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A Study Of The Decision To Remove Children From Their Parents By Child Welfare Supervisors

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DISSERTATION APPROVAL

A STUDY OF THE DECISION TO REMOVE CHILDREN FROM THEIR PARENTS BY CHILD
WELFARE SUPERVISORS

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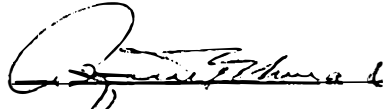
ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE DECISION TO REMOVE CHILDREN FROM
THEIR PARENTS BY CHILD WELFARE SUPERVISORS

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Aqueel Ahmad", written over a horizontal line.

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirement for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

WALDEN UNIVERSITY

August 1992

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF THE DECISION TO REMOVE CHILDREN FROM THEIR PARENTS BY CHILD WELFARE SUPERVISORS

by Charles F. Lorbeer

Faculty Adviser: Aqueil Ahmad

The goal of this study was to analyze the decision by child welfare supervisors to remove children from their parents. This was accomplished by studying the effect that three specific factors have on that decision. The three factors were 1) physical abuse, 2) domestic violence and substance abuse, and 3) availability of services to help the family.

Decision theory provided the conceptual framework for understanding the microstructure and interplay of variables involved in a decision. Decision theory was viewed within the context of the current functioning of the child welfare system. The goal was to present an integrated approach that led to development of a scale that was used to rate specific factors that this research studied. Emphasis was placed on survey research methods to help determine decision making factors used by managers.

Eighty-seven child welfare supervisors were surveyed from the northeast region of the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. The prediction that a combination of factors of physical abuse and domestic violence/ substance abuse would increase the certainty of a manager removing a child from his parents was confirmed by data. The prediction that the likelihood of managers removing a child from his/her parents is greater with evidence of severe physical injury to the child than with presence of only general domestic violence and substance abuse by parents was not supported by data. The prediction that certainty of managers removing a child from his/her parents increases with lack of services (such as daycare, in-home intensive counseling, and availability of the agency worker) was confirmed by data.

As a consequence of this study, useful information was provided for those interested in protective services for children, e.g., social workers, managers, students, lawyers, child advocates, and society as a whole.

Analysis of demographic and attitudinal variables indicated a relationship to decision making. The variables that were analyzed included the influence of manager's gender, number of children, attitude toward spanking, history of spanking, and their opinion on importance of problems

and solutions to challenges within the system.

Completion of the project has contributed to the knowledge base of the management of child protective services. A contribution to the understanding of how the system currently works, and suggestions for social change within the profession have been made. Findings of this study point to the continued need for the implementation of specific criteria to guide supervisory decision making. Formulation of sound decision making guides will not only increase the supervisor's competence when deciding to remove children from a parent(s), but will also help to improve the efficacy of decisions for both removal and non-removal interventions.

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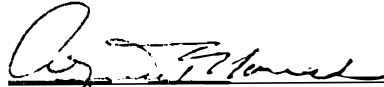
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1. INTRODUCTION

The proper attachment of children to their parents is one of the most important aspects of human development. The early parent-child relationship is a vital and necessary phase of growth (Wasserman and Rosenfeld, 1986). One of the great aspirations of modern psychology is to comprehend the infant-mother bond (Karen, 1990). Unfortunately, our modern society has seen an epidemic of maltreated children who have not had a healthy bond with their parents. There are over 2 million reports of abuse and/or neglect of children each year in the United States. About 10% of these reports are categorized as serious, and up to 5000 children die each year (Jellinek, et al., 1992). The child welfare system has responded by forcibly removing thousands of children from their parents each year. "The removal of a child from his or her natural parents is one of the gravest actions that can be taken by a democratic society that highly values both individual and family rights. Child removal is the ultimate intrusion into the privacy and sanctity of family life" (Pelton, 1989, p. 47). This removal severs the primary bond between the child and his/her parents, and often leads to a variety of emotional problems as children 'drift' in the

foster care system through a variety of 'temporary' placements (Murphy, et al., 1991, p. 198). At what point does the abuse and/or neglect by parents become so severe that the child welfare system believes that it is in the children's best interest to be removed from their parents? This is the crucial question.

Young children have no right of self-determination due to their age. Therefore, they depend on others to intercede if their parents are severely abusing and/or neglecting them. The authority of government to remove abused and/or neglected children from their parents has its precedent deep in the roots of American history. The children of the poor have been the most affected, both past and present. During the 1600s the laws of Virginia, Massachusetts, and Connecticut authorized magistrates to remove children from poor families without parental consent. It is unclear how often this power was used. However, the town records of Watertown, Massachusetts "show that in 1671 Edward Sanderson's two oldest children were bound as apprentices 'where they may be educated and brought up in the knowledge of God and some honest calling.' The reason given: poverty" (Mnookin, 1973, p. 603).

By the early 1800s, the states' power to look after the best interests of children who were unable to protect themselves was considered sufficient to enable the courts to

remove a child from the custody of its parents (Mnookin, 1973). "Child removal was a major strategy for dealing with dependent and neglected children during the nineteenth century, and children were placed in institutions" (Pelton, 1989, p. x).

Currently, the choice between placing children in foster care or leaving them at home in a potentially dangerous situation is often a life or death decision. According to Murphy (et al., 1991, p. 198):

Two cases which grabbed front page headlines in Boston newspapers recently provide a tragic illustration of the dilemma faced by courts and protective workers. In the first case, two children who had been removed from their parents and placed in foster care were murdered, probably by another child who had been placed in the foster home. In the second case, a child with a history of suspicious injuries was left in the care of his middle-class parents. This child too was allegedly murdered.

According to James S. Elkind, Alma Berson, and David Edwin (1977, p. 531), the quality of the management of abused and neglected children by the child welfare agencies determines whether children are adequately protected. They state:

Too frequently, imperiled children are denied care and protection by the very agencies mandated to meet their needs. An important causal factor in this situation is the reemergence of societal skeletons and childhood goblins that impede agencies and professionals from rendering necessary services. The fate of children needing protective services hinges on the manner in which their situations, and the feelings these predicaments evoke, are managed within and between agencies.

Contrary to what one might imagine, the decision to remove a child from his or her parents is not based on precise regulations or factors derived from research. Most public child welfare agencies have extremely broad and vague guidelines. "Moreover, many agencies have not had written criteria or guidelines for seeking child removal" (Pelton, 1989, p. 49).

It would appear that the problem of deciding whether to remove maltreated children from their parents has not been solved since Sanderson's children were removed over 300 years ago. Today, child welfare professionals constantly find themselves faced with a great dilemma. They must decide daily whether children must be separated from their parents and siblings, and placed with substitute caretakers; or leave the children with the abusive parents and risk having the child suffer emotional trauma, severe injury or even death.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

If current indicators hold true, the future will see an explosion in numbers of children left to the child welfare system to protect from their parents, and then to either rehabilitate the parents, or to find alternative permanent homes for these children. In 1991, there were about 83,000 children reported abused and/or neglected in Massachusetts. This represented an approximate increase of 30% since 1988.

If current trends continue, the future will have public administrators dealing with an unprecedented number of abused and neglected children. This will include problems of physical abuse, sexual assault, failure to provide nutritional and health needs, emotional or psychological abuse, and drug addicted children. Although the causes of these problems are complex, it is often said that parents who were themselves abused, tend to be child abusers. This holds important implications for the future: increasing number of abused children will likely become abusive parents themselves.

The problem of physical injury of children by their parents' has previously received a moderate amount of research attention. For example, Henry Kempe (Kempe,

Silverman, Steele, Draegemueller, & Silver, 1962) originally identified and defined the 'battered child syndrome'. This syndrome usually has the following characteristics (Bowdry, 1990, p. 337):

The child is young, generally under four; the parents are immature emotionally and have unrealistic expectations of the child and of parenting. The parents present histories of maltreatment in their own childhoods; they are socially and emotionally isolated. The child presents with injuries that are unexplained or inconsistent with the explanation offered.

Rosenfeld and Newberger (1977) call on professionals to have a balance in extending compassion and control towards abusive parents. They state that there is a need for a standard for decision making "that would guide the choice of the intervention model....there is no body of empirical data with which to finalize such a standard" (Rosenfeld & Newberger, 1977, p. 2088). They propose that repeated severe child abuse injuries might warrant an intervention more on the side of control. Bowdry (1990, p. 338) emphatically states that "if there is any history of previous trauma to the child, no matter how minor, the child ought to be removed from the home."

The presence of domestic violence and drug abuse, and availability of services (which have been limited due to budget cuts) are two factors that have received very little research attention. Saunders (1988, p. 180), for example, states that "most studies of domestic violence fail to ask

about the motives for and consequences of violence." One consequence of domestic violence is the decision by the child welfare system to separate children from their parents.

The factors of physical abuse, drug abuse, and domestic violence are currently part of the "Risk Factor Matrix" which the Massachusetts Department of Social Services has distributed to all social workers and managers. Managers' use of these factors in their decision making process, plus the factor of lack of services, was analyzed. The decision that was analyzed was whether children must be separated from their parents and siblings, and placed with substitute caretakers; or leave children with abusive parents and risk having children suffer emotional trauma, severe injury or even death.

Abuse of alcohol and use of illegal substances often causes an individual to become much more violent than they would naturally be. To obtain illegal drugs, individuals often must commit crimes to secure necessary funds to maintain the habit. Violent individuals that are in and out of the home are often a severe threat to children. Many children have been beaten and killed as a result. Others have been sexually abused by their parents, or other drug involved individuals in the home. As the number of individuals abusing substances has increased, the numbers of children abused and neglected has soared.

One alcoholic described his behavior in the following manner (Alcoholics Anonymous, 1976, p. 435):

After my last binge I came home and smashed my dining room furniture to splinters, kicked out six windows and two balustrades. When I woke up sober, my handiwork confronted me. It is impossible for me to reproduce my despair. I can only list a few of its elements.

When young children witness this type of insane behavior they are extremely traumatized. When they are themselves beaten, serious injury or death can result.

A recent survey of Department of Social Services cases found that abuse of substances is a factor in two-thirds of supported investigations of child abuse. A clear trend has emerged: young children have been severely injured, or killed by male friends of their mothers, some of whom had only been in the household a few weeks. These men shared a common profile of violent behavior, substance abuse and criminal records.

Increased violent behavior that comes with crack and cocaine use presents a tremendous risk to children. There is a high correlation between spouse abuse and child abuse. Exceptionally high risk factors are present when family violence is further complicated by substance abuse. Additionally, use of illegal substances is also implicated in extreme neglect of young children to the point that they experience bodily injury or death. Therefore, this study analyzes, as one factor, abuse of substances and domestic

violence. This is due to the fact that the abuse of substances is very often accompanied by violence.

As administrators try to plan for the problems of the future, one indicator of how the future will develop is to analyze how recent federal legislation is impacting on the present. Once this is analyzed, projections can then be made, and new legislation proposed.

According to a recent New York Times article ("Foster Care System," 1990) ten years after the signing of a federal law meant to reduce the need for foster care by helping troubled families stay together, foster care has grown into a multibillion dollar industry of confusion and misdirection, overwhelmed by the profusion of sick, battered and emotionally scarred children who are becoming the public's responsibility.

In its first five years the federal law helped cut the number of children in foster care by nearly half, from 500,000 to 270,000. But since 1985 the number has grown steadily. By January, 1990 it had reached at least 360,000 and showed few signs of abating. At the same time, the amount of available foster homes is declining. There are now about 100,000 U.S. foster homes, a decrease of about 50,000 from three years ago. Each home averages more than three foster children, which more than doubles the number from 1980 ("Foster Care System," 1990).

Congressional hearings over the past two years and interviews with professionals show a system in grave danger, as too few people try to care for too many children in crisis across the country. According to law professor and psychologist Gary Melton, of the University of Nebraska, "it is a crisis nationally, the system has gone beyond its capacity" ("Foster Care System," 1990, p. A1).

While California, with over 80,000 foster children, and New York, with 62,000, account for more than a third of children in foster care nationwide, experts state that family problems are straining the system in almost every state. For example, in Massachusetts, a state congressional subcommittee found that the state's foster care system was not only expensive but cruel to children. The system has become overwhelmed by reports of child abuse which have stemmed in part from the increase in drug abuse and violence. The number of children removed from their parents' homes is increasing rapidly, and the amount of children under age two in foster care grew from 517 in 1987, to 893 in 1988. Massachusetts removes more children from their parents and places them into care than the national average. This state, according to the report, has lost out on tens of millions of dollars in federal reimbursement due to regulations that were previously not in line with federal guidelines. The layers of bureaucracy within the agency were termed "staggering".

Although it is widely accepted that the decision to remove a child from its parent(s) is one of the most grave and intrusive acts that government can take (Pelton, 1989), few if any studies have been conducted that investigate the factors that managers in the child welfare system use to decide whether or not to remove a child from his/her parent(s).

In years past, probation officers and child welfare agencies did not exist. Today, a child's case usually reaches court after many public officials and private agencies have unsuccessfully worked with a family. Mnookin (1973, p. 605, 607) states:

Unfortunately, very little is known about how the discretion of these administrative officers is exercised before a case reaches court...Unfortunately there is very little systematic information about the circumstances that result in foster care placement over parental objections. Although some social welfare research attempts to analyze why children are placed in foster care, these studies are based on samples where many parents agreed to placement or sought it.

Rosen (1980, p. ii) conducted a study to "analyze the influence of three sets of variables on caseworker's perceptions of and responses to potential child abuse situations." Her sample included caseworkers, assistant supervisors, and supervisors (22 total). But, her conclusions tended to overlook the differences between these respondents. No recent study has been conducted that looks at the factors that managers in the child welfare system

consider when deciding whether or not to remove a child from his/her parents.

Although in recent years the issue of the removal of children from their parents has received a large amount of research attention, many research questions and problems remain unanswered. One such problem is related to the need for data about the criteria, (and their relative importance) used by those who decide whether to recommend removal from the family or not. Little of the research regarding the removal of children from their parents has focused specifically on the managers within the system. It is critical that the factors involved in these decisions are understood.

III. PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to understand three specific factors that child welfare supervisors use when they are deciding whether to remove abused and neglected children from their parents, and the weighting of these factors. These factors are severity of current abuse, presence of domestic violence and drug abuse, and availability of services/resources to help families. For the purpose of this study, services/ resources refer to daycare, in-home intensive counseling, and a social worker provided to a family by the child welfare agency. Factors chosen for this study were considered to be among the most important reasons for removal of children from their parents. They were selected after a literature review, from feedback from those in the field, and after an analysis of results of a pre-test using these three factors. It is believed that an understanding of these three factors will greatly add to the understanding of the management of the child welfare system.

This study seeks to improve the competency of managerial decision making within the child welfare system. This includes increasing the knowledge base of current decision

making and obtaining some notion of the causative basis for such decisions. The expected purpose, or objective for the study was not to learn the correct choice in a decision making situation, but rather the learning of a logical process, i.e. an examination of outcomes for a range of choices in relation to the decision by managers in the child welfare system to remove children from their parents (Cassel, 1973).

Understanding of this decision making process has great potential for increasing the effectiveness of the child welfare system. The study is embedded within the larger decision making framework, as explained by Cassel (1973, p. 177-178):

The decision making process represents the single means man has for improvement of all behavior, since it serves as the blueprint for the inciting and direction of such activity. If human behavior is ineffective it is largely because of the ineffective direction provided, and no human behavior exists that cannot be improved. Improved competency in decision making offers the greatest single promise for achieving the desires and integrity of man. Any helping relationship that fails to accept this notion disregards truth and operates in contradiction to fact.

