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An elementary school project: Impact of the school-based social worker on CPS dependency rates

Terry Ann Mitchell

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AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PROJECT: IMPACT OF THE SCHOOL-BASED SOCIAL WORKER ON CPS DEPENDENCY RATES

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Terry Ann Mitchell
Yolanda Amelia White
June 1995
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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

This research explored the impact of the services and interventions provided by a Riverside County Child Protective Services worker based at a local elementary school, upon the number of "adjudicated cases" i.e., children who were made dependents of the court due to child abuse and neglect, in the geographical section which included the catchment area that was served by the school. This was a one-group, pretest-posttest design which compared outcomes for the 1989-1990 school year before the social worker was assigned, and outcomes for the 1993-1994 school year which was a period after the worker was based at the school. The data was extracted from the Riverside County Department of Public Social Services' Automated Case Tracking (ACT) database and were analyzed quantitatively. The findings of this study suggested possible future trends in school-based social work intervention.
ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

This was a group project and a team effort where authors collaborated throughout the project. However, each phase of the project, certain authors took primary responsibility. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. Data Collection:
   Assigned Leader Yolanda A. White
   Working with Terry A. Mitchell

2. Data Entry and Analysis:
   Assigned Leader Terry A. Mitchell

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:
   a. Introduction and Literature
      Assigned Leader Yolanda A. White
      Working with Terry A. Mitchell
   b. Methods
      Terry A. Mitchell
      Yolanda A. White
   c. Results
      Assigned Leader Terry A. Mitchell
      (Qualitative & Quantitative)
      Working with Yolanda A. White
      (Qualitative)
   d. Discussion
      Terry A. Mitchell
      Yolanda A. White
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PROBLEM STATEMENT

Since 1991, Riverside County Unified School District implemented a program called Service Management Through Action, Responsibility, and Teamwork (SMART). Project SMART brought together a variety of social services on-campus at selected elementary, middle and senior high schools. The schools were chosen primarily because the majority of their student populations were identified as being disadvantaged. Some of the services that Project SMART offered students and their families included: medical and dental evaluations, income maintenance assistance, mental health counseling, education, and job training referrals (Press Enterprise, 1992).

The elementary school that was the focal point of this study was the first school in Riverside County to offer this "one-stop shopping" approach to social services. Riverside County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) has been a participant in Project SMART since its inception. DPSS was represented by the following programs at the elementary school: Eligibility Services, GAIN, Social Services, Income Maintenance, Child and Adult Protective Services, and Family Preservation. Among the key DPSS personnel assigned to this elementary school was a full-time, bilingual (Spanish/English), Child Protective Services social worker who provided child protection and family preservation services to students and their parents.
This research addressed the practice arena of administrative/policy planning because it was a descriptive study that evaluated the impact of an elementary school-based social worker upon the number of adjudicated cases in the 92507 zip code area, which incorporated the section that was served by the selected elementary school.

PROBLEM FOCUS

The positivist paradigm was utilized in conducting this research. According to Rubin and Babbie (1993), the preliminary stage of positivist research involves "problem formulation" (p. 91) during which a research question is presented and a hypothesis is subsequently formulated. Historically, the formal educational environment has been the source of a plethora of positivist, quantitative studies measuring various aspects of student's intellectual functioning and/or academic achievement. This paradigm focused on school-based social workers' involvement in assisting the child in meeting academic standards and developing a healthier psychosocial perspective. The overall objective of the school-based social worker was to assist in creating an environment in which each student would have the maximum opportunity to learn by addressing those detrimental aspects of school policies and practices and home environments that impaired learning (Allen-Meares, 1988).
However, the process by which a school-based social worker achieved this goal was not always quantifiable. For example, Lee (1983), reported that "the effective school social worker must identify influential people within and outside the school system and plan strategic interactions and responses." Also, Radin, et. al. (1984) noted that typical activities of school social workers incorporated: consulting with teachers, working with parents, conducting workshops for teachers, doing group work with problem students, and leading classroom discussions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, school-based social workers defined their role using a clinical perspective, in that their focus was to identify students with social or emotional problems (Alderson, 1972). Sedlak (1993), noted that the introduction of social services in the schools was the result of three major changes in American societal attitudes during the latter part of the nineteenth century. The first change was the acceptance of public institutions' involvement in the previously private domain of the individual and family. The second important shift occurred when the concept of "equal opportunity" was reinterpreted and fueled the education reform movement to challenge curriculum that was not relevant to the majority of working-class children.
And finally, the traditional social function of schools was redefined, and it was felt that their mission was to exhort the values of an industrial society. Educators enlisted allies in women's groups, philanthropists, and settlement house workers to champion this new cause. Schools were seen as having the potential to cure a variety of social ills, such as "urban and labor disorder, the alienation of the lower classes, deteriorating public health and sanitation, immigrant communities in need of Americanization, spreading immorality, physical disability, and severe family disorganization that contributed to juvenile delinquency and ultimately to adult crime" (Sedlak, 1993).

