach, which has evolved as part of our push toward professionalism, has directed our attention toward seeing the deficits, pathologies, and problems as being within people. There certainly is a place for diagnostic skills, especially if there is a medical or psychological condition that can be treated. However, helping interventions need to be designed to facilitate the empowerment of individuals in order for them to be able to maintain as much control in their lives as is possible. The design of these interventions must be a collaborative project for professionals and those they serve. The road to healthy

interdependence and self-sufficiency is built on the foundation of helping interactions that support individual capacity and opportunity.

Second, the emphasis on specialization needs to be reconsidered and the concept of social work generalist rekindled. Social workers require a general foundation in their education and training that will enable them to interact knowledgeably and successfully with a variety of people, social systems, and social institutions. Baer (1979) stated that social work generalists have the "ability to intervene in a variety of situations, utilizing intervention modes that are most appropriate to the particular situation" (p. 154). The ability to see "the big picture," to think creatively, and to respond flexibly were hallmarks of the work of the community service educators in this study. According to the participants, Jim and Sara's ability to provide services, to suggest resources, to involve parents, and to make referrals and connections to available community agencies and programs was immeasurably helpful to them.

Third, social work needs to enhance educational curricula that stress prevention strategies as well as education and training for interdisciplinary and interagency collaboration. The findings of this study suggest that these participants recognize that services, as they are typically provided by the current social service system, are too often not available until there is a crisis. Parents said that they highly valued the placement of the community service educators in the school because this allowed them to "watch for things" and to "pick up a lot" or to "notice which people are worse off" so that services could be offered when problems were more manageable. The parents' observation speaks to a common complaint of those in the helping

profession that there is little opportunity to intervene when situations are stressful or high-risk. The helper's ability to intervene is often constrained by the requirement that there be evidence of an existing and identifiable "problem," usually a crisis. Lawson and Briar-Lawson (1997) lament that, "Few schools have been prepared for the reality that 75-90 percent of services are available to children and families only after a crisis has occurred—for example, only after the child is psychotic or suicidal, the abuse has occurred or the assault has been committed" (p. 34). This research study indicates that the opportunity to catch situations early and prevent small difficulties from becoming large problems makes a great deal of sense when trying to build long-term success for and with individuals and families.

Likewise, although social workers historically have emphasized their role as "team players," that role typically has been as a part of intra-agency staffings and treatment teams, not interagency collaborations among diverse agencies with various and sometimes disparate goals, philosophies, and approaches. Preservice training for all human service professionals, including teachers, has lacked this necessary ingredient— the ability to be a part of an interdisciplinary team that includes other professionals and consumers. Social work education and practice could lead the way by initiating training programs for creating successful collaborative initiatives.

Fourth, **social work education and practice must also address the social structural problems that effect people's lives. It is time to reactivate the dual focus of our history and emphasize social reform as well as individual and family intervention.** It is important that social work begin to address the structural problems in

social systems in an effort to both call attention to the impact systemic problems have on people, and to remedy this situation. In this way, social work can educate the public that individuals who need assistance are not to be blamed for situations that are outside their control. As one of the parents, Mary, said, "Parents aren't really in a position to access all the resources...they don't know...and it's overwhelming. What is happening at Craft should be set up in the whole entire community, otherwise it's almost like the system blames the parents when things go wrong." It is important for social workers to advocate for individual consumers, but they must also advocate for system reform. As an example from this study, the community service educators helped to gain permission for a child with disability to use the school gym on weekends. In this process, they recognized that all children at Craft, not just "the identified client," should be allowed to use the gym on Saturdays. Effective social work practice would address the needs of the individual (or family), but also the rules and policies that limited access to resources or service.

Finally, **social work practice must also work to inform and shape social policy.** It is imperative that the philosophy and practice of social work be instrumental in creating and supporting justice-based policies that allow for the strengthening and empowering of citizens who must rely on public assistance, be it temporarily or for their lifetime. This topic is addressed more fully in the following section.

Implications/Recommendations for Social Policy

Social policy is the mechanism which creates the opportunity, structure, and funding for social programs. Most formal services would not exist if there were no social policy to authorize their development or financially support the programs. The lessons learned from this research have implications for the development of social policy.