IV. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

A. THE LITERATURE REVIEW:

CHILD ABUSE / NEGLECT AND REMOVAL FROM PARENTS

From the preliminary review of the literature it became obvious that this study highlights a problem that has not been specifically researched previously. There is an expanding literature on the types, and sources of child maltreatment. For example, several carefully designed studies have been done showing that siblings have a higher rate of vulnerability to future injuries as compared with the accidentally injured control groups (Reece & Grodin, 1985). However, only recently has there been a significant evaluation and follow-up of the outcomes of abuse. One obvious outcome is the decision by child welfare managers to remove children from their parents. Although there have been many studies conducted on the impact of abuse and neglect on children, and on various aspects of the child welfare system, no recent studies exist on the specific topic of the factors that child welfare managers employ when they decide to remove children from their parents.

Although in recent years the issue of the removal of children from their parents has received a large amount of

research attention, many research questions and problems remain unanswered. One such problem is related to the need for data about the criteria, (and their relative importance) used by those who decide whether to recommend removal from the family or not. Little of the research regarding the removal of children from their parents has focused specifically on the managers within the system.

In 1966, Shirley Jenkins and her co-workers at Columbia University published an extensive study on the reasons that lead professionals to seek the removal of children from their parents. This work studied 425 families whose children were placed into foster care. They divided the most important reasons for placement into five categories as follows: (a) illness or confinement of the parent, 29 percent; (b) mother with mental illness, 11 percent; (c) emotional or personality problems of the child, 17 percent; (d) severe abuse or neglect, 10 percent; (e) problems within the family, including parental incompetence, arrests, and desertion, 33 percent (Mnookin, 1973, p. 607).

In 1972, Shirley Jenkins published another study with Elaine Norman. This study had nine categories of reasons for removal as follows: (a) mental illness, 22 percent; (b) child behavior, 16 percent; (c) abuse or neglect, 14 percent; (d) physical illness, 11 percent; (e) inability or unwillingness to continue care, 11 percent; (f) family dysfunction, 9

percent; (g) inability or unwillingness to assume care, 8 percent; (h) desertion or abandonment, 8 percent; and (i) other problems, 1 percent (Mnookin, 1973, p. 607-608).

Neither of these studies look at the managers in the system. Additionally, neither is very helpful when analyzing the reasons for the decision to remove children from their parents. In the first study, the caretakers were known to have objected to the removal in only 10 percent of the sample families. Also, the distribution of percentages of factors for removal among this subgroup was not given. Apparently, the severe abuse and neglect group had most of the nonconsenting parents. This category, however, is no more helpful in describing the reason for the removal, than the underlying legal statutes which tend to be very vague. It too had descriptive factors which lack definitional specificity (Mnookin, 1973). Typically such studies reviewed the case record, focused on interviews with the family, or on interviews with the social worker.

The following studies and articles were also included in the literature review in order to create a broader conceptual framework for the present research.

Schaeffer (1981) described a research project that studied needs of children in their first placement after their removal from their parents. The children's dysfunctional behavior in placement was seen as a result of

their being removed from their biological parents.

Stricklin (1982) analyzed the perceptions of neglected children and neglecting parents about the causes for removal of children from their home. The study was conducted in South Africa. The reasons for the removal of the children include truancy, alcoholism, marital discord, and child abuse. Removal was viewed by children and parents as resulting from a personality characteristic or action of the child.

Knitzer (1983) authored an article regarding dilemmas and realities concerning children's rights in the family and society. The author examined recent legal situations involving children. One area that was explored was the legal foundation for removing children from their parents.

Stone (1983) discusses the prediction of successful foster placement. The author examined the reasons behind unplanned removal of children from foster placements. Successful casework was found to exist when the social workers expended a high amount of energy, and had frequent contact with children in the foster homes.

Tyler and Brassard (1984) analyzed abuse in the investigation and treatment of intrafamilial child sexual abuse. The current practice of sexual abuse cases and trials leaves much to be desired. The authors suggested changes which could lead to less reliance on removing children from

their homes.

Zoccolillo and Cloninger (1985) discussed how the factor of mental illness effects the removal of children from their parents. Parental breakdown associated with somatization disorder was the specific topic covered. Removal of children and child abuse were also studied by the authors. Results showed that a diagnosis of somatization disorder went with poor parenting. The same did not apply for uncomplicated major depression and low socioeconomic status.

Famularo, Barnum, and Stone (1986) conducted a study on court ordered removal of children from their parents and found that children removed had parents with a lifetime incidence of psychological disorders and alcohol use. Few of these persons had been diagnosed or treated prior to the children's removal.

Famularo, Barnum, Stone (July 1986) published another article on the removal of children from the home. This article focused on the relationship between alcoholism and child maltreatment that results in the removal of children from their parents.

Katz (1986) published an article concerning decision making in cases of child abuse and neglect. This study was drawn from children admitted to Boston Children's Hospital with a physical injury suspected to be related to child maltreatment. Results show that extent of injury was not a

factor with whether the child was placed in a foster home. Low income families, and families that had previous histories with protective services, lost their children more frequently. The author calls for the establishment of a child abuse team which would formalize decision making.

Wasserman and Rosenfeld (1966) studied judicial decision making in regards to the removal of children from their parents. They discussed factors that judges must weigh when considering this decision. These issues included extent of the abuse/neglect, and potential psychological damage to the child of being removed from a parent and placed in a foster home.

Morrisette and McIntyre (1989) explored the placement process for homeless children and looked at permanent removal of children from poor situations as one possible course of action.

Pellegrin and Wagner (1990) examined child sexual abuse and factors affecting victims' removal from their home. The decision to remove sexually abused females from their homes was analyzed relative to six factors. These included: 1) severity of abuse, 2) nature of abuse, 3) abuse frequency, 4) employment status of female caretaker, 5) compliance of female caretaker with treatment recommendations, and 6) whether the female caretaker believed the child.

Scott (1990) discussed how 'practice wisdom' has been

a neglected topic of research. Practice wisdom has been ignored by those conducting social work practice research. Many practitioners state that they base their decision making on an intuition or 'gut feeling' which they call practice wisdom. The author attempts to bridge the gap between qualitative and quantitative methods.

Goffin and Myers (1991) studied the development and dissemination of position papers on the welfare, education, and health of children from birth to eight years of age. Content analysis showed that there were "consistent themes, as well as a consensus of professional thought on recommended responses to these concerns. The need for an expansion and refinement of our advocacy nomenclature also emerged from the survey" (Goffin & Myers, 1991, p. 40). Position papers on child abuse were included in the analysis.

Miller and Dore (1991) called on child welfare professionals to focus more energy on developing excellent training programs to equip professionals to handle the increasing number of child abuse cases coming to the attention of the system. The authors examined four innovative training programs begun in varying human service agencies in different states.

Simms and Bolden (1991) focused their attention on visitation needs of families when their children are removed. They document a 16-week pilot program which was created to

provide a natural setting for supervised visits. The study highlights one facet of the removal of children from their parents that needs to be focused on by the system.

Showers (1992) researched a preventative educational campaign designed to decrease the number of children physically injured by their parents. "In one retrospective study of fatal child abuse cases over a 20-year period, shaking was implicated as the cause of death in 13% of cases" (Showers, 1992, p. 11). Unfortunately, studies show that the general population is not aware of the dangers of shaking a baby. This study is a classic example of the need to invest in prevention, and the positive results which can be demonstrated when a well documented study is conducted.

The literature review has examined literature that deals with the child welfare system, with a special focus on removal of children from their parents by the child welfare system. Sources were periodicals, other dissertations, and books that touched on this topic. The first step was a close examination of bibliographies and abstracts. More literature was searched out then was incorporated into this literature chapter of the dissertation.

B. STUDY RATIONALE: A FRAMEWORK FOR DECISION MAKING WITHIN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

This section of the dissertation will study organizational decision making from multiple fields, with a focus on the field of public administration. This provides a foundation for the underlying rationale of the research question. Literature discussed will be primarily from the fields of psychology, public administration, and sociology. The focus will be on the natural interrelations among subtopics and the presentation of an integrated view of the knowledge of decision making in organizations (Administration/Management, 1988).

The topic of decision making is vital to an understanding of the management of organizations. Peter Drucker (1980, pp. 4-5) states:

The greatest and most dangerous turbulence today results from the collision between the delusions of the decision makers, whether in governments, in the top managements of businesses, or in union leadership, and the realities. But a time of turbulence is also one of great opportunity for those who can understand, accept, and exploit the new realities.

The psychological process underlying decision making contains several clearly recognizable dimensions. Another

way to conceptualize a decision would be to analyze the interplay of its variables or factors. Many dimensions have been researched by scientists seeking to describe various features of human behavior (Cassel, 1973).

According to Russell Cassel (1973, pp. 37-38):

Psychologically, a factor implies that all variables involved in the human decision function have been clustered into related groupings, which are herein referred to as 'dimensions.'...All of the dimensions have an independent organization, as in the typical psychological factor, but they all work in concert with each other in relation to the human decision function.

The field of public administration has made some contributions to the theories of rational decision making. However, the relationship between public administration and mainstream organizational theory is weak. The public sector contributed some early organizational principles, especially the rational scheme of decision making, and theories of administration and of bureaucracy. Many organization and management texts treat these contributions as insignificant footnotes (White, 1989).

Joseph W. Newman (1971, p. 3) states that the decision making process includes the following steps:

1. Recognition of a situation that calls for a decision about what action should be taken.
2. Identification and development of alternative courses of action.
3. Evaluation of the alternatives.
4. Choice of one of the alternatives.
5. Implementation of the selected course of action.

Dealing with uncertainty is one of the most difficult

issues for the decision maker. Many decision rules assume that one cannot state anything beneficial about the probabilities of outcomes that will result from possible courses of action (Newman, 1971).

"One such rule is the 'minimum criterion', which says that the decision maker should determine the worst that could happen under each alternative course of action and then choose the one that would have the highest minimum payoff...At the other extreme is the 'maximum criterion', which dictates choice of the act with the highest maximum payoff" (Newman, 1971, p. 5).

The child welfare system often makes decisions using the 'minimum criterion'. This conservative mode of decision making unfortunately results in more children being removed from their parents (due to fear that the children will be seriously abused) than is necessary.

Many child welfare administrators are not familiar with decision making tools and are in need of further training. The desired aim of such training is not the transformation of managers into analysts but rather to orient them to the nuances, limitations, and nature of various approaches (Nigro, 1984).

During the 1960s, the main reform movement within the federal government (and in some foreign countries) was based on the economic approach to decision making. Foundations of

this approach were in economic theory, especially welfare economics, quantitative decision making, and micro-economics. Chief tools of the approach were operations research, cost-benefit analysis, cost-effectiveness, systems analysis, and program budgeting. The new professionals involved in implementation of the approach were the systems analysts. In essence, these changes involved for the first time the invasion of economics into public decision making (Shafritz & Hyde, 1987, p. 338).

The economic view of decision making approached every decision as a choice between resource allocation. An application of economic analysis should contribute to better decision making, according to this theory (Shafritz & Hyde, 1987).

One hypothesis of this study was that a lack of resources would affect decision making of managers and cause more children to be removed from their parents.

The concept of decision making is the theoretical glue that binds the elements of modern administrative function. Indirectly and directly, and in every stage of activity, the literature of organization and management presses administrators to meticulously develop their ability to make economically, organizationally, and technically rational decisions. The evolution of ideas concerning public administration sprang primarily from decision making themes.

What is now changing is the context in which these decisions must be made in the post modern era, and the extraordinary challenges associated with the effort to improve administrative decision making. The constantly growing array of technologies, information, methods, and concepts presents a formidable task for those attempting to improve decision making quality within the system (Nigro, 1984).

An extensive review of literature has revealed that most practitioners and specialists agree that decision making is a fundamental and central aspect of interorganizational relations. Interorganizational decision making is defined "as the process by which organizations attempt to realize their own selfish or altruistic goals under constraints imposed by their own organizations and by specific organizational situations over which they have no control" (Rogers & Whetten, 1982, p. 11).

Decision making in regards to the allocation and control of resources in an interorganizational environment is a process common to all systems. Interorganizational coordination can therefore be defined as the method whereby two or more organizations use and/or create the existing decision rules that were established to deal with their common tasks. For example, research on social welfare organizations shows that concerted decision making takes place so that aggregate goals are realized that would not

have been accomplished otherwise. Coordination results in organizations adjusting their respective methods of operation, objectives, and outlooks. Joint decisions tend to be threatening to an organization's autonomy. Organizations typically try to maintain their strength and implement interorganizational strategies that will least affect their autonomous functioning (Rogers & Whetten, 1982).

Administrators in public agencies often commission research to help in decision making. Administrators will occasionally ask for a specific piece of research from consultants, colleagues, or subordinates. Administrators frequently question researchers about studies to decide if a specific finding justifies continued administrative action. And frequently they will read research to determine if the findings can be applied to their organization. Managers need to be able to evaluate research conclusions and made aware of the results so that they can assess the quality of the study and allow it to help them in the decision making process (O'Sullivan & Rassel, 1989).

C. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

1. SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

This analysis of decision making by child welfare supervisors was conducted within a context of social change. This section of the dissertation will present a theoretical framework from which the present study evolved. A special emphasis was given to the factors that this study is analyzing. This includes drug abuse, family violence, physical abuse of children, and the lack of governmental resources to deal with these problems.

Child welfare agencies have undergone tremendous change within the past five years. As a result, the two greatest problems facing child welfare administrators are defining the scope and mission of their agencies, and funding. The passage of the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974 and the resulting massive educational efforts to raise the consciousness of the public has resulted in an escalated amount of child abuse and neglect reports. The public expects all reports to be investigated and is intolerant of unnecessary interventions and inaccurate evaluations. Staff shortages and limited funding act to exacerbate the dilemma (Downing, Wells, & Fluke, 1990). "Since 1974, with the passage of the child protection act,

the number of child abuse cases reported for investigation has increased annually" (Mills & Ivery, 1991, p. 35).

Administrators are trying to focus their agencies more tightly to operate within shrinking budgets. However, there are currently strong trends by politicians to enlarge the role of child welfare agencies to perpetrators who are not members of the family whose child was abused/neglected. For example, federal regulations have recently been enacted that mandate agencies to include more types of reports at intake (Downing, et al., 1990). This trend has placed a tremendous burden on managers within the system as they struggle to do more with less resources.

A study conducted by Downing, Wells, and Fluke (1990) had a surprising outcome. Few managers were willing to acknowledge that the increasing burdens (caseload sizes and insufficient resources) are impacting on their agency performance. Only a limited number of managers (12%) responded that due to these burdens, investigations that normally would be conducted were not completed. Managers listed perceived burdens as a sudden influx of reports, current caseload size, and very complicated investigations. "When asked how frequently burdens affect case selection for investigation, most of the supervisors (73%) reported 'never' and only 4% reported 'always'. The majority of the supervisors (71%) based these conclusions on personal

observation" (p. 361-362).

Unfortunately, the media is quick to point out the flaws within the system, and they typically leave out any call for increased funding. The Department of Social Services is the state operated child protection agency in Massachusetts. It has recently received much criticism for its poor management. A recent editorial (Boston Herald, 1992, p. 26) called for sweeping changes within the Department: "The increasingly erratic, at times cruel and unconscionable operations of the Department of Social Services require more than a mere rebuke. The time has come for a full investigation and possibly a complete overhaul of what can only be described as a rogue agency...The agency and its workings should come under the scrutiny of an independent commission, and its procedures subject to any revisions it might recommend."

Leroy Pelton is also quick to point out the flaws within the system. He calls for 'real' change, not just philosophical and linguistic changes. According to Pelton (1989, p. xi):

There have been many changes, but this study may show that the history of child welfare practice supports the adage that the more things change, the more they remain the same. In some respects, it can even be said that this book is a study in linguistics: Changed philosophies, theories, 'treatments,' laws, labels, and names have been changes in words only, and not in methods or results. A dependent child is now called a neglected child. Negative moralistic attributions to 'offending' parents have been replaced by negative psychological labels, and so on.