This transformation in society's thinking was evident in 1906 and 1907, when school social work services began as a result of concern for students who were labeled "underprivileged." Settlement house workers visited schools and homes and acted as liaisons between the schools and communities to facilitate understanding and communication (Allen-Meares, 1988). These early social workers were primarily women who were volunteers in public service organizations. In addition to community liaison duties, these volunteers also donated and served food in subsidized lunch programs, installed science equipment, taught cooking and sewing and recruited physicians to teach health and hygiene.
In the years that followed, as the field of social services became professionalized, the number of school social workers increased and their roles continued to be influenced by the social climate of the particular era. For example, the passage of compulsory attendance laws were created due to concerns for illiterate migrant children and also focused societal attention on the children's rights issue of basic education. The resulting studies of these aforementioned problems legitimized the need for school social workers, also known as attendance officers, who had specialized knowledge about the effects of adverse societal conditions on school attendance. Oppenheimer (1925) noted that the most important task of the school social worker was to assist schools to modify their organizational and educational practices in response to social problems which negatively impacted students' academic performances.

During the aftermath of World War I, school enrollments experienced a dramatic increase. With the majority of students negatively affected by the war, it was felt that an augmentation of school-based social services was warranted. The mental hygiene movement of the 1920's along with the visiting teacher and guidance clinic experiments funded by such organizations as the Rockefeller Memorial Fund, subsequently influenced the expansion of the school social worker's role to a more therapeutic one. To address issues such as juvenile delinquency, and other types of "deviant"
behaviors, there was an increased emphasis on the behavioral problems of student and preventative measures which involved individual work with children and their families.

The Great Depression of the 1930's resulted in a decline in the commitment to provide social services through the schools. During this period, school-based social workers began to work with middle-class families and "successfully penetrated markets in affluent and professional communities to disassociate themselves for the stigma of exclusive association with the impoverished, criminal and otherwise most intractable problem youth" (Sedlak, 1981).

The transformation that began in school-based social work from political change and adverse community conditions to social casework with families from a broader spectrum of socioeconomic levels continued in the 1940's. After World War II, social work services in the schools experienced a revitalization. Factors such as financial stability in white, middle-class society and aggressive professional lobbying contributed to this increased demand for the schools to provide social services for children (Sedlak, 1993).

With the full advent of the Civil Rights movement during the 1960's, the school system, a microcosm of societal racial inequalities, was often the subject of attack in the literature on school social work. Once again, disadvantaged populations became the primary recipients of school social
service programs. At that time, school social workers utilized a systems perspective and advocated working with parents and communities.

The profession of school social work saw an expansion in the 1970's, "with an increased emphasis on family, community and teaming with other school personnel, and broader models were encouraged" (Alderson, 1972). One model of practice that received a significant amount of attention during that time was the school-community-pupil relations model (Costin, 1975). The main objective of this model was to change the components of the triad by altering unhealthy school policies and practices and community conditions that impeded the learning process.

Although on the surface it appeared that school-based social services were enjoying a healthy growth during the 1960's and 1970's, in reality, the foundation of their existence was tenuous. As long as local school boards could rely on financial support from the state and federal level for these programs, they were enthusiastically embraced. However, it became increasingly difficult for funding to keep pace with service delivery costs. Subsequently, school administrators began to withdraw their support from school-based social services once outside funding diminished and pupil enrollments abated.

Federal legislation and legal litigation were notable influences on the role of school social workers in the
1980's. According to Constable and Flynn (1982), the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act in 1975 served as the impetus for change over the next several years in the profession of school social work that emphasized the ecological and systems perspectives. It also focused the profession's attention on outcome evaluation and accountability.

Today, the role of the school-based social worker has evolved to a more active one with the emphasis on the prevention of child abuse. According to Kurtz (1988) a study conducted by Mintzies and Hare reported that, "In a national survey of school social workers, child abuse and neglect was identified as the number one family barrier to school adjustment and achievement." It is ironic that many schools themselves have participated in acts of child abuse through the use of corporal punishment. In addition, minority students were more often the victims of corporal punishment than white students (Bowers and Hare, 1986). Subsequently, one goal of school social workers was to eliminate corporal punishment in the school system by educating school staff about alternative measures of discipline.

Allen-Meares (1988) defined the role of the contemporary school-based social worker as the provider of both remedial and preventative services and outlined three primary areas of responsibility. First, the social worker is a mandated
reporter of child abuse and neglect. Second, the worker provides support to the victim and the family through short-term therapy and referrals. Third, the school social worker assists the child welfare worker in providing services to the family. Prevention services offered by the school social worker may include training school personnel about various issues related to child abuse and neglect and offering parents classes to the community.