First, **social policy must be implemented to move the service delivery system in the direction of equality and justice-based services.** Efforts must be made, through social policy, to eradicate the punitive and victim-blaming system that currently exists. Policies must be in place that allow people to receive services as part of their rights as citizens, for as long as it takes for them to reach an operating level of self-sufficiency. These policies could also function to help eliminate the damaging myths about people who need assistance which permeate public opinion in this society.

Second, **social policies which have been shaped by the philosophy of the medical model, with its focus on pathology, and the limitation of services only to diagnosed disorders, must be revised.** The participants in this research suggested that there needs to be more emphasis on preventing social problems than on reacting to them. As one parent said, "I can see where this kind of program could eliminate it [a crisis] from ever occurring. It's more preventative." In Susan's estimation, "If they are watching for the beginnings of problems, and you could cut that out, you save the kid and the family, everyone, in the long run, a lot of time and anguish." Susan articulated the philosophy of all those who believe, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of

cure," when she stated, "If we make this small investment now, and we support the child, we get it back."

We must develop social policies that encourage, reward, and fund prevention efforts, not stymie them. Our current social policies, too frequently, allow us only to be able to react to a problem. We continue to live with social policies that have resulted in spending money to build more prisons and institutions as an intervention response, when we need to create policies that develop and fund programs that would render prisons and institutions unnecessary.

Third, **we must create social policies that allow flexible funding for programs and agencies, and eliminate policies that categorically fund programs and contribute to fragmenting services.** The problem of fragmentation of services has been well-documented in the literature and has been reflected in this research study as well. Policies that categorically fund programs have contributed to the maze of social agencies that people must navigate in order to adequately address complex individual and family needs. It is a very real problem for both consumers of services with needs and for providers who are limited in what they can realistically offer under the present system. It is particularly important to have policies that allow for discretionary funds which can be accessed by direct, front line workers to meet the unique needs of consumers.

Fourth, **we must create social policies that encourage and reward collaborative endeavors among various social agencies.** Currently, the "scarcity model" encourages agencies to be competitive, rather than cooperative, for the limited

and diminishing funds that are made available. Policies need to be developed that support efforts to integrate service delivery and which encourage collaboration among agencies in order to more effectively and efficiently meet human needs.

Finally, **we need to develop social policies that work to eliminate the bureaucratic "red tape" that inappropriately limits eligibility, delays service delivery, or complicates maintaining necessary services.** Social policy could be implemented that would streamline the application, intake, and eligibility process that encumbers many services and agencies. It would also be possible to create "single point of entry" intakes where, if a person is deemed eligible for a particular service, (s)he is automatically eligible for the array of services that would be logically connected. Many of the bureaucratic strictures that prevent timely and effective services could be eliminated through new policy development.

Implications/Recommendations for Schools

A central component of this research was the notion of improving the learning, healthy development and well-being of children, thus leading to brighter outcomes for their future by uniting two important national reform movements; social service system reform and school reform. The school-linked service integration movement is an initiative specifically designed to join together both the social service system's commitment and the educational system's commitment to enhance outcomes for children and families. This research study showed that these initiatives entail new

relationships among schools, families, communities, and social service agencies, which has implications for the roles of schools.

First, **schools must recognize and act on the view that they have <u>children</u> in their care, not simply students.** The consequence of educators viewing children simply as students, aside from the impact of failing to understand a child's behavior within his/her own culture and context, is that they are likely to see the family as being separate from the school. This separation creates a belief that families have to do "their job" of raising children so that schools can do "their job" of educating them. This view is erroneous and potentially lethal to children's lifelong success, and it must be changed. Epstein (1995) describes the relationship between families, communities, and schools as, "overlapping spheres of influence" (p. 702) and believes that all three must work in a partnership that recognizes their shared interest in and responsibility for children.