As the problems of society continue to mount, child welfare agencies will come under more scrutiny for the work they do. They will have to be more selective on the types of cases that they become involved with. Decision making will become increasingly difficult. Factors affecting these decisions will need to be analyzed carefully. The safety of many children depends on the manner in which these alternatives are weighted. Sensitivity analysis and contingency analysis are two approaches to managing these decisions within the child welfare field.

When making decisions about the possible risk of severe injury or death of a child, a specific individual often cannot be designated with certainty as the one who will be affected. Therefore, prior to implementing an alternative, it should be analyzed as to the resulting impact on the injury/death rate of the entire community. Calculating the change in the probability of injury/death may then be a better method of determining the value of the alternative on human life. The fact that many people voluntarily place themselves in an environment with increased risk of injury/death may indicate that doing so is valued greater than a less risky but more expensive or more inconvenient alternative (McKenna, 1980).

There is at this time no one correct way to make allowance for differences in the incidence of injury/death.

"However, in a world where different programs compete for the same dollars, some assessment of the value of lives is considered by many to be useful" (McKenna, 1980, p. 146).

It is amazing that our society has changed to the point that managers will be called on to assess the value of human life, and literally make decisions on who will or will not live. For example, as health care costs continue to spiral, tough decisions in the future must be made as to who will be the recipients of the latest (and of course the most costly) medical procedures. The health care profession must grapple with these realities. Is it acceptable for the United States to collectively spend billions of dollars each year on extraordinary measures to enable the elderly to live a few more months? Who will make the decision on which person lives, and who is left to die? Similarly, child welfare administrators cannot continue to place more and more demands on their staff without calculating the impact that this will have on the community. Some children will be severely injured, and others will die as a result of the child welfare system being too overwhelmed to handle the changes in society's problems.

The burdens placed on the system greatly impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of case management. Most child protection agencies are understaffed, undersupervised, and underfunded. This has created a national concern about

caseload management. Our increasing litigious social climate has produced strains and pressures that are unique to the child welfare field (Mills & Cassandra Ivery, 1991, p. 36).

The pressures, strains, and the lack of resources has caused many families to be left in very dangerous situations. Children die that are known to the system because precious resources were used for another family.

As lawmakers decide on funding levels for various programs, they are actually deciding who should be allowed to live. Currently, few are willing to conceptualize it in these terms. However, the pool of resources is drying up. Special interest groups clamor for their fair share of tax dollars. More money given to one program translates into less money for another program. The programs that receive adequate funding will enable their clients to live, those that do not will see clients be injured and die as a result. These decisions must be made. The variables on which these decisions are to be made have not yet been determined. The decision makers of the future will need all the wisdom of Moses as they grapple with these unprecedented dilemmas.

Sensitivity analysis and contingency analysis can help managers determine how the alternatives will be affected by having to execute plans that fit with their budgets (McKenna, 1980). Managers in the child welfare system are struggling to deal with society's current epidemic of substance abuse,

violence, lack of sexual boundaries, poverty, homelessness, and many other challenges. Many child welfare professionals feel like they are trying to plug a hole in a dam, only to see more and more holes develop.

An example of how changes in society have affected the child welfare system is the failed 'war on drugs'. Despite all the publicity and money spent on eliminating the abuse of drugs, one study of both private and public obstetric clinics had alarming results. The rate of positive urine toxicologies at the public clinics was 16.3%, and the rate at the private clinics was 13.1% (Chasnoff, 1989).

Hospitals across the nation are reporting incredible increases in the amount of women who use drugs during their pregnancy. Many are using the very addictive form of cocaine known as crack, often right up to labor. In Washington, DC at Washington General Hospital, approximately 3% of children born in 1982 were drug exposed. By 1988 the number had increased to 18%. In inner city Detroit, at Hutzel Hospital, a very extensive study in 1989 found that 43% of babies were exposed to drugs during their mothers' pregnancy. In Illinois, the second half of 1988 had a 79% increase in the number of drug exposed babies over the same period in 1987 (Wightman, 1991).

The resulting challenges to the child welfare system are immense. Drug exposed babies become patients in hospitals at

enormous expense, or they are removed from their parents at birth and placed into an already over burdened foster care system (Schydlower, 1989).

Beyond obvious medical risks are serious problems the drug factor places on the infant-mother bond. Behavioral and physiological studies show that infants exposed prenatally to drugs show an initial inability to respond to the face and voice of the caretaker. Similarly, the mother may have many problems in responding to their infants' irritated and withdrawing behaviors. Child welfare managers are aware that mothers who abuse drugs are isolated socially, require greater help in parenting, and are less likely to be involved in educational and vocational activity (Wightman, 1991).

Additionally, the mother-child bond is changed. The drug exposed infant has a difficult time bonding with its mother (Wightman, 1991).

These children display an increased risk of organic, emotional, and developmental problems. Due to major emotional and physical damage that these children suffer, many are advocating for a change in child abuse laws so that these women can be prosecuted. "Intense debate now surrounds the question of whether or not to apply child abuse laws to women who deliver drug-exposed babies. Regardless of the outcome of this debate, these babies and their mothers need treatment and protection" (Schydlower, 1989, p. 2).

One form of protection is the decision by child welfare managers to remove these children from their parents and place them in foster care. This can increase the quality of the rearing environment and lower the impact of prenatal drug exposure (Howard, 1989).

Recent studies have sought to determine the effect that changes in society's drug usage have had on the decision of child welfare agencies to intervene in families. These decisions are guided partly by community norms and values. According to a recent study by Monica Wightman (1991, p. 655):

Protective service providers are permitted to intervene in families where social standards for parenting are not being met, as is the case when parents abuse or neglect their children. Criteria for placement decisions in protective services were examined to determine how workers assess the potential risk and subsequent placement of children into protective custody. Risk to the child, severity of the incident, functioning and cooperation of the prime caregiver, and the age of the child were found to be the most important factors used.

The child welfare system has undergone unprecedented change during the 1980s and 1990s. If current indicators hold true, the future will see an explosion in numbers of children left to the child welfare system to protect from their parents, and then to either rehabilitate the parents, or to find alternative permanent homes for these children. During the last 10 years in Massachusetts, the population of children has decreased by 10%. At the same time, the number

of children reported abused and neglected has skyrocketed. When the Massachusetts Department of Social Services began as a separate state agency in 1980 there were approximately 15,000 children reported abused and neglected. For 1990, the number was about 83,000. It is generally believed that these increases are due to the rapid rise in the use of cocaine and other drugs, their impact on the ability of families to care for their children, and the resulting rise in domestic violence (Matava, 1990). Other reasons for the rapid change possibly include the increased exposure that child abuse has received through the attention of the media.

Child welfare agencies across the country have seen their caseloads increase at record speeds. However, due to the economic slowdown and resulting budget cuts, many agencies have had to cut staff while trying to handle this increased workload. Therefore, only the most severely abused and neglected children are removed, as the foster care system cannot handle the numbers of children if all who were at risk were to be removed.

The pace of change has accelerated within the child welfare system. In 1989, there were over 70,000 children reported abused and/or neglected to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. This was a 15 percent increase in one year. At the end of 1989 Massachusetts had about 8,500 foster children, an increase of over 20 percent

over the previous 18 months. If this current change continues, the paradigm of the future will have managers dealing with an unprecedented number of abused and neglected children who will need to be removed from their parents and placed in foster homes (Salomons, 1990).

Nationally, since 1981, fatalities from abuse has risen 36%, child sexual abuse is up 277%. Child abuse has reached epidemic proportions. Unfortunately, funding from the federal government has dropped 10% over the same period (Child Welfare League of America, 1990, p. 289).

There have been many changes in the management of the child welfare profession in response to the increase in society's problems. One such change is the effort to base practice on risk assessment instruments. According to Michael Wald and Maria Woolverton (1990, p. 483-484):

Risk assessment procedures potentially can improve decision making, facilitate internal supervision, and lead to more efficient resource allocation....Despite the promise, we believe that risk assessment instruments have only limited utility at present.

Managers within child protection agencies began using risk assessment instruments due to the many changes in the policies and direction of their agencies over the past 15 years. Prior to 1970, intervention by the juvenile courts and child protection agencies was often explained as a way to help children who received 'inadequate care'. No exact harm was required, and a likelihood of future injury was not a

requirement for removal of children from their parents. Therefore, child welfare agencies were not concerned with assessing risk carefully (Wald & Woolverton, 1990).

Additionally, statutes defining court jurisdiction over neglected and abused children allowed removal if children were in an 'unfit home', the parents were 'unsuitable or neglectful', or other such undefined and vague terms. Those interested in risk assessment would be unable to define the behavior that needed to be predicted (Wald & Woolverton, 1990).

Development of formal risk assessment systems has been hailed by some as a way to respond to changes in society and to improve the management of the system's intervention. Although assessment of risk has been a practice of child welfare agencies for many years, the implementation of defined assessment instruments is new.

In a study of 100 local child welfare agencies, respondents were questioned about formal agency policies and written procedures, including decision making factors used to measure level of severity. "Type of abuse or neglect was the most common criterion used for prioritizing complaints, cited by nearly all of the administrators and supervisors (88% and 91%, respectively). Severity of injury was chosen as the second most common factor by both groups (78% of the administrators and 81% of the supervisors)" (Downing, Wells,

and Fluke, 1990, p. 365).

According to Downing, Wells, and Fluke (1990, p. 365):

Currently, risk assessment is often defined as a systematic decision making process that may use one or more instruments for evaluating risk, designed to provide workers with concrete and practical guidelines for decision making at any point during a case and to develop consensus....

As caseloads have risen dramatically in the past five years, administrators must look not only at risk assessment, but also on placement prevention. If every child was placed into foster care that was at high risk, the already underfunded and overburdened foster care system would topple. There simply are no alternative homes to place these children into. The emphasis must therefore be placed on family preservation.

Programs to prevent placement have been implemented in many states to treat multiproblem families referred for neglect, abuse, youth status offences (truancy, curfew violations, etc.), and delinquency. Extensive outreach therapy programs have worked to avoid the removal of children from their parents and the breakup of families. Previous researchers [Haapala, 1983; Heying, 1985; and Jones, 1986] have documented the effectiveness of programs that preserve families intact or return children home faster. However, little research has been conducted concerning the important factors in avoiding placement and helping families. Little is known about the effect of family therapy, ecological, and

organizational variables on children and their parents. Placement prevention efforts have varied greatly in duration, intensity, services provided, and contacts with families. Further research is needed on the factors that differentiate services and families in cases where a child is placed from those where placement is avoided (Reid, Kagan, & Schlosberg, 1988).

Managers have developed family preservation programs which usually consisted of the following ingredients:

- a) crisis oriented treatment;
- b) intensive in-home counseling;
- c) worked with families as a unit;
- d) adapted home visits to a family's schedule;
- e) taught parenting skills;
- f) hooked families up to available community services and resources; and
- g) short time-limited involvement, usually limited to two to six months.

Families referred to these programs are typically at high risk of having a child placed out of the home. Some cases involved families where a child was in placement and the goal of the outreach counseling was to improve the family's functioning so that the child could be returned home. These counselors have the skill to form intensive therapeutic relationships with dysfunctional families characterized by severe and chronic disturbances, such as sexual or physical abuse, violence, drug use, and/or neglect (Reid, et al., 1988).

Administrators are struggling to deal with the loss of

financial resources for their mandated programs. According to Schilling, Schinke, and Weatherly (1988, p. 5):

Forced to lower their goals, social workers have turned to service concepts that promise to do more with less. Some of the recent trends in service delivery that are described as innovative are in fact variations of traditional methods of serving clients.

For example, case management has been hailed as a cost-cutting innovation in service delivery. However, this form of delivering services is new only in name (Schilling, et al., 1988).

Prior to the current budget cuts, the past two decades had witnessed a widespread growth in the American child protection system. Most professionals believe that this country still has the most highly developed and specialized system for handling this problem (Faller, 1985). However the system has its flaws.

Kathleen Faller (1985, p. 63) states:

Like many other social engineering endeavors, the system has a number of unanticipated and unintended negative consequences for families and children who are channeled into it. Some of these are inherent in the system itself, and others are a consequence of inadequate funding.

The child welfare system is desperately in need of increased funding for the implementation of new innovative services. When caseloads began to explode ten years ago, there was an increase in federal and state funding to implement demonstration projects and other innovative services. Unfortunately, the momentum for an appropriate

caseload size and the development of innovative treatment programs has been greatly inhibited by funding cutbacks.

In recent years problems have continued to grow. Between 1986 and 1989, the number of youth placed in detention for drug offences increased 641%. One in seven Massachusetts teenagers contracted a sexually transmitted disease. One in six children lived in poverty. An immediate investment is needed due to the fact that for every \$1 spent on preventative programs, \$5 is saved in treatment and intervention programs. The reason that this immediate investment is needed is due to the rapid change in the number and intensity of societal problems that public administrators are currently facing and will be facing in the future (Salomons, 1990).

Funding decisions are regularly made in a chaotic and unplanned manner. "Many studies have revealed that planning is done in the context of daily actions, and that the decision process does not unfold in a logical and orderly way, and occurs under conditions of uncertainty where meaning is subjective" (Mordock, 1989, p. 598).

Whether in the public or nonprofit sector, professionals are struggling to make the best changes so they can provide the best services under difficult circumstances (Schilling, et al., 1988, p. 5).

Viewing these modern decisions through a systems

perspective can provide some help. However, many feel that the methods are inherently flawed as ways of ameliorating human suffering. When the child welfare system too quickly decides to implement a new concept without proper study, they abdicate their position as advocates, and often shift the burden of responsibility from the public to the needy (Schilling, et. al, 1988, p. 8).

In order to manage growing caseloads and to deal with increasingly complicated family situations, managers must continue to press for positive change. They must strengthen services that support families before a crisis occurs. Definitions of abuse must be clarified and the factors that lead to decision making must be clearly understood. Programs that treat and prevent family breakdowns must be improved. Out-of-home care and adoption services must be expanded. This is an investment in the future that must be made now (Salomons, 1990).

Innovative solutions must be sought to fund these programs. Administrators currently lack specific research to clearly document that without services managers recommend a more costly alternative: removal of children from their parents. This study's hypotheses investigated factors that lead to the removal of children from their parents. One of the hypotheses stated that managers will be more likely to recommend the removal of children when there is a lack of

resources.

During the past fifty years, experimental psychologists have increasingly focused their research on human judgements, or decision making. These attempts have gone beyond strict behaviorism, and have covered a wide range of topics including: decisions under risk, information-integration theory, social decision making, portfolio theory, and integration theory. All of these approaches share the common goal of explaining the process and structure of how individuals make rational decisions and differentiate between choices (Rosen, 1980, pp. 21-22).

There are two basic types of rational decision making theories: normative and descriptive decision theories. The normative theory of decision making "is said to concern the choices that a rational man should make in a given situation, regardless of the choices that real men actually make" (Lee, 1971, p. 16). "Descriptive theory is said to concern the choices that real people actually make, regardless of the choices they should make" (Lee, 1971, p. 16). Often in social science research factors are introduced in such a way that subjects would be frustrated if they attempted to employ normative decision making when choosing a response. This is due to the fact that unresolvable dilemmas are often purposefully built into studies so that researchers can study real life situations.

The type of job that a person holds impacts on their decision making style. Jobs can be classified into two categories: a) possible, and b) impossible. Although Hargrove and Glidewell's (1990, p. 8) book is somewhat judgemental and biased against "irresponsible and intractable clients", it serves as a useful model to examine the context of decision making within the field of child welfare.

"Possible jobs are those with one legitimate clientele and with few constituencies in only mild conflict, those enjoying great public respect for professional or scientific authority, and those guided by strong, well-understood myths that sustain policy continuity and feasible goals (Hargrove & Glidewell, 1990, p. 8)." Workers within these agencies have a reasonable workload, and these agencies have a waiting list or limit on those they can serve.