It appears that in the 1990's, school-based social services have come full circle since their origin in the late 1800's. The Family Resource Coalition (1993) noted that "across the nation, communities are recognizing that educating children requires commitment and resources from the whole community, not only from the schools." School administrators have acknowledged that they can no longer be surrogate parents to an increasing number of children with multiple problems in the health, social and psychological arenas. For many of these children, their parents are unable to assist them because they too are overburdened with problems of their own (Dryfoos, 1993).

There are several additional assumptions which support the rationale for school-based social services. First, prevention is more cost-effective than corrective measures. Also, since present service delivery systems for children are fragmented, duplication and waste occur, and unfortunately, some children fall through the cracks.
Finally, schools are seen as the most logical place to provide multiple services to children, since they have prolonged contact with the majority of children (Kirst, 1990).

It is in this present-day atmosphere which welcomes the presence of social service agencies in school building sites, that Riverside County DPSS assigned a Child Protective Services Worker to the elementary school which was the focus of this study.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Purpose of the Study

Since January of 1991, Riverside County's Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), a participant in Project SMART, has assigned a full-time, bilingual (Spanish/English), Child Protective Services social service worker to a local elementary school to provide child protection and family preservation services to students and their parents. Social work interventions utilized by the worker include: crisis and supportive counseling, translation services, parent education, respite child care, transportation, employment information, food clothing and housing assistance, and child protective services. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of the school-based social worker upon the number of "adjudicated cases" i.e., children in the geographical area which included an
elementary school's district, who were made dependents of Riverside County's Juvenile Court due to child abuse and neglect.

RESEARCH QUESTION/HYPOTHESIS

This was a positivist descriptive study. It was funded by the family preservation program which is part of a growing trend in innovative strategies to strengthen families at risk of abusing/neglecting their children. DPSS management requested this study. It was determined that quantitative data would effectively address causality in order to satisfy the grant funding source and ensure continuation of the program's financial support. The focus of the study was on the association between the dependent variable (dependency rates) and the independent variable (services of a school social worker). The research question was, "What is the association between the introduction of an elementary school social worker and the number of adjudicated cases in the 92507 zip code area which contains the region served by that school?" The hypothesis was as follows: "The dependency rates in the 92507 area which incorporates the service district of the elementary school have decreased since the school-based social worker was assigned in January 1991."
SAMPLING

Since the focal point of this research was a Riverside County elementary school, a population of interest sample was utilized which was comprised of families with children who resided in the 92507 zip code area which included the school's service district. Variables including zip code, dependency date, mother's name, and minor's date of birth were entered into the Riverside County DPSS Automated Case Tracking (ACT) computer system in order to determine the number of adjudicated cases.

DATA COLLECTION AND INSTRUMENTS

The DPSS ACT computer database served as the primary source of data for this study. Included in the ACT system were historical information about all Riverside County adjudicated child protective services cases that date back to seven years. This method of data collection had several limitations. First, because this was a population of interest sample, the findings of this study could not be generalized. Therefore, the results of this study could not be used to conclusively measure the effectiveness of the program involving the school-based social worker, and the research findings could only suggest possible trends.

However, one strength of this data collection method was that the cases contained in the ACT database, by their nature, had already screened-out those cases that did not
meet the legal criteria for child abuse and neglect. Second, another factor that contributed to this method’s efficiency was that the existing database contained the required demographic information about families that had a prior history of child abuse and neglect.

From the ACT computer, the Systems Specialist obtained 34 families with CPS cases who resided in the 92507 area during the 1989-1990 school year; this represented a total of 54 minors who were made dependents of the court during that time period. For the 1993-1994 academic year, a listing of 68 CPS cases, which amounted to 136 minors, was extracted from the ACT computer. However, for the 1989-1990 school year, only 19 of the 34 cases could be found. And, for the 1993-1994 year, 52 out of the 68 cases were located. The absent cases marked the beginning of a series of problems in this phase of the study.

Written and telephone contacts were conducted with staff in Closed Files regarding the missing cases since all closed CPS cases were sent to one location at the DPSS Administration building in Riverside. The procedure to obtain closed files required the submittal of a written request which indicated the date that the CPS case was closed.

We were informed by the Closed Files staff that there were several possible explanations as to why the CPS cases could not be located. First, if the requested CPS case also
had an Income Maintenance (IM) case, the two cases would be physically combined and stored together. In addition, it was conceivable that each of the two cases could have a different closure date. Therefore, the CPS file could be logged in under the IM closure date. And since the two closure dates were not cross-referenced, the Closed Files computer would indicate that the CPS case did not exist.

A second justification for the lost cases was that a number of closed cases had recently been shipped to the storage basement of a DPSS building approximately 60 miles away in the Palm Springs area. The staff in Closed Files reported that, although the files were in boxes labeled with case numbers, they could not specify which cases were now in the desert location. When asked if an employee could assist in searching for the files in Palm Springs, we were told that since a Closed Files unit did not exist in that area, no other division had yet been assigned the