Consistent with what can be found in the literature, the research participants stated their belief that a child's academic success and overall achievement cannot be divorced from the rest of his or her life. The parents in this study also articulated their belief that it was "in the school's best interest" to get involved in meeting the needs of children. Susan described it as "kind of short-sighted to pretend that a kid not having snow boots doesn't have an impact on them." Or, as Debbie stated, "If you stop and think about it, those test scores and everything are partly due to the home environment, and what kind of environment you live in." And to Beth it seemed obvious to the point of absurdity that, "If you see a child coming in every day, and you know they are not getting any breakfast…they can't learn."

The principal posed his contention that schools "are really changing, and they are really becoming more of a community than just a school." Principal Kenny openly stated his belief that "unless you provide for those other types of needs, we are not going to be able to do the educational things." His enlightened perspective about the nature of schools undoubtedly contributed to the successful incorporation of this service initiative at Craft School. Teachers also voiced their awareness that education does not occur in isolation from a child's lived experience. One of the teachers voiced a common concern among teachers when she talked about the steadily increasing demand on teachers' time and energy. Yet, in describing a situation where a family could not be engaged to work with the school, she lamented, "We're just focusing on the child...but that's really hard because you know that the home situation is causing the problems that the child is having."

The participants in this study consistently acknowledged that a shared sense of responsibility must be engendered among schools, families, service agencies, and communities to enhance successful outcomes for children. There is support in the literature for the notion that school/agency/community partnerships can create climates that support, guide, and motivate children to succeed. As Epstein (1995) argues, "If children feel cared for and encouraged to work hard in their role of student, they are more likely to do their best to learn to read, write, calculate, and learn other skills and talents and to remain in school" (p. 702). In order for schools to more effectively meet their students' needs, they must be oriented to believing that they have children in their care.

Second, schools must devise methods to welcome and involve all families, not just those who are easy to reach. This research study indicated that participants valued the role that Jim and Sara played in enhancing the relationship between the families and the school. It was widely recognized and appreciated, by parents and school personnel (the teachers, as well as the principal, school counselor and social worker) alike that the community service educators facilitated a great deal of contact, and forged connections with families on many different levels. Parents described how "They have been the ones to keep in contact with me," and teachers declared, "Sara and Jim will go out, they will meet with parents on a Saturday here, or whatever they need to do," to create and maintain the connections.

Parent involvement is important in order to both improve children's learning and academic success, and to support schools and teachers in general. Although it is well documented that just about all teachers and administrators would like to involve families, many are unsure about how to go about building positive programs to do so, especially with "hard-to-reach" families (Adelman, 1994; Epstein, 1995; Hooper-Briar & Lawson, 1994; Sailor, Kleinhammer-Trammil, Skrtic, & Oas, 1996).

Attention must be given to recognizing various kinds of involvement and promoting a variety of opportunities for parents, schools, and communities to work together. The findings from this study indicated that the availability of supportive services in the school, and the willingness of Jim and Sara to reach out to reluctant parents, promoted more connections and involvement of parents with the school. Sara and Jim used many creative and innovative techniques for involving parents and

rewarding them for their efforts. One of the parents, Beth, provided an example as she described how Jim and Sara, "put up little blue medals when parents volunteer for anything, whether it be clean-up day, reading in class, going on field trips, whatever, any kind of volunteerism, they put their name up on a board on a little blue ribbon." The community service educators were able to find ways, as Mary stated, to "build in reinforcement for parents to help entice them to want to participate and change." There is much to be learned from their example.

Third, **teacher education programs, and advanced degree programs for teachers and administrators, must include education and training which helps them define their professional work in terms of partnership.** The parents in this study identified the fact that teachers would need training and support to work more cooperatively with other services, especially if they are going to adequately address the needs of the students who have various, sometimes severe, impediments to learning. Teachers also require training and strategies to enable them to reach, engage, and work with parents, and to collaborate with the array of service providers that may need to be involved to ensure success. Mary articulated her concern that "Teacher preparation needs to start looking at the changes in our society and what contributes to those changes" so that teachers can be more prepared to address the learning needs of children. As she described, "Educating is the whole person, it's integrating successfully into society, and contributing, and learning about reciprocity...and I think that needs to be addressed in teacher competencies and the curriculum to meet those competencies."