Those holding "impossible jobs must serve irresponsible and intractable clients in intense conflicts with more legitimate clients for public resources; must satisfy multiple and intensely polarized, active constituencies; possess professional, scientific authority that commands little public respect; and are guided by weak, controversial myths that cannot sustain policy continuity...." (Hargrove & Glidewell, 1990, p. 8). The agencies usually have no waiting lists, and workloads are unrealistic.

2. CHILD WELFARE DECISION MAKING THEORY

Child welfare workers and administrators have impossible jobs. Social welfare departments in most states are often the largest in terms of the number of employees and the size of the budget (Hargrove & Glidewell, 1990). The child welfare budget is a component of the total state welfare budget. For example, in Massachusetts the yearly budget for child welfare is about 400 million dollars.

It is in the context of daily decision making that impossibilities confronting these employees begin to come into focus. Decision makers must make choices in a very hostile environment. Recipients of child welfare services are often child molesters, drug abusers, teenage mothers, unemployed welfare recipients, and minority-group members-- who are of little concern and unpopular with taxpayers, service providers, and voters. Most taxpayers who provide money for these programs are not recipients of services. Social programs usually involve redistribution, which is generally a politically controversial activity. Additionally, advocates for clients, administrators, and clients themselves constantly are at odds over the most appropriate treatment for clients. These players are under no obligation to subordinate their self-interests or to cooperate with one another (Hargrove & Glidewell, 1990). Therefore, the environment for the decision maker in an

impossible job is very hostile. This adds to the difficulty of making good decisions within the child welfare system.

The discussion will now move from general decision making issues, to specific decision making on the front line of the field. It should be noted that decision makers on the front line usually make choices by employing descriptive theory. However, decision making is very difficult when the definitions and descriptions of child abuse and neglect are vague.

Child neglect and abuse may be seen as a aberration and failure in the normal parent-child relationship. Social workers and managers have had difficulty in developing definitions of neglect and abuse that are helpful in deciding whether to intervene (Wasserman & Rosenfeld, 1986).

Often child welfare agencies have had extremely broad and vague criteria for defining neglect and abuse. Additionally, many agencies do not have written guidelines or policies for seeking the removal of children. Laws governing intervention by the courts have been extremely broad and vague. This broadness and vagueness in the standards for the removal of children has caused much variability in judgements by decision makers (Pelton, 1989).

According to Wasserman and Rosenfeld (1986, p. 517):

The 1962 definition of child abuse or baby battery included mainly the most severe cases, such as those where infants' skulls had been broken; recent definitions have been expanded to include any form of

corporal punishment. Some authors seem to consider anything less than optimal child rearing to be abuse because such upbringing impeded a child from realizing his full potential.

Child welfare professionals are constantly faced with the difficult decision of whether to remove a child from its family. This decision is difficult for a variety of reasons. Every child should have the right to be raised by their biological parents. When this bond is broken all types of psychological damage can result. Therefore, child welfare professionals should only remove a child from its parents when a decision has been made that removal would cause less damage to a child than remaining with its parent.

The involuntary removal of a child from its parents has several parallels with the involuntary admission of patients into psychiatric facilities. In both cases, a human service professional makes a judgement on the safety of an individual to remain in their current environment. The commitment of mentally ill individuals is causing a major dilemma for the psychological profession. Laws are vague, and vary throughout the country. The need to quickly predict future client behavior may on the one hand violate a clients rights, while on the other hand place the safety of a community at risk if a mentally ill person is allowed to be on the streets. Most states have several criteria that must be met for an involuntary commitment (Segal, Watson, & Nelson, 1985). The trend, according to these authors, is in

restricting the numbers of those who can be committed.

The child welfare community is also struggling with their own criteria for the involuntary removal of children from their parents. Child welfare workers in some states, after receiving a report that a child is at risk, have legal authority to remove endangered children from parents on the spot, without any prior court approval.

At the present time, every state has a statute enabling the courts to protect a child from its family. Most states have laws that allow the court to be involved in the child's life if the child lacks a suitable guardian and is therefore 'dependant' or a 'ward' of the state, and if a parent has abused or neglected him/her. Legislative definitions of abuse and neglect are open-ended and vague. They require a large amount of subjective determination by the professionals involved. Also they allow intrusion into a family not only when a demonstrated condition of abuse and/or neglect has already occurred, but even in the case where a risk for abuse/neglect is present. This can even cause battles between parents and child welfare agencies who have different religious standards and moral values. The legal standards today have hardly been made any more precise than those that were in existence more than 100 years ago (Mnookin, 1973).

In Massachusetts, for example, a social worker may remove a child from a parent if the child is at 'imminent

risk'. However the social worker must go into court within twenty-four hours after the removal of the child(ren) and convince a judge that the decision was correct (Murphy, et al., 1991, p. 199).

Social workers must constantly evaluate the suitability of care children are given. The decision on whether to remove a child from their parents and siblings has an effect that lasts a lifetime. The fear exists that these decisions are arbitrary, may contain cultural bias, and are based on the values of the white, middle-class society that most workers were brought up in (Polansky, Ammons, & Weathersby, 1983). Research contained in this study adds to the knowledge of what motivates child welfare professionals to remove children. One thing is clear, whatever the criteria, the decision to remove a child has a lifelong impact.

Because of its lifelong impact, the decision as to whether and at what time to separate parents from their children are some of the hardest decisions made by child welfare managers.

The lack of definitional clarity has caused difficult decision making problems for the child welfare manager who must decide when the government must intervene to protect children. This problem is compounded by the limited alternatives available to the manager other than placing

children in foster care, the legal challenge of proving abuse, and the many children in borderline abuse/neglect circumstances (Wasserman & Rosenfeld, 1986).

More recent abuse and neglect regulations have changed the standard of what is considered 'minimally adequate parenting' to a practical one (Wasserman & Rosenfeld, 1986).

Researchers use a variety of techniques to gather data on specific decision making factors. One of these is the development of a scale that can rate factors that influence decision making. Such a scale can be administered as part of a survey that uses standard research techniques to study decision making patterns.

One argument against surveys is that they are not well suited for the study of behavior and attitudes because they elicit biased and unreliable self-reports. This springs from the rationale that responses are too abstract. It can be argued that each respondent will respond according to their own mental picture. One good solution is to present the stimulus in as detailed and concrete manner as possible within a vignette (Alexander & Becker, 1978).

Alexander and Becker (1978, pp. 93-94) state:

Vignettes are short descriptions of a person or a social situation which contain precise references to what are thought to be the most important factors in the decision-making or judgement-making processes of respondents. Thus, rather than allowing or requiring respondents to impute such information themselves in reacting to simple, direct, abstract questions about the person or situation, the additional detail is

provided by the researcher and is thereby standardized across respondents.

To date, vignettes have been used with a wide variety of research on decision making. For example, they have been employed in the area of experimental social psychological research, particularly in deciding responsibility for automobile accidents or to a victim for a crime, and simulated jury decision making (Alexander & Becker, 1978).

Within the field of child welfare vignettes have been used frequently. For example, they have been used to study agreement between child protection professionals (Ronnau & Poertner, 1989); to assess responsibility in the sexual abuse of girls by men (Ringwalt & Earp, 1988); to investigate child abuse reporting patterns (Zellman, 1990); to compare potentially abusive and abusive parents' perceptions of discipline (Kelley, Grace & Elliott, 1990); to study younger adolescents' ratings of abusive parental behavior (Roscoe, 1987); to study the factors that influence mental health professionals to report child abuse (Kalichman, Craig, & Follingstad, 1988); to examine whether professionals adhere to laws that mandate child abuse reporting (Kalichman, Craig, & Follingstad, 1990); to evaluate decision making in protective services (Rosen, 1980); to determine attitudes about intervention in child sexual abuse (Wilk & McCarthy, 1986); to compare and contrast social worker and attorney recommendations on the removal of children from their parents

(Craft & Clarkson, 1985); to compare recognition and response to possible abuse by doctors in the United States and Northern Ireland (Benson, Swann, O'Toole, & Turbett, 1991); and to study the degree of institutional abuse and neglect (Rabb & Rindfleisch, 1985).

Kalichman's (et al., 1988) study used experimentally controlled vignettes as the measurement instrument to analyze mental health professionals' decision to report suspected cases of child abuse. "A multivariate analysis of variance was performed with victim age, type of abuse, and the child's reactions during the interview entered as independent variables; and responsibility attributed to the father, mother, daughter and society were entered as dependent factors. Clinicians' number of years of experience in mental health was entered as a covariate in the analysis" (Kalichman, et al., 1988, p. 47).

The conclusion of Kalichman's study was a call for further research to empirically investigate the situational factors which contribute to the decision of professionals to report child abuse.

John Ronnau and John Poertner's (1989, p. 431) study on agreement between child protection professionals employed vignettes. Their conclusions discussed how certain decisions within the child protection field are often very subjective: "As with most human decisions in the absence of established

objective criteria, subjective factors rush in to fill the void. Such is the case in the controversial issues surrounding emotional abuse." The aim of this study was to research decision making by lawyers, judges, and social workers regarding the need for intervention within families who are emotionally maltreating their children. Results of the study suggest that there is much disagreement concerning responses to emotional maltreatment within the child protection system (Ronnau & Poertner, 1989).

The extreme variability in judgements by decision makers has been due to the broadness and vagueness of standards pertaining to the removal of children from their parents. In fact, one study showed that three highly experienced caseworkers did not agree on the decision of whether a particular child should be placed (Pelton, 1989).

Specific decision making factors for removing children have varied greatly between decision makers.

According to Pelton (1989, p. 50):

It was also found that among the factors these practitioners listed as having affected their decisions were the mother's degree of hostility toward the agency and worker, the mother's 'cooperation' with the worker, whether or not the mother 'appears' emotionally disturbed, the mother's 'ability to verbalize,' whether or not the mother is 'withdrawn or depressed,' and the 'suspiciousness' of the mother. When factors so remotely and debatably related to the reasonable goal of protecting children from harm are allowed to influence child placement decisions, there is no wonder that there is little consensus on such decisions.

Due to the importance of understanding the nature of these decisions, several studies have been conducted. For example, Helen Rosen (1980) analyzed decision making in protective services by studying the influence of social worker's perceptions and responses to child abuse situations using case vignettes. Rosen's study analyzed the influence of caseworker's responses and perceptions of child abuse. The variables she studied were a) evidence of abuse, b) demographic characteristics of the social worker, and attitudes toward spanking, and c) geographic setting. The study is helpful in analyzing and describing child abuse decision making.

In conclusion, this chapter of the dissertation has presented a critical understanding of decision making within child welfare organizations. The context in which decisions are made within child welfare organizations was highlighted. An emphasis was placed on survey research methods used by managers to help determine decision making factors.

V. METHODOLOGY: NATURE OF PRESENT STUDY

A. ASSUMPTIONS

1. Understanding factors which lead managers to recommend removal of children from their parents is crucial to the field of child welfare.

2. Managers in the system are committed to the best interest of children and are continually striving to balance the child's need to be with their parent and the need to be safe.

3. There has recently been a greater emphasis on emerging problems of drug abuse and domestic violence and their impact on children.

4. Surveying of child welfare managers, through case vignettes that describe factors related to removal decisions, is a valid and reliable methodology for gathering data for the study.

5. Systematic analysis of this data may provide child welfare managers with information that can improve their decision making.

B. HYPOTHESIS

The three hypotheses of this study are concerned with the question of the comparative weight of various factors in the decision making of child welfare managers. Decision theory states that when a situation is processed, managers analyze information by assigning weight to each item of information. Not all items receive identical weight in the final decision. The literature on the child welfare system states that many factors are important and have scale values, when managers are deciding whether or not to remove a child from his/her parents. However, there exists an overall lack of agreement regarding the weight that each factor of information should hold and the extent of its diagnostic value (Rosen, 1980, p. 60).

This study will analyze data as it relates to the following three hypotheses:

Hypotheses 1: Certainty of managers removing a child from his/her parents increases when there is evidence of severe physical injury to the child, along with presence of general domestic violence and drug abuse by parents.

Hypotheses 2: Likelihood of managers removing a child from his/her parents is greater with evidence of severe physical injury to the child than with the presence of only

general domestic violence and drug abuse by the parents.

Hypotheses 3: Certainty of managers removing a child from his/her parents increases proportionately to the lack of services, such as: daycare, in-home intensive counseling, and availability of the agency social worker.

C. PROCEDURE

This study focuses specifically on the decision making process of child welfare managers who supervise units of social workers. This study's scope was limited to three decision making factors. These factors were the severity of current abuse, presence of domestic violence and drug abuse, and availability of services.

There are at least forty other factors that could be involved when a manager is analyzing whether or not to remove a child from a family. According to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services "Risk Factor Matrix", other factors include: age and community visibility; physical/mental/social development; self care; self-protection; fear of caretaker or home environment; dangerous acts; extent of emotional harm; adequacy of medical care; provisions for basic needs; adequacy of supervision; hazards in the home; frequency and chronicity of abuse and neglect;

caregiver demographics; history of prior abuse and neglect; mental, physical, or emotional impairment of caretaker; history of criminal behavior or mental illness; caretakers' own history of victimization and discord in family of origin; process of selecting caretakers; presence of unrelated adult in the home; parents ability to maintain a home environment free of people who may present risk to children; parenting skills and knowledge; nurturance; caretakers' recognition of problem; caretakers' willingness to protect child; cooperation; caretakers' response to child's misbehavior; attachment/bonding; child's role in family; stress on caregiver; employment status; social support network; and perpetrator's access/responsible caretaker available.

Factors chosen for this study were considered to be among the most important reasons for removal of children from their parents. They were selected after a literature review, from feedback from those in the field, and after an analysis of results of a pre-test using these three factors. These decision making factors are used constantly by managers within the system. It is believed that an analysis of these three factors will greatly add to the understanding of management of the child welfare system.

The analysis of these factors involved constructing eight vignettes as hypothetical versions of decision making situations that might be faced by a child welfare manager.

Each vignette was composed of a mix of the three factors: A= severe physical injury; B= presence of domestic violence and drug abuse; C= scarcity of services; a= mild physical injury; b= no domestic violence and no drug abuse; c= services available. A mixed factorial design was constructed that consisted of eight possible vignette versions (see Table V.1 on page 65). In order to increase the response rate an effort was made to keep each individual survey short. Therefore, each respondent was given only one set of vignettes (a set contained two case summaries as outlined in Table V.1).

This dissertation involved analysis of data that bore upon the hypotheses. Therefore, this procedure section will clearly state the sources of that evidence.

1. Description of Vignettes

One argument against surveys is that they are not well suited for the study of behavior and attitudes because they elicit biased and unreliable self-reports. This springs from the rationale that responses are too abstract. It can be argued that each respondent will respond according to their own mental picture. An excellent solution is to present the stimulus in as detailed and concrete manner as possible (Alexander & Becker, 1978).

According to Alexander and Becker (1978, pp. 93-94):

Such a stimulus would more closely approximate a real-life decision making or judgement making situation.

Furthermore, by holding the stimulus constant over a heterogeneous respondent population, the survey researcher gains a degree of uniformity and control over the stimulus situation approximating that achieved by researchers using experimental designs. The 'vignette' is proposed as a means of doing this. Vignettes are short descriptions of a person or a social situation which contain precise references to what are thought to be the most important factors in the decision making or judgement making processes of respondents. Thus, rather than allowing or requiring respondents to impute such information themselves in reacting to simple, direct, abstract questions about the person or situation, the additional detail is provided by the researcher and is thereby standardized across respondents.