Teachers play a pivotal role in meeting the educational needs of children, but they cannot be social workers, counselors, and health professionals. Support services must be made easily available to teachers. However, teachers and administrators are at a disadvantage when it comes to making appropriate referrals because their preservice orientation lacks a frame of reference as to the what, when, and how of involving services for their pupils (Pennekamp, 1992). In fact, Pennekamp suggests that this problem goes both ways, in that, "Future teachers and administrators and future support staff are trained in isolation from each other and largely outside of each other's awareness" (p. 126). Without knowledge of what other professions have to offer each other or strategies for connecting services, the ideal of a seamless system of care that could really make a difference, does not exist. In order to remedy this, training for interdisciplinary and interagency teamwork and collaboration must become a main ingredient in the education and training for all the human service professions, which includes educators.

Finally, **schools, with the help of families and communities, need to work to create caring educational environments for all children.** Schools need to establish and cultivate a belief that all children are able to learn, and that all have strengths. Differences in children's abilities, race, ethnicity, and social class, must become simply differences to respond to with individualized learning approaches and culturally congruent teaching-learning materials and classroom environments. Many of the participants in this research remarked on the uniqueness of Craft School in addressing children's differences without stigma or reproach. Beth described how there were many

children at Craft with special needs, "but I don't think those kids are singled out like they are at some schools." She appreciated how differences were not seen "as a bad thing... it's a difference, it's not a problem."

Teachers also identified that Craft "has a sense of community that is very different than other schools" and that this difference could be seen in how the children treated each other, as well as on the part of the parents. As one teacher put it, "There's a different feel on the part of the parents. You don't see parents being overly concerned that a child with special needs is going to be in their child's class." Several participants identified Craft's long history with special education programs as part of the explanation for the climate of acceptance and cooperation that existed. This cooperative climate was seen as a real strength of this school, contributing to both the success of the students, and to the successful implementation of the SLSI project. The importance of accepting differences and initiating positive contact with families, not just contact around problems, cannot be overstressed in terms of fostering a nurturing, educational environment.

Implications/Recommendations for Further Research

The findings from this research study suggest implications for research relative to methodological issues and suggestions for future research questions.

First, in terms of methodology, the complexity of comprehensive collaborative services for children and families requires **a new vision for research that emphasizes wide participation and a collaborative relationship between those studied and those**

conducting the research. As was demonstrated in this research, in order to gain understanding of the complex forces that shape integrated, comprehensive service initiatives, it is necessary to engage multiple, as well as divergent participants' perspectives. In this research study, data were gathered from a wide variety of participants. Interviews were conducted with the parents (who were selected using maximum variation sampling), the school principal, the community service educators, the school counselor, and the school social worker. In addition, data were also gathered from critical dialogues that were conducted with the teachers. This broad based approach to data gathering was deemed necessary because integrated, comprehensive, collaborative service efforts inevitably involve the perspectives of different participants. In addition, this study viewed the perspective of consumers (a voice often lost in traditional research methods) as being particularly relevant to understanding what was occurring in this service integration initiative.

Also, because service integration initiatives are complex and can take so many different forms based on the unique needs of the community, it makes sense to emphasize description of particular examples of comprehensive, collaborative service initiatives. To this end, Knapp (1995) suggests that qualitative "thick descriptions" are particularly appropriate. "Qualitative techniques are especially helpful in illuminating what collaborative arrangements mean to participants, how such efforts differ from service-as-usual, and what the nature of collaboration is (Knapp, 1995, p. 11). Consequently, the qualitative approach of constructivist inquiry was utilized in this research in order to honor the multiple perspectives of the participants, to value the

interaction among all the participants, and to value the interaction between the participants and myself as the inquirer. Service integration initiatives, such as this school-linked service integration project, have called into question the tendency to rely on traditional experimental research designs as the method of choice for acquiring reliable research data.

Second, there are several questions which were raised by this study that indicate a need for further research. The following list includes some of these questions.

1. What "measures" will be used to determine if school-linked service integration initiatives are "successful"? Given that improved outcomes for children and families is a monumental, as well as long-term, goal, what are some interim measures that can be incorporated into projects to determine that initiatives are "on the right track"?