This researcher conducted a literature search to determine if a scale suitable for the research had already been developed. No acceptable scale was found. Therefore, it was necessary to construct one. "Thurston and Likert scales are probably the most common types of attitude scales that are constructed" (Borg & Gall, p. 201). This study used a Likert scale to rate the degree that respondents felt a child should or should not be removed from his/her parents.

A quasi-experimental mixed factorial design was employed. The three factors were manipulated by changes within the eight vignettes and were rated by respondents using a 4-point Likert scale (see appendix for samples of the eight vignettes). Responses ranged from 1 (Definitely would not remove) to 4 (Definitely would remove). A similar design (however not a similar methodology) was employed by Craft and Clarkson (1985).

This study utilized a 2^3 factorial design. The total number of possible versions was eight, and a subset was developed that was given to each manager that was surveyed (Alexander & Becker, 1978, p. 96). Each manager received a random set of two of the possible eight vignette versions. The vignettes were grouped in four sets (W, X, Y, or Z) of two vignettes each. (See the appendix for vignette examples).

Each of the eight vignette versions differed in their mix of the three factors that were studied (see Table V.1). The first factor (or cue) was the severity of current abuse. It was presented in the vignette as: "Jim has suspicious bruise marks and welts visible on his body and a broken arm. Mother explained this as a fall while he was riding his tricycle."

The second cue is the presence of domestic violence and drug abuse. It is presented in the vignette as: "You are told that Jimmy's mother is currently involved in a violent relationship with her boy friend, and she has been unable to set limits regarding future violence."

The third cue is the availability of services. It is presented in the vignette as: "There is a significant waiting list for daycare. The family would only agree to in home intensive counseling, and this contract was just eliminated. The social worker has a weighted caseload of 24, and is

unable to personally provide intensive services."

Since there are three factors with two possible vignette versions for each factor, there are 8 possible combinations of case summaries.

The following table describes the factorial design of this experiment:

Table V.1 The Design of a 2 Factorial Design Contrasting ABC

Set W	1-A B C	2-A B c
Set X	3-A b c	4-a B C
Set Y	5-a B c	6-A b C
Set Z	7-a b C	8-a b c

A= severe physical injury

B= presence of domestic violence and drug abuse

C= scarcity of services

a= mild physical injury

b= no domestic violence and no drug abuse

c= services available

Respondents rated the factors according to the degree that they felt the child should be removed from a hypothetical situation described in a case vignette. (See appendix for sample of the survey.)

For each of the vignette versions, the respondents were tested in their decision making by answering the following

question:

- 1) I would definitely not recommend the removal of the child.
- 2) would probably not recommend the removal of the child.
- 3) I would probably recommend the removal of the child.
- 4) would definitely recommend the removal of the child.

Respondents rated the factors according to the degree that they felt the child should be removed from a hypothetical situation described in one of eight vignette versions (see appendix for the eight vignette versions).

2. PRE-TEST

The pre-test conducted as part of this study consisted of a survey of managers in the child welfare profession concerning child removal decision making factors. Each participant was given a survey which was three pages long: a) the first page was a cover letter which detailed the study as an investigation of factors that influence decision making by managers; b) one of the four variations (set W, X, Y, or Z) of the second page containing two of the possible eight vignette versions; c) and the third page which was a survey asking for demographic data and their opinion on several questions (see appendix for pre-test survey).

The pre-test consisted of a small sample of individuals similar to the final population that was tested. The pre-test form of the survey allowed for the respondents to comment on the questions, to indicate whether some items are

vague, whether the instrument can be improved upon within various sections, and whether alternative responses should be included within the survey. The method for administering the survey during the pre-test was similar to that of the final study (Borg & Gall, 1971, p. 203-204).

The analysis of the pre-test results yielded much useful data. Items that could not be meaningfully summarized were targeted and eliminated from the final survey (Berdie & Anderson, 1974).

Survey items were checked with the following:

- (1) Does the question ask for only one bit of information?
- (2) Does the question presuppose a certain state of affairs?
- (3) Does the question wording imply a desired answer?
- (4) Are any of the question's words emotionally loaded, vaguely defined or overly general?
- (5) Do any of the question's words have a double meaning that may cause misunderstanding?
- (6) Does the question use abbreviations which may be unfamiliar to respondents?
- (7) Are the response options mutually exclusive and sufficient to cover each conceivable answer?
(Berdie & Anderson, 1974, p. 48)

The pre-test form of the survey provided space for respondents to comment on questions, to indicate whether some items were vague, whether the instrument could be improved upon within various sections, and whether alternative responses should have been included within the survey. Methods for administering the survey during the pre-test were very similar to that of the true study (Borg & Gall, 1971, pp. 203-204).

Respondents were asked to comment on the following issues (see appendix for sample):

- A Do vignettes represent the type of cases and contain information that you are asked to make decisions on?
- B Are any of the items too vague?
- C Can the instrument be improved upon within various sections?
- D Should alternative responses be included within the survey?

Respondents were asked to read the cover letter and complete a questionnaire. Ten surveys were given to DSS supervisors. Six were analyzed as of November 7, 1991. Therefore, the response rate for the pre-test was 60%.

Results for the descriptive portion of the pre-test were as follows:

A. Do the case summaries represent the type of cases and information similar to what you make decisions on?

YES 2 NO 3 No Response 1

COMMENTS:

"The cases are usually more complex and have alot of additional information."

"#1 states no additional information available, if the child had broken arm there would be MD's report and opinion. Same for #2.

"(Yes) but the case was very bland in comparison to what

we see."

"The vignette would lead to more questions being asked."

B. Are any of the items too vague?

YES 5 NO 1

COMMENTS:

"Not enough info--no collateral contacts." "Was this an open case or a new 51-A? Why did the parents agree to counseling? What did they want counseling for? Were collaterals made? Was he examined by a doctor? Was this the first 51-A? How big was the bruise? What did the child say happened?"

C. Can the instrument be improved upon within various sections?

YES 5 NO 0 No Response 1

COMMENTS:

"More detail."

"For what purpose?"

"Needs to be more specific." "More info--more collateral info--any visibility in the community, mother's ability to react--protect--any info about domestic violence--209A--separations--any history of bruises, any arrests--police know this family?"

D. Should alternative responses be included within the survey? YES 2 NO 1 No Response 3

COMMENTS:

"Not if these are the items being measured."

"(Yes) including researching the situation more thoroughly before making a decision."

"Depends on what you are measuring."

E. Any other comments or suggestions?

"What do you mean by #5? # of my own biological children? Too vague."

"More information is needed before any kind of decision can be made. The child needs to be seen by a physician and X-rays need to help determine if injuries were inflicted, or due to an accident, etc."

PRE-TEST RESULTS TO DSS SUPERVISOR SURVEY:

1. Are you currently a DSS supervisor? Yes 6 No 0
2. How many years have you been a DSS supervisor? Average of 6.3 years each.
3. What is your gender? male 4 female 2
4. What is your ethnicity? Black 0 White 6 Hispanic 0 Asian 0 Other 0
5. Number of your children: Average of 0.5 children each.
6. Is physical discipline/spanking ever OK? Yes 6 No 0
7. Were you ever physically disciplined as a child?
Yes 5 No 1
8. If so, do you consider the physical discipline you received to be child abuse? Yes 1 No 5

9. Does the current lack of preventative resources lead to an increase in the number of children being removed from their parents? Yes 4

Analysis of the pre-test data revealed that the topic had much potential for a full research project. A complete statistical analysis of the data was not undertaken due to the small sample size. A larger sample size would be needed for data analysis. However, several general trends emerged:

Some of the respondents appeared uncomfortable answering the questions due to the limited information contained in the vignettes. Many stated that they would have preferred to have further information. Some realized that alternative responses could not be added since the factors included are the ones that are being measured. The managers had a difficult time making decisions when they felt they needed more data. However, the old saying "no decision is a decision" can be aptly applied. By not deciding to remove children, they have in fact decided to allow the children to remain in a situation that might be dangerous.

None of the respondents felt that physical discipline was always wrong. The Department's overall philosophy seems to contradict this finding.

Overall, the feedback was helpful. Information was gained during this preliminary study on the decision making process of Department of Social Services supervisors.

Suggestions were considered and some were incorporated into the larger study.

3. Population and Sample

The population of the study were all middle-managers in the child welfare system. There are four regions within the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. The northeast region includes Lowell, Cambridge, Waltham, Lynn, Lawrence, Haverhill, Framingham, Beverly, etc. Data was taken from managers who worked in the geographical area termed the northeast region within the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. All middle-managers in the northeast region who supervise regular ongoing units, home finding units, investigation units, adolescent units, assessment units, and family life center units were surveyed. Eighty-seven surveys were distributed.

4. Data Collection Techniques

Each participant was given: a) a cover letter which detailed the study as an investigation of factors that influence decision making by managers; b) one of the four variations (set W, X, Y, or Z) of the second page containing two of the possible eight vignette versions; c) and a survey page asking for demographic data and their opinion on several questions (see Appendix for example of questionnaire).

Additionally, a postage-paid return envelope, and a Kennedy half-dollar were provided. Respondents were informed

that the survey of managers focused on why some children are removed from their homes and others are allowed to remain at home.

Of the eighty-seven surveys that were distributed, seventy-three were returned. This represented an excellent response rate of 83.9%.

5. Data Analysis

A multivariate analysis of variance was performed to study data. The three factors of 1) severity of current abuse, 2) the presence of domestic violence and drug abuse, and 3) availability of services, were entered as independent variables. The degree to which the respondents felt the child should or should not be removed was entered as the dependent variable. Results were calculated to determine if a significant multivariate effect was present. An analysis of variance, Fisher PLSD (multiple comparison t-test), were conducted to study the data and examine the hypotheses (Box, Hunter, & Hunter, 1978, pp. 203-204).

D. LIMITATIONS

There were several conceptual shortcomings. The sample was drawn specifically from one geographic area of Massachusetts, and results may not be the same as those found elsewhere. Additionally, only three factors were analyzed. This left out other important variables, such as: parent's mental illness, parent's suicidal ideation, age of the child, community visibility of the child, conceptual framework of manager, etc. Also, this study uses case vignettes to analyze supervisor's decision making. Although the use of vignettes in survey research design may approximate the results that are obtained by researchers using an experimental design (Alexander & Becker, 1978), the results may not be as accurate.

Another limitation of this research design is that it utilized a survey composed primarily of closed questions, which were of the multiple choice variety. They asked the respondent to select from several possible answers. The disadvantage is that "they suggest answers that respondents may not have thought of before; they force respondents into what may be an unnatural frame of reference; and they do not permit them to express the exact shade of their meaning" (Rossi, et al., 1983, p. 207).

One inherent limitation was the feeling that respondents may not have given consistent answers as each views a situation differently. This agrees with Wayne Lee (1971, p. 8), who states:

The rational decision for a decision situation may differ among persons. One reason for this is, as noted, that subjective probabilities differ among people. Another reason is that people evaluate the possible consequences of a decision differently, and the rational decision is dependent on such evaluations.

Another important concept pertains to the scale type and measurement of the vignette measurement technique.

According to Lee (1971, p. 11):

Measurement usually refers to the assignment of a quantity to represent the degree to which some object or event is characterized by some attribute. The development of accurate and reliable measurement methods has been important in all fields of science, and decision theory is no exception. Of particular importance for measurement in decision theory is the concept of scale type. Scale type concerns the degree of arbitrariness in the numbers a measurement method produces...Measurement methods are classified according to the degree of arbitrariness in the measures. The degree of arbitrariness is expressed in terms of the mathematical transformations allowed on a set of measures. If there is no arbitrariness, we speak of an absolute scale.

The vignette survey technique for data gathering has a moderate degree of arbitrariness. This is considered an inherent limitation of the research design.

F. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Abuse

Non-accidental commission of any act by the child's caretaker which creates a substantial risk of, or causes serious emotional or physical injury, or a sexual offense under the laws of that state.

Caretaker

An individual personally responsible for the well-being of a child. This could include a parent, guardian, stepparent, teacher, bus driver, etc.

Child

An individual who has not reached their eighteenth birthday. For the purpose of this study, does not include unborn children.

Child Welfare Manager

An individual who directly supervises the front-line child welfare social worker.

Domestic Violence

A violent incident in a home between a child's caretaker.

Drug Abuse

The ingestion of mind/mood altering drugs that cause a person

to be "high".

Emergency

A situation where the failure of professionals to respond immediately would place a child and/or family at great risk of family disruption, serious physical or emotional injury, or death.

Foster parent

An individual who has been studied and approved by the state to take in and care for children who are in the custody of that state.

Neglect

The failure by a caretaker either through inability or deliberately, to respond to a child's need for minimally adequate clothing, shelter, food, supervision, medical care, emotional stability, and growth. This would not include situations that are due solely to lack of economic resources (Massachusetts Regulations, 1986).

Removal

The initial point that a child is taken from a parent against the parent's will by the child welfare system.

VI. RESULTS

Results of the study are presented in this section. The study surveyed an entire population. This section is organized into two parts:

A) Results for the population are first presented using graphs of a cube and tables that describe differences in means and percent change this represents for the individual component of each hypothesis. Tests for statistical significance were also conducted so that generalizations could be made to other samples beyond the population that was measured. The Fisher PLSD (protected least standard deviation) test for multiple comparisons was calculated to determine the confidence interval of the true difference between the means (Box, Hunter, & Hunter, 1978). Tests for statistical significance were conducted at both the 95% and 83% degree of confidence.

This is important when considering that supervisors averaged only 6.54 years of experience (Table VI.2). This implies a large turnover rate of supervisors within the child welfare system. Tests for statistical significance are important when considering whether the results of this research

can be applied to the same region five to ten years in the future, and other similar populations across the United States. Assuming that regional differences within Massachusetts are not significant, due to the fact that all managers operate using the same policies and procedures, data collected through this research can be applied statewide. Table VI.1 presents the overall analysis of variance table for the multiple comparisons. Of significance is the calculation that $p=.0001$.

TABLE VI.1 Overall Analysis of Variance Table

<u>Source:</u>	<u>Degrees of Freedom</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F-Test</u>
<u>Between Groups</u>	7	<u>69.716482</u>	<u>9.959497</u>	<u>25.423775</u>
<u>Within Groups</u>	136	<u>53.276574</u>	<u>.39174</u>	<u>p= .0001</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>143</u>	<u>122.993056</u>		

B) The results are then presented by analyzing the influence of respondent's: a) gender -Tables VI.8 and 9, b) number of children - Tables VI.10 and 11, c) attitude toward spanking - Tables VI.12 and 13, d) history of spanking - Tables VI.14 and 15, and e) ranking of problems - Tables VI.18 and 19, --on their responses to the vignettes. The results of a question dealing with change within the system is presented (Table VI.20) and the responses allowed the managers to make a proactive statement in regards to social change within the child welfare system.

TABLE VI.2 Background Characteristics of Respondents

CHARACTERISTICS	TOTALS	AVERAGE/PERCENT
<u>SUPERVISORY EXPERIENCE:</u>	477.1 years	Average: 6.54 years
<u>ETHNICITY:</u>	Black 2	Percent: 2.7%
	White 68	93.2%
	Hispanic 2	2.7%
	Asian 1	1.4%
<u>NUMBER OF CHILDREN:</u>	Zero 27	Percent: 37.0%
	One 15	20.5%
	Two 14	19.2%
	Three + 17	23.3%
<u>SPANKING EVER OK?</u>	Yes 35	49.3%
	No 36	50.7%
<u>WERE YOU SPANKED?</u>	Yes 51	69.9%
	No 22	30.1%
<u>WAS THIS SPANKING ABUSE?</u>	Yes 10	19.6%
	No 41	80.4%
<u>LACK OF RESOURCES INCREASE REMOVALS?</u>	Yes 59	84.3%
	No 11	15.7%
<u>WHAT SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT AN ABUSED CHILD? *</u>	a 0	0.0%
	b 49	76.6%
	c 6	9.4%
	d 9	14.1%

* Possible responses for this item:

- a. Child should be removed from care of person who caused the injury the first time incident occurs.
- b. Child should be removed from home only as a last resort.
- c. If it seems unlikely that person who injured child would do it again, its okay to leave child in his/her care.
- d. None of these.