2. How can local communities be more fully involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating service integration initiatives? What avenues exist for incorporating the families, neighbors, school personnel, and local social services professionals as equal participants in shaping specific programs to meet their unique needs?

3. What can be done to impact legislation and policy in order to provide flexible funds for these new initiatives?

4. Can these programs "afford" to provide services to any and all families who are members of the community school? Will restrictive eligibility and an application process be necessary if the program expands?

5. And finally, what role will social work play in shaping and facilitating this imperative and innovative attempt to reform the social service delivery system? And how will the role of the school social worker be reformed in order to meaningfully contribute to this initiative?

Limitations of this Study

Given the idiographic nature of constructivist methodology, this study is limited in terms of direct generalization of the findings to other settings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As was described in Chapter 3, readers who are interested in making a transfer must reach their own conclusions about the degree of similarity or "fit" between this context and another setting in order to determine if a transfer can appropriately be made.

Likewise, one could question whether or not the school-linked service integration project at Craft Elementary School really did unfold in the manner that the participants described. However, based on the criterion of trustworthiness (see Chapter 3) established by Lincoln and Guba (1995) and Skrtic et. al. (1985), I did endeavor to conduct this study in a manner that would provide some measure of credibility throughout the inquiry. I also made every effort to present the findings and describe the methods in sufficient detail that any reader (be (s)he a consumer, practitioner, researcher, or policy-maker) could evaluate the findings as well as the research process that I used.

Conclusion:

It Does Take a Whole (read Intact/Complete) Community to Raise a Child

What we can learn from this research study is both profound and logical. It only makes sense that the manner in which people are treated effects the process and the outcome of the helping encounter. The experience of receiving help is impacted by both the skills and the techniques of the direct service provider, as well as by the responsiveness of the social service system. This is not a new insight, yet it would appear that we must have lost sight of what we once knew. Current efforts to improve service delivery by integrating social services and linking them to schools represents the latest wave of initiatives designed to reform social services, to enhance educational opportunities, and to thereby improve outcomes for children and families.

Before the inspirational African proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" was relegated to a pithy sound bite by media and campaign spinmeisters, it connoted a belief in our shared responsibility for, and a commitment to, our children (Benson, 1996). As we face continuing and escalating rates of children and families at-risk, we must recognize the fact that "business-as-usual" will not stem the tide of "rotten outcomes" (Schorr, 1988) which dims the future of too large a percentage of America's children. Franklin and Streeter (1995) remind us that, "Both public schools and human services are being challenged to rethink and redesign their efforts to educate, socialize, and intervene in the problems of children and their families" (p.773). This challenge will require whole communities, which includes families, schools, neighborhoods, social

agencies, universities, and government, to work collaboratively and conscientiously to save our children, especially those who are most at risk of being wasted.

The school-linked service integration movement is premised on the fact that we can no longer expect individual families, or schools, or a service agency or provider to "do it all." A family-focused, community driven, school-based approach to service delivery, that is capable of bringing parents into new roles of power and self confidence, will be required in order to help schools accomplish our shared mission. There is no single model for collaborative school-linked services. Programs must emerge from the needs of the children and families in local communities (Levy & Shepardson, 1992). However, much can be learned from examples that can be found in the existing and growing literature and from this research study. Knowledge of what needs to occur and suggestions about what can be done are available. The task that remains is to take action. As Lerner (1995) describes it, "The agenda is clear and the means to achieve it appear available. We need only the will" (p. 128). It is my hope that the findings from this research inquiry will provide enough knowledge to inspire the will to take action towards this end.