Table VI.2 breaks the data down into groups. Statistical analysis of the ethnicity question was not conducted due to the large number of Caucasians in the population. Similarly, statistical analysis of the history of abuse question was not conducted due to the large number of respondents who stated that the spankings they received was not abuse.

Table VI.3 gives the count of each vignette received from respondents (see Table V.1 for a description of the groups). This table displays the mean, standard deviation, and standard error for each of the eight vignette types. The mean numbers are graphed at the corners of the cube in Graph VI.1.

TABLE VI.3 Group Analysis of Variance Table

<u>Group:</u>	<u>Count:</u>	<u>Mean:</u>	<u>Std. Dev.</u>	<u>Std. Error:</u>
ABC	17	3.117647	.781213	.189472
ABc	17	2.294118	.848875	.205882
Abc	18	1.944444	.639137	.150646
aBC	18	2.777778	.732084	.172554
aBc	18	2	.485071	.114332
AbC	18	2.722222	.669113	.157711
abC	19	1.157895	.374634	.085947
<u>abc</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>1.105263</u>	<u>.315302</u>	<u>.072335</u>

Table VI.4 presents the mean difference, percent change, and Fisher tests at the 95% and 83% confidence levels. The mean difference is placed on the cube to show the distance between the corners.

TABLE VI.4 Main Comparison Table

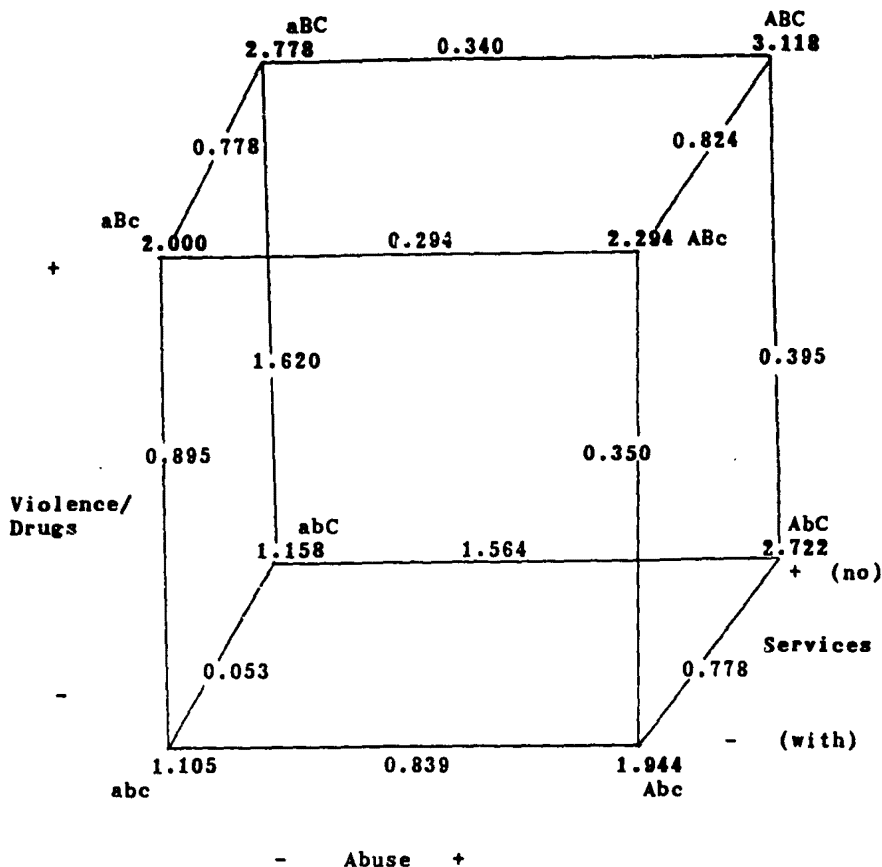
Comparison:	<u>Mean Difference</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>	<u>Fisher PLSD 95%</u>	<u>Fisher PLSD 83%</u>
ABC vs. ABc	.823529	26.4%	.424582*	.296164**
ABC vs. Abc	1.173203	37.7%	.418644*	.292022**
ABC vs. aBC	.339869	10.9%	.418644	.292022**
ABC vs. aBc	1.117647	35.9%	.418644*	.292022**
ABC vs. AbC	.395425	12.7%	.418644	.292022**
ABC vs. abC	1.959752	62.9%	.413258*	.288265**
ABC vs. abc	2.012384	64.6%	.413258*	.288265**
ABc vs. ABc	.349673	15.3%	.418644	.292022**
ABc vs. aBC	.48366	17.4%	.418644*	.292022**
ABc vs. aBc	.294118	12.8%	.418644	.292022**
ABc vs. AbC	.042811	15.7%	.418644*	.292022**
ABc vs. abC	1.136223	49.5%	.413258*	.288265**
ABc vs. abc	1.188854	51.8%	.413258*	.288265**
Abc vs. aBC	.833333	30.0%	.41262 *	.28782 **
Abc vs. aBc	.055556	2.8%	.41262	.28782 **
Abc vs. AbC	.777778	28.6%	.41262 *	.28782 **
Abc vs. abC	.78655	40.4%	.407155*	.284007**
Abc vs. abc	.839181	43.2%	.407155*	.284007**
aBC vs. aBc	.777778	28.0%	.41262 *	.28782 **
aBC vs. AbC	.055556	2.0%	.41262	.28782
aBC vs. abC	1.619883	58.3%	.407155*	.284007**
aBC vs. abc	1.672515	60.2%	.407155*	.284007**
aBc vs. AbC	.722222	26.5%	.41262 *	.28782 **
aBc vs. abC	.842105	42.1%	.407155*	.284007**
aBc vs. abc	.894737	44.8%	.407155*	.284007**
AbC vs. abC	1.564327	57.5%	.407155*	.284007**
AbC vs. abc	1.616959	59.4%	.407155*	.284007**
abc vs. abc	.052632	4.6%	.401615	.280143

* significant at 95% level

** significant at 83% level

Note: The mean difference and the percent change numbers are given in terms of their absolute value, therefore no negative numbers appear within this table.

GRAPH VI.1
Graphical View of the Full 2³ Factorial Experiment



This graph shows the average ratings from the eight different vignettes. The data were taken from Table VI.3 and Table VI.4. The bold faced numbers at the corners of the cube are the average ratings and the plain text is the difference between the connected ratings. (See Table V.1 for an

explanation of large and small case letters at the corners of the cube).

A) ANALYSIS OF THE HYPOTHESES:

Each hypotheses will be analyzed by viewing a cube with its data present.

Hypotheses 1 states that: "The certainty of managers removing a child from his/her parents increases when there is evidence of severe physical injury to the child, along with the presence of general domestic violence and drug abuse by the parents."

This hypotheses is confirmed. This can be seen by viewing Graph VI.2. The dashed lines on the cube show the data that bears upon hypothesis 1. In each case the numbers are larger when moving from the point on the cube where only abuse or drug abuse/domestic violence is present, to the point where both are present. This same results hold whether or not services are present. In all cases there is at least a ten percent change (increase) when comparing each segment of the hypothesis. The specific data compared for this hypothesis is presented in Table VI.3.

Tests for statistical significance at the 95% and 83% level are presented in Table VI.4. The Fisher tests showed significance for two out of the six comparisons at the 95% confidence level. Those with significance at the 95% level were the comparisons of: ABC versus abC, and ABc versus abc. The Fisher test at the 83% confidence level showed significance for all six comparisons.

GRAPH VI.2 A Graphical View of Hypothesis 1

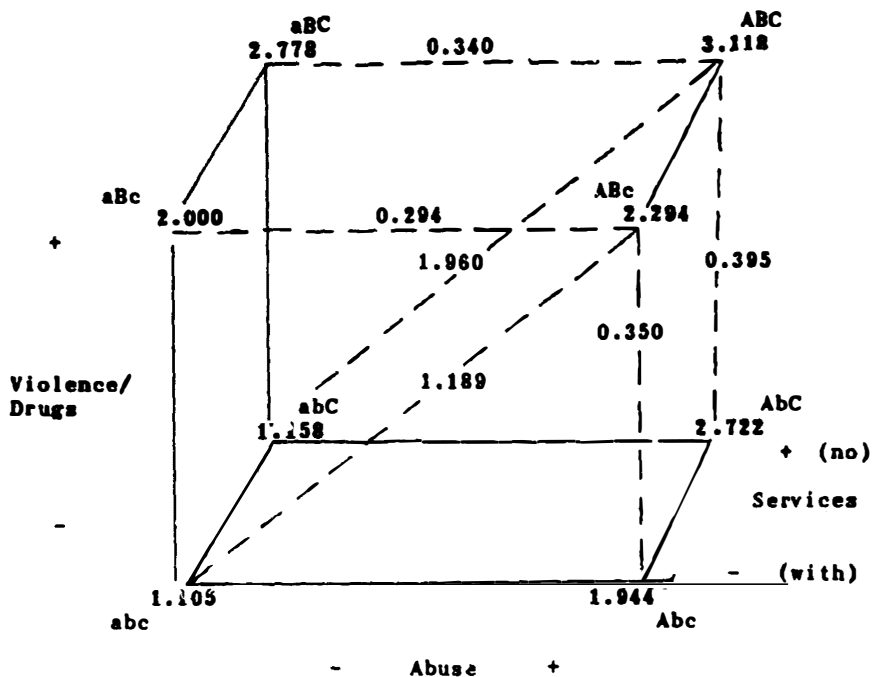


TABLE VI.5 Comparison of Mean Difference for Hypothesis 1

<u>Comparison:</u>	<u>Mean Difference</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
ABC vs. aBC	.339869	10.9%
ABC vs. AbC	.395425	12.7%
ABC vs. abC	1.959752	62.9%
ABc vs. Abc	.349673	15.3%
ABc vs. aBc	.294118	12.8%
ABc vs. abc	1.188854	51.8%

Hypotheses 2 states that: "The likelihood of managers removing a child from his/her parents is greater with the evidence of severe physical injury to the child than with the presence of only general domestic violence and drug abuse by the parents."

This hypotheses is not confirmed. This can be seen by viewing Graph VI.3. The two dashed lines on the cube show the data that bears upon hypothesis 2. In each case the mean difference was 0.056 larger when moving from the point on the cube where only drug abuse/domestic violence was present, as compared to the point where only abuse was present. This represents a 2.8% change in the direction opposite to what was predicted by hypothesis 2. This same result holds whether or not services are present. The specific data compared for this hypothesis is presented in Table VI.6.

Tests for statistical significance at the 95% and 83% level are presented in Table VI.4. The Fisher test at the 95% level does not show significance for either of the two comparisons (Abc versus aBc or aBC versus AbC).

Significance was found at the 83% level on the Abc versus aBc comparison. However, no statistical significance was found on the aBC versus AbC comparison at the 63% confidence level on Hypothesis 2. Therefore, no generalizations will be made to populations beyond that surveyed for this research.

GRAPH VI.3 A Graphical View of Hypothesis 2.

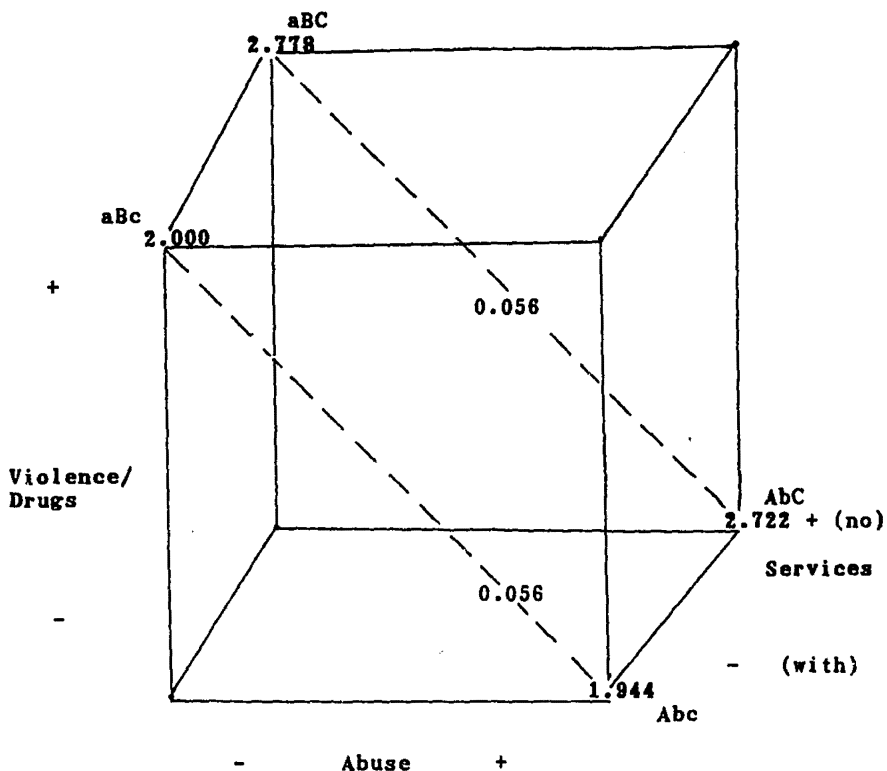


TABLE VI.3 Comparison of Mean Difference for Hypothesis 2.

<u>Comparison:</u>	<u>Mean Difference</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
Abc vs. aBc	.055556	2.8%
aBC vs. AbC	.055556	2.8%

Hypotheses 3 states that: "The certainty of managers removing a child from his/her parents increases proportionately to the lack of services, such as: daycare, in-home intensive counseling, and the availability of the agency social worker."

This hypotheses is confirmed for the population that was surveyed. This can be seen by viewing Graph VI.4. The four dashed lines on the cube show the data that bears upon hypothesis 3. In each case, the mean difference was larger when moving from the point on the cube where services were available to the point where they were not available. This same result holds whether or not services are present. The specific data compared for this hypothesis is presented in Table VI.4.

Tests for statistical significance at the 95% and 83% level are presented in Table VI.4. The Fisher tests shows significance for three out of the four comparisons. No significance was found when going from no abuse-no violence/ no drugs-services to no abuse-no violence/no drugs - no services (abc versus abC). This is not surprising, as the percent change between these two variables was only 4.6%, and it would be unlikely for managers to recommend the removal of a child when there are no problems present. Otherwise, the results of this hypothesis can be applied to other samples taken from similar populations.

GRAPH VI.4 A Graphical View of Hypothesis 3-

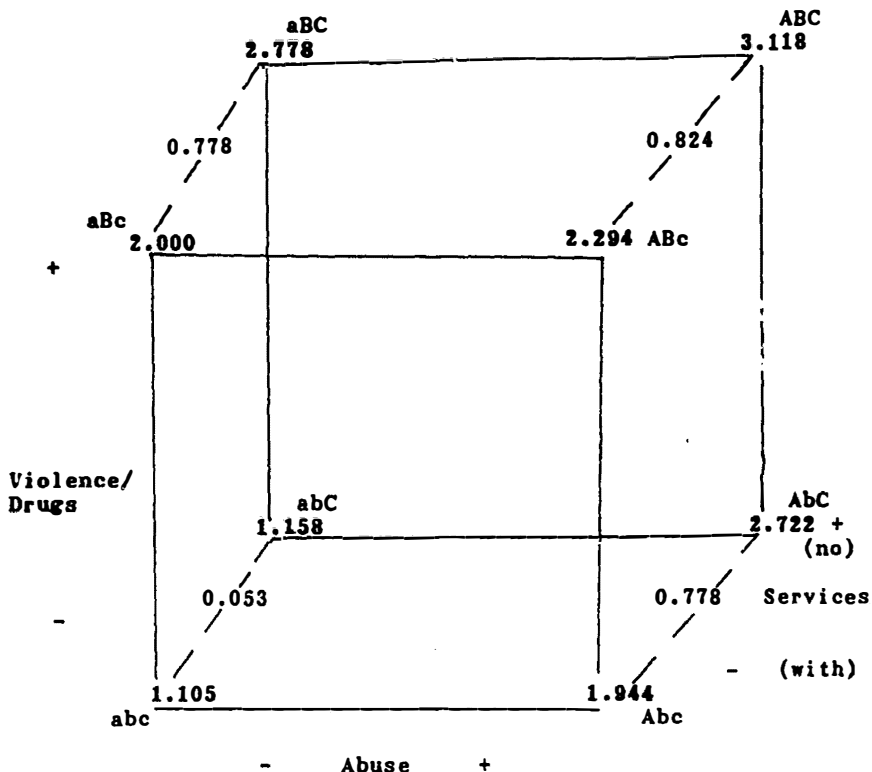


TABLE VI.7 Comparison of Mean Difference for Hypothesis 3.

<u>Comparison:</u>	<u>Mean Difference</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
aBC vs. aBc	0.778	28.0%
ABC vs. Abc	0.824	26.4%
abc vs. Abc	0.053	4.6%
AbC vs. Abc	0.778	28.6%

B) RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHIC AND OPINION ANALYSIS

The effect of respondent demographical data and their opinions on key issues will now be presented.

Table VI.8 presents the ANOVA table for gender. The P value of .0001 shows that the different vignettes the respondents read did affect their ratings. Additionally, this table shows, from the P value of .0503, that there is a 5.03% chance that the gender of the respondents is insignificant and does not affect the results. The P value of .0589 shows that there is a 5.89% chance that there is no interaction effect between the gender and the vignette that they read.

TABLE VI.8 ~~ANOVA Table for a 2-factor Analysis of Variance on Gender~~

Source:	Degrees of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F-Test	P-Value
Group (A)	7	59.551381	8.50734	23.239836	.0001
Gender (B)	1	1.429157	1.429157	3.904086	.0503
AB	7	5.146372	0.735196	2.008364	.0589
Error	128	46.856593	0.366067		

Table VI.9 describes the breakdown of gender across each vignette. The ABC rating by the males was a full point higher than the females. The male respondents were 33.3% more likely to ask for the removal of a child when severe abuse, domestic violence/drugs, and services were present than the female respondents. This was the highest percent difference

between the two groups. Overall, males were 11.9% more likely to recommend removal than females.

TABLE VI.9 Incidence Table on Gender

<u>Group</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Totals:</u>
ABC #:	5	12	17
Ave. Rating:	3.4	3	3.117647
ABc	5	12	17
	3	2	2.294118
Abc	5	13	18
	1.6	2.076923	1.944444
aBC	5	13	18
	3	2.692308	2.777778
aBc	8	10	18
	1.875	2.1	2
AbC	8	10	18
	2.875	2.6	2.722222
abC	5	14	19
	1.2	1.142857	1.157895
abc	5	14	19
	1.4	1	1.105263
Totals:	46	98	144
	2.304348	2.030612	2.118056

Table VI.10 presents the factor analysis of variance on the number of respondents' children. The P-value of .0001 shows that the different vignettes the respondents read did

affect their ratings. However, this table also shows from examining the P-value of .6534 that there is a 65.34% chance that the number of children of the respondents is insignificant and does not affect the results. The P value of .6599 shows that there is a 65.99% chance that there is no interaction effect between the number of children and the vignette that they read.

TABLE VI.10 ANOVA table for a 2-factor Analysis of Variance on Number of Children

<u>Source:</u>	<u>Degrees of Freedom</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F-Test</u>	<u>P-Value</u>
<u>Group (A)</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>25.488863</u>	<u>6.488423</u>	<u>16.00198</u>	<u>.0001</u>
<u>Children (B)</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0.662415</u>	<u>0.220805</u>	<u>0.543719</u>	<u>.6534</u>
<u>AB</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>7.204851</u>	<u>0.343088</u>	<u>0.844834</u>	<u>.6599</u>
<u>Error</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>45.483333</u>	<u>0.406101</u>		

Table VI.11 shows that respondents with 1 child of their own were the least likely to ask for the removal of children. They were 11.9% below the average of all respondents. Those with 2 children were the most likely to ask for the removal of children. However, they were only 6.67% above the average. The respondents with 0 children differed from those with 3 or more children by only 1.3%.

TABLE VI.11 Incidence Table on Number of Children

Group	Children:	0	1	2	3+	Totals:
ABC		7	2	3	5	17
		3.427	3	2.333	3.2	3.118
ABc		7	2	3	5	17
		2.571	2.5	2	2	2.294
Abc		6	3	5	4	18
		2.333	1.667	2	1.5	1.944
aBC		6	3	5	4	18
		2.667	3	2.8	2.75	2.778
aBc		6	3	3	5	18
		2	1.667	1.667	2	2
AbC		6	3	3	5	18
		2.667	2.667	2.667	2.8	2.722
abC		8	7	7	3	19
		1	1.429	1.429	1	1.158
abc		8	7	7	3	19
		1	1.143	1.143	1.333	1.105
<hr/>						
Totals:		54	30	30	34	144
		2.148	1.867	1.867	2.176	2.118

Table VI.12 presents the ANOVA table for the attitude toward spanking. The P value of .0001 shows that the different vignettes the respondents read did affect their ratings.

However, this table also shows from the P value of .0961

that there is only a 9.61% chance that the attitude towards spanking is insignificant and does not affect the results. The P value of .0374 shows that there is only a 3.74% chance that there is no interaction effect between their attitude toward spanking and their response to the vignette.

A further review of the data from Table VI.13 shows that those who feel that spanking might be all right in certain situations, are more likely to recommend the removal of children from their parents when both severe abuse and domestic violence/substance abuse are present (ABc and ABC); then those who feel spanking is never all right. The breakdown for the availability of services in this situation is as follows: when no services are present they are 16% more likely to ask for the removal of the child, and when services are present they are 29.4% more likely to ask for removal than the group opposed to spanking.

TABLE VI.12 ANOVA table for a 2 factor Analysis of Variance on Attitude Toward Spanking.

<u>Source:</u>	<u>Degrees of Freedom</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F-Test</u>	<u>P-Value</u>
Group (A)	7	64.904548	9.272078	24.98082	.0001
Attitude (B)	1	1.043835	1.043835	2.812298	.0961
AB	7	5.752189	0.821741	2.213834	.0374
Error	124	46.02482	0.371168		

TABLE VI.13 Incidence Table on Attitude Toward Spanking

<u>Group</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Totals:</u>
ABC	7	9	16
	3.429	2.889	3.125
ABc	6	10	16
	2.833	2	2.313
Abc	10	8	18
	1.9	2	1.944
aBC	10	8	18
	3	2.5	2.778
aBc	6	11	17
	2	2	2
AbC	6	11	17
	3	2.636	2.765
abC	12	7	19
	1	1.429	1.159
abc	12	7	19
	1	1.286	1.105
Totals:	69	71	140
	2.087	2.141	2.114

Tables VI.14 and VI.15 present the data regarding whether the respondents' history of being spanked affects their decision making on the removal of children from their parents.

The P-value of .0001 from Table VI.16 shows that the different vignettes the respondents read affected their ratings. However, Table VI.14 also demonstrates from the P-value of .638 that there is a 63.8% chance that whether or not the respondents were themselves spanked is insignificant and does not affect the results.

An analysis of the P-value of .6696 shows that there is a 66.96% chance that there is no interaction effect between the respondents history of being spanked and the vignette that they read.

Table VI.14 ANOVA table for a 2-factor Analysis of Variance on History of Spanking

<u>Source:</u>	<u>Degrees of Freedom</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F-Test</u>	<u>P-Value</u>
Group (A)	7	58.123355	8.303336	20.760594	.0001
Spanked (B)	1	0.088947	0.088947	0.222391	.638
AB	7	1.967645	0.281092	0.702807	.6696
Error	128	51.194444	0.399957		

An analysis of Table VI.15 shows that the greatest difference between those that had a history of spanking and those that did not occurred when they were rating the aBc vignette. The respondents rating the aBc vignette who had no history of being spanked were 25.7% more likely to recommend the removal of a child from its parents than those who had a history of being spanked. Overall, those who had no history of being spanked were 4.2% more likely to recommend the removal of a child than those who had been spanked.

TABLE VI.15 The Incidence Table on History of Spanking

<u>Group</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Totals:</u>
ABC	8	9	17
	3.125	3.111	3.118
ABc	8	9	17
	2.375	2.222	2.294
Abc	14	4	18
	2	1.75	1.944
aBC	14	4	18
	2.786	2.75	2.778
aBc	14	4	18
	1.857	2.5	2
AbC	14	4	18
	2.785	2.5	2.722
abC	14	5	19
	1.214	1	1.158
abc	14	5	19
	1.143	1	1.105
Totals:	100	44	144
	2.09	2.182	2.118

Tables VI.16 and VI.17 present data on how respondents opinions on the availability of resources affected their decision making.

The P value of .0001 from Table VI.16 shows that the different vignettes the respondents read affected their ratings. However, this table also shows from the P value of

.8909 that there is a 89.09% chance that their attitude toward the availability of resources is insignificant and does not affect the results. The P value of .414 shows that there is a 41.4% chance that there is no interaction effect between the number of children and the vignette that they read.

Table VI.17 shows that those who feel that a lack of resources causes more children to be removed from their parents, when making decisions on the vignettes were actually less likely to seek removals. However, the difference was only 2.5%. The vignettes that actually tested decision making on the lack of resource issue were ABC, AbC, aBC, and abC. Interestingly, on these four vignettes the respondents who stated that a lack of resources does not affect their decision making were 4.6% more likely than the other group to recommend the removal of children when resources were lacking!

Overall, a large percentage of respondents stated that a lack of resources does affect decision making.

TABLE VI.16 ANOVA table for a 2-factor Analysis of Variance on Lack of Resources

Source:	Degrees of Freedom	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F-Test	P-Value
Group (A)	7	53.316321	4.759474	11.702277	.0001
Resources (B)	1	0.007679	0.007679	0.018879	.8909
AB	7	2.931522	0.418789	1.02969	.414
Error	122	49.619048	0.406714		

Table VI.17 The Incidence Table on Lack of Resources

<u>Group</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Totals:</u>
ABC	15	2	17
	3.133	3	3.118
ABc	15	2	17
	2.4	1.5	2.294
Abc	15	2	17
	1.933	2	1.941
aBC	15	2	17
	2.733	3.5	2.824
aBc	14	4	18
	1.929	2.25	2
AbC	14	4	18
	2.714	2.75	2.722
abC	15	2	17
	1.2	1	1.176
abc	15	2	17
	1.133	1	1.118
Totals:	118	20	138
	2.144	2.2	2.152

Question number 11 on the survey asked: Rank order (1, 2, & 3) what is the importance of these problems: physical abuse, domestic violence & drug abuse, and a lack of resources. Tables VI.18 and VI.19 report the data on this question.

Table VI.18 The Incidence Table on the Importance of Problems

<u>Group</u>	<u>123</u>	<u>132</u>	<u>213</u>	<u>231</u>	<u>312</u>	<u>321</u>	<u>Totals</u>
ABC	0	2	5	2	3	5	17
-		3	3.2	3.5	3.33	2.8	3.118
ABc	0	2	5	2	3	5	17
-		2	2.8	2	2.33	2	2.294
Abc	0	1	5	1	4	5	16
-		2	2	2	1.75	1.6	1.823
aBC	0	1	5	1	4	5	16
-		3	2.6	2	3.25	2.6	2.75
aBc	0	0	8	2	2	5	17
-		-	2	2	2	2	2
AbC	0	0	8	2	2	5	17
-		-	2.88	3	2.5	2.8	2.824
abC	2	0	5	2	5	4	18
1	-		1	1.5	1	1.25	1.111
abc	2	0	5	2	5	4	18
1	-		1	1	1	1.5	1.111
<hr/>							
Totals:	4	6	46	14	28	38	138
	1	2.5	2.217	2.143	2	2.105	2.110

Table VI.18 describes the incidence of the ratings of the importance of each factor. The ordering of the problems, beginning with the order that received the most responses was: 2-1-3, 3-2-1, 3-1-2, 2-3-1, 1-3-2, and 1-2-3. The average ratings in their rated order of importance was: 1.55 -domestic violence and drug abuse, 2.0-lack of services, and 2.45-physical

abuse. This rating corresponded to the respondents rejection of Hypothesis 2, where domestic violence and drug abuse caused children to be removed more often then physical abuse.

Table VI.19 shows that there does not appear to be any interaction effect between these answers.

Table VI.19 ANOVA table for a 2-factor Analysis of Variance on the Importance of Problems

<u>Source:</u>	<u>Degrees of Freedom</u>	<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F-Test</u>	<u>P-Value</u>
<u>Group (A)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>23.455243</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
<u>Rank (B)</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0.449395</u>	<u>0.149798</u>	<u>0.342376</u>	<u>.7947</u>
<u>AB</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>0.410981</u>	<u>0.016439</u>	<u>0.037573</u>	<u>1.0</u>
<u>Error</u>	<u>98</u>	<u>42.877497</u>	<u>0.437525</u>		

Question 12 asked respondents to rank order (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9) what is the importance of these changes: court reform, lower caseloads, increased pay, better trainings, less paperwork, foster care system overhaul, implementation of new initiative to prevent the removal of children from their parents (family preservation), positive media coverage and increase DSS revenue from outside sources. Lower caseloads was ranked as the most important item for change. Table VI.20 presents the respondents ranking of the importance of these changes to the child welfare system.

TABLE VI.20 Ranking of the Importance of Systemic Change

- 2 Court Reform
- 1
- 6 Increased Pay
- 8 Better Trainings
- 5 Less Paperwork
- 4 Foster Care System Overhaul
- 3 Implementation of Family Preservation
- 9 Positive Media Coverage
- 7 Increase DSS Revenue from outside sources.

VII. CONCLUSION: RELATIONSHIP TO SOCIAL CHANGE

The significance of this study is that it gives insight into three factors that child welfare managers use when they are deciding whether to remove a child from his/her parents. The literature review found no studies which focused specifically on child removal decision making factors by managers. This is significant because managers are constantly evaluating the suitability of care children are given. The decision on whether to remove a child from his/her parents and siblings has an effect that lasts a lifetime. This study addresses the fear that these decisions are arbitrary, and are based on the availability of resources (Polansky, Ammons, & Weathersby, 1993).

This study also provides further tools for those advocating for increased funding for children's services. This is significant because the results showed that children are more likely to be removed from their parents if resources (day care, intensive in-home counseling, and the availability of the case worker) are not available.

This researcher is an employee of the agency that was surveyed. It is felt that jointly researching and working for an agency is an excellent approach to research. When the agency's own personnel conduct the study, it is more likely that the research will benefit the agency, as opposed to only

advancing the scholarly discipline of applied behavioral analysis. Hopefully, this can help address the growing concern that "the advancements in technologies for therapeutically changing human behavior that have been reflected in the professional research literature are not being so reflected in the day-to-day practices within existing human service agencies" (Reid, 1987, p. 7).

According to Reid (1987, p. 5):

University researchers have really been responsible for the bulk of the development of applied behavior analysis. Unfortunately, though, the advances that have occurred to date have been more in the development of the academic discipline of applied behavior analysis than in the human service agencies in which the research has been conducted. Although applied behavior analysis focuses on resolving problems of social significance through research, most behavior analysis research projects have not resulted in a thorough resolution of an existing problem in a human service agency.