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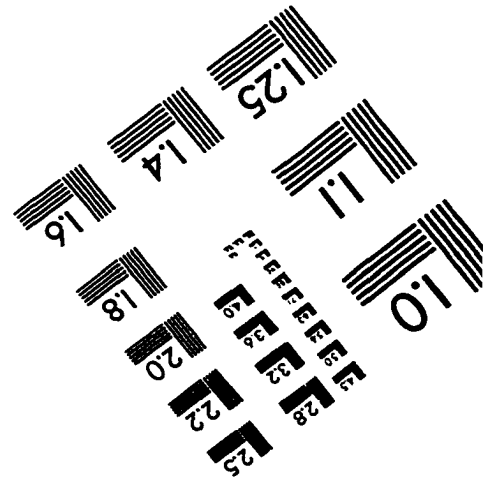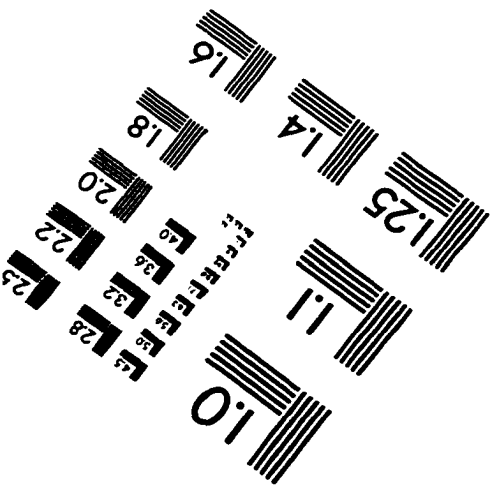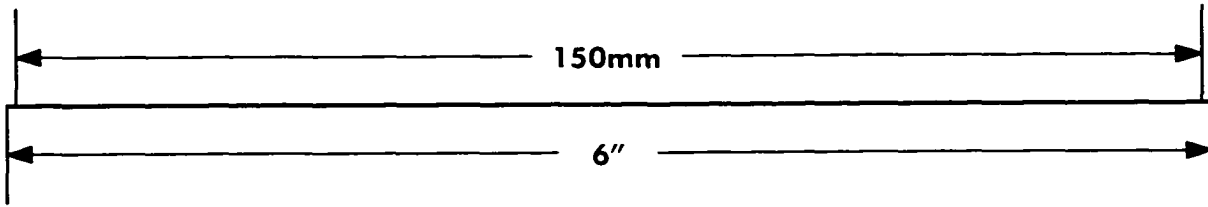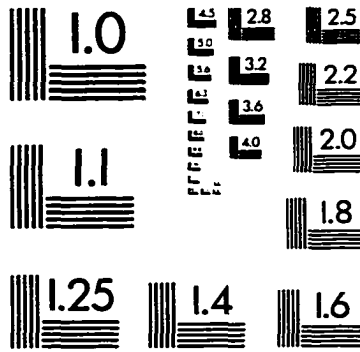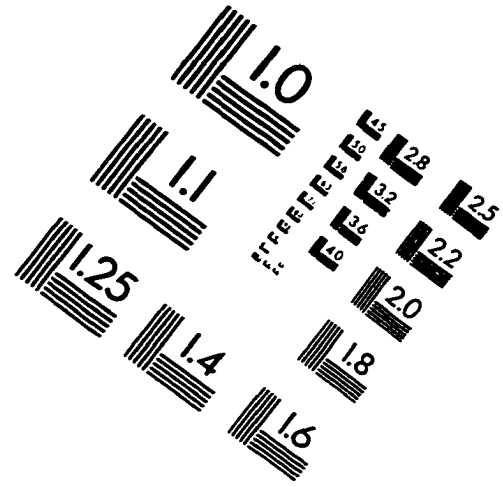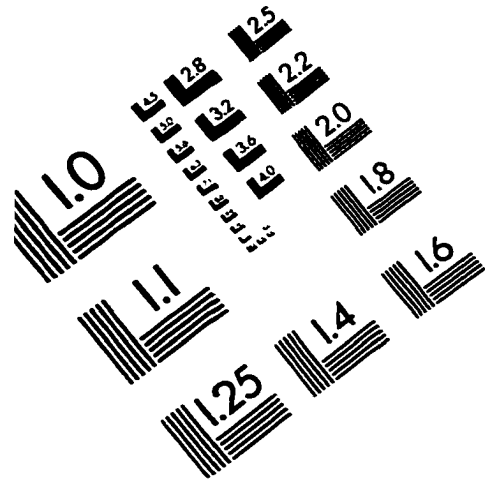
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