The general purpose of this research was to study the context and process of decisions made by child welfare supervisors to remove children from their parents. This role is one of social control and it is one of the most intrusive acts that a government can take. The government has been responding to the exploding problems of violence and drug use by removing more children from their parents each year.

The research was accomplished by studying the effect that three specific factors have on that decision. The three factors were 1) physical abuse, 2) domestic violence and substance abuse, and 3) the availability of services to help

the family.

The theoretical framework for understanding the microstructure and interplay of the variables was provided through a discussion of decision theory. Current decision making within the child welfare system was viewed through the framework of decision theory. The study rationale included the presentation of an integrated approach that led to development of the scale that was used to rate the specific variables that were studied. An emphasis was placed on survey research methods used by managers to help determine decision making factors.

Eighty-seven child welfare supervisors were surveyed from the north east region of the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. The prediction that the combination of the factors of physical abuse and domestic violence/ substance abuse would increase the certainty of a manager removing a child from his parents was confirmed by the data. The prediction that the likelihood of managers removing a child from his/her parents is greater with evidence of severe physical injury to the child than with the presence of only general domestic violence and substance abuse by parents was not supported by the data. The prediction that the certainty of managers removing a child from his/her parents increases with lack of services (such as daycare, in-home intensive counseling, and the availability of the agency worker) was

confirmed by data.

Managers rated the importance of the factors studied in the following order: 1) Domestic violence/substance abuse, 2) Lack of services, and 3) physical abuse. When asked to rank importance of change within the system, supervisors placed the issues in the following order:

- 1) Lower caseloads, 2) Court reform, 3) Implementation of a system to keep families together ("Family Preservation"),
- 4) Foster care system overhaul, 5) Less paperwork,
- 6) Increased pay, 7) Increase revenue from outside sources,
- 8) Better trainings, and 9) Positive media coverage.

Analysis of demographic and attitudinal variables indicated a relationship to decision making. Variables that were analyzed included influence of manager's gender, number of children, attitude toward spanking, history of spanking, and their opinion on importance of problems and solutions to challenges within the system.

Another finding was that managers required a broad range of specific data in order to make good decisions. Managers delayed making decisions when they felt they needed more data. However, this places children at risk. Managers should be trained to make the best decisions with the data that they have on hand.

Findings of this study point to continued need for implementation of specific criteria to guide supervisory

decision making. Formulation of sound decision making guides will not only increase supervisor's competence when deciding to remove children from a parent(s), but will also help to improve the efficacy of decisions for both removal and non-removal interventions.

As a consequence of this study, useful information is provided for those interested in protective services for children, e.g., social workers, managers, students, lawyers, child advocates, and society as a whole.

New knowledge learned from this study will be fed back to the Massachusetts Department of Social Services. Hopefully the Department's leadership will use the data as a base and begin to implement planned systems change. Feedback from survey research could have a powerful influence if an agency's leadership decides to analyze and apply its lessons.

Although further research is needed to determine what other factors motivate child welfare managers to remove or not to remove children, this study helps to clarify three specific factors that were investigated. This could enable child welfare managers to better provide children and their families with help to which they are entitled (Elkind, et al., 1977).

In the future, studies will need to wrestle with the difficult methodological issues of definition, and appropriate measures of outcome and success. Necessary data vital to program planning will be difficult to produce; yet without

such studies there is only a limited hope in preventing the removal of children and slowing the damage from its current acceleration.

VIII. APPENDIX

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C. QUESTIONNAIRES
1. PRE-TEST COVER LETTER

My name is Chuck Lorbeer, and I am a supervisor in the Lowell DSS Area Office. I am conducting a survey of DSS supervisors as part of a dissertation I am completing for a Ph.D. in Public Administration. Please find attached a short survey that is being given to child welfare supervisors in the Northeast geographical area. Your voluntary participation in this survey is greatly appreciated. There are no right or wrong answers. All individual responses are anonymous and strictly confidential. Only group responses will be analyzed. Results will be available to anyone who requests a copy. I hoped that the results of the research will give further insight into the factors that influence supervisor/management decision making. The survey will take no more than 10 minutes.

The survey consists of 3 parts. Part A consists of two short case vignettes. Each vignette is followed by one question. Each survey has a different mix of vignettes. Part B and C consist of questions concerning your background and a critique of the survey. The entire survey should take no more than 10 minutes. It is important that you answer all items. Questions and comments can be noted on the back of the survey.

Once you complete the survey, please return it to me in the attached envelope as soon as possible. Thank you very much for your participation! It is appreciated!

2. PRE-TEST DSS SUPERVISOR SURVEY

(NOTE: PART A of Pre-test is identical to part A of the full study, which is presented below.)

PART B

1. Are you currently a DSS supervisor? Yes___ No___
2. How many years have you been a DSS supervisor? ___years
3. What is your gender? male___ female___
4. What is your ethnicity? Black___ White___ Hispanic___
Asian___ Other___
5. Number of your children: 0___ 1___ 2___ 3+___
6. Is physical discipline/spanking ever OK? Yes___ No___
7. Were you ever physically disciplined as a child?
Yes___ No___
8. If so, do you consider the physical discipline you
received to be child abuse? Yes___ No___
9. Does the current lack of preventative resources lead to an
increase in the number of children being removed from their
parents? Yes___ No___

3. PRE-TEST CHILD WELFARE SURVEY

PART C

A Do the vignettes represent the type of cases and contain information that you are asked to make decisions on?

YES___ NO___

COMMENTS_____

B Are any of the items too vague?

YES___ NO___

COMMENTS_____

C Can the instrument be improved upon within various sections?

YES___ NO___

COMMENTS_____

D Should alternative responses be included within the survey?

YES___ NO___

COMMENTS_____

E Any other comments or suggestions? _____

4. COVER LETTER FOR FULL SURVEY

Dear Supervisor,

My name is Chuck Lorbeer, and I am a supervisor in the Lowell DSS Area Office. I am conducting a voluntary survey of DSS supervisors as part of a dissertation I am completing for a Ph.D. in Public Administration. Your Area Director supports this research and has approved of me distributing this survey to you. Please find attached a short survey that is being given to DSS supervisors in the Northeast geographical region. Your voluntary participation in this survey is greatly appreciated. There are no right or wrong answers. All individual responses are anonymous and strictly confidential. Only group responses will be analyzed. Results will be available to anyone who requests a copy. It is hoped that the results of the research will give further insight into the factors that influence supervisor/management decision making. The survey will take no more than 10 minutes.

The survey consists of 2 parts. Part A consists of two short case vignettes. Each vignette is followed by one question. Surveys differ in their mix of vignettes. Part B asks for demographic data and your opinion on several questions. The entire survey should take no more than 5 - 10 minutes. Please answer all items as requested.

Although the enclosed case summaries approximate the types of situations we see, they contain less information than we usually like to have. Please make your decision based on the information contained in the case summary.

It is VERY IMPORTANT to the validity of the research that a large percentage of responses are returned. As a token of my appreciation I've enclosed a 'thank you incentive'.

Once you complete the survey, please return it to me in the attached postage-paid envelope as soon as possible. Thank you very much for your participation! It is appreciated!

Sincerely,

Chuck Lorbeer

5. VIGNETTES FOR PRE-TEST AND STUDY

PART A: VIGNETTES

Set W

1-A B C

Jimmy is a three year old boy who resides in the local area. Today, your office received information from a professional alleging that he is at risk at home. Jimmy has suspicious bruise marks and welts visible on his body and a broken arm. Mother explained this as a fall while he was riding his tricycle. You are told that Jimmy's mother is currently involved in a violent relationship with her boyfriend, and she has been unable to set limits regarding future violence. Both parents have a history of substance abuse and mother recently showed reduced effectiveness due to intoxication. There is a significant waiting list for daycare. The family would only agree to in home intensive counseling, and this contract was just eliminated. The social worker has a weighted caseload of 24, and is unable to personally provide intensive services." There is no other information. Please circle your answer:

- 1) I would definitely not recommend the removal of the child.
- 2) I would probably not recommend the removal of the child.
- 3) I would probably recommend the removal of the child.
- 4) I would definitely recommend the removal of the child.

2-A B c

Jimmy is a three year old boy who resides in the local area. Today, your office received information from a professional alleging that he is at risk at home. Jimmy has suspicious bruise marks and welts visible on his body and a broken arm. Mother explained this as a fall while he was riding his tricycle. You are told that Jimmy's mother is currently involved in a violent relationship with her boyfriend, and she has been unable to set limits regarding future violence. Both parents have a history of substance abuse and mother recently showed reduced effectiveness due to intoxication. The family would only agree to in home intensive counseling, and a slot will be available soon. The social worker has a weighted caseload of 18, and is able to personally provide intensive services." There is no other information. Please circle your answer:

- 1) I would definitely not recommend the removal of the child.
- 2) would probably not recommend the removal of the child.
- 3) would probably recommend the removal of the child.
- 4) would definitely recommend the removal of the child.

SET X

3-A b c

Jimmy is a three year old boy who resides in the local area. Today, your office received information from a professional alleging that he is at risk at home. Jimmy has suspicious bruise marks and welts visible on his body and a broken arm. Mother explained this as a fall while he was riding his tricycle. You are told that Jimmy's mother is currently living with her husband. Neither parent has a history of substance abuse. Jimmy has been referred for daycare and an opening will occur next week. The family would only agree to in home intensive counseling, and a slot will be available soon. The social worker has a weighted caseload of 18, and is able to personally provide intensive services." There is no other information. Please circle your answer:

- 1) would definitely not recommend the removal of the child.
- 2) would probably not recommend the removal of the child.
- 3) I would probably recommend the removal of the child.
- 4) would definitely recommend the removal of the child.

4-a B C

Jimmy is a three year old boy who resides in the local area. Today, your office received information from a professional

alleging that he is at risk at home. Jimmy has a suspicious bruise mark visible on his back. Mother explained this as a fall while he was riding his tricycle. You are told that Jimmy's mother is currently involved in a violent relationship with her boyfriend, and she has been unable to set limits regarding future violence. Both parents have a history of substance abuse and mother recently showed reduced effectiveness due to intoxication. There is a significant waiting list for daycare. The family would only agree to in home intensive counseling, and this contract was just eliminated. The social worker has a weighted caseload of 24, and is unable to personally provide intensive services." . There is no other information. Please circle your answer:

- 1) would definitely not recommend the removal of the child.
- 2) would probably not recommend the removal of the child.
- 3) would probably recommend the removal of the child.
- 4) would definitely recommend the removal of the child.

SET Y

5-a B c

Jimmy is a three year old boy who resides in the local area. Today, your office received information from a professional alleging that he is at risk at home. Jimmy has a suspicious bruise mark visible on his back. Mother explained this as a

fall while he was riding his tricycle. You are told that Jimmy's mother is currently involved in a violent relationship with her boy friend, and she has been unable to set limits regarding future violence. Both parents have a history of substance abuse and mother recently showed reduced effectiveness due to intoxication. Jimmy has been referred for daycare and an opening will occur next week. The family would only agree to in home intensive counseling, and a slot will be available soon. The social worker has a weighted caseload of 18, and is able to personally provide intensive services." There is no other information. Please circle your answer:

- 1) I would definitely not recommend the removal of the child.
- 2) I would probably not recommend the removal of the child.
- 3) I would probably recommend the removal of the child.
- 4) I would definitely recommend the removal of the child.

6-A b C

Jimmy is a three year old boy who resides in the local area. Today, your office received information from a professional alleging that he is at risk at home. Jimmy has suspicious bruise marks and welts visible on his body and a broken arm. Mother explained this as a fall while he was riding his

tricycle. You are told that Jimmy's mother is currently living with her husband. Neither parent has a history of substance abuse. There is a significant waiting list for daycare. The family would only agree to in home intensive counseling, and this contract was just eliminated. The social worker has a weighted caseload of 24, and is unable to personally provide intensive services." There is no other information. Please circle your answer:

- 1) I would definitely not recommend the removal of the child.
- 2) I would probably not recommend the removal of the child.
- 3) I would probably recommend the removal of the child.
- 4) I would definitely recommend the removal of the child.

SET Z

7-a b C

Jimmy is a three year old boy who resides in the local area. Today, your office received information from a professional alleging that he is at risk at home. Jimmy has a suspicious bruise mark visible on his back. Mother explained this as a fall while he was riding his tricycle. You are told that Jimmy's mother is currently living with her husband. Neither parent has a history of substance abuse. There is a significant waiting list for daycare. The family would only

agree to in home intensive counseling, and this contract was just eliminated. The social worker has a weighted caseload of 24, and is unable to personally provide intensive services." There is no other information. Please circle your answer:

- 1) I would definitely not recommend the removal of the child.
- 2) I would probably not recommend the removal of the child. 3) I would probably recommend the removal of the child.
- 4) I would definitely recommend the removal of the child.

8-a b c

Jimmy is a three year old boy who resides in the local area. Today, your office received information from a professional alleging that he is at risk at home. Jimmy has a suspicious bruise mark visible on his back. Mother explained this as a fall while he was riding his tricycle. You are told that Jimmy's mother is currently living with her husband. Neither parent has a history of substance abuse. Jimmy has been referred for daycare and an opening will occur next week. The family would only agree to in home intensive counseling, and a slot will be available soon. The social worker has a weighted caseload of 18, and is able to personally provide intensive services." There is no other information. Please circle your answer:

- 1) I would definitely not recommend the removal of the child.
- 2) I would probably not recommend the removal of the child.
- 3) I would probably recommend the removal of the child.
- 4) I would definitely recommend the removal of the child.

PART B: DSS SUPERVISOR SURVEY

1. Are you currently a DSS supervisor? Yes___ No___
2. How many years have you been a DSS supervisor? ___years
3. What is your gender? male_____ female_____
4. What is your ethnicity? Black___ White___ Hispanic___
Asian___ Other___
5. Number of your own children: 0___ 1___ 2___ 3+___
6. Is physical discipline/spanking ever OK? Yes___ No___
7. Were you ever physically disciplined as a child? Yes___ No___
8. If so, do you consider the physical discipline you received to be child abuse? Yes___ No___
9. Does the current lack of preventative resources lead to an increase in the number of children being removed from their parents? Yes___ No___
10. What should be done about an abused child? Circle one:
 - a. Child should be removed from care of person who caused the injury the first time incident occurs.
 - b. Child should be removed from home only as a last resort.
 - c. If it seems unlikely that person who injured child would do it again, its okay to leave child in his/her care.
 - d. None of these.

PLEASE RANK ORDER THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IN THEIR ORDER OF IMPORTANCE: Low # = MOST IMPORTANT; High # = LEAST IMPORTANT.

11. Rank order (1, 2, & 3) the following:
What is the importance of these problems:

___Physical Abuse,
___Domestic Violence & Drug Abuse,
___Lack of Resources
12. Rank order (1, 2, 3, 4, . . . & 9) the following:
What is the importance of these changes:

___Court Reform
___Lower Caseloads

- ___ Increased Pay
- ___ Better Trainings
- ___ Less Paperwork
- ___ Foster Care System Overhaul
- ___ Implementation of Family Preservation
- ___ Positive Media Coverage
- ___ Increase DSS Revenue from outside sources.

D. CURRICULUM VITAE

- 1978** **Graduated from Forrest High School,
Jacksonville, Florida.**
- 1978-1984** **Attended Florida State University,
Tallahassee, Florida.**
- 1982** **B.A. Communications,
Florida State University.**
- 1984** **M.S.W. Clinical Social Work,
Florida State University.**
- 1985-present** **Massachusetts Department of Social Services.**
- 1987** **Promoted to Supervisor, Massachusetts
Department of Social Services.**
- 1990-1992** **Doctoral work in Public Administration,
Institute for Advanced Studies, Walden
University.**
- 1992** **Commonwealth of Massachusetts Citation
for Outstanding Government Service**
- 1992** **Ph. D. in Administration/Management,
specialization in Public Administration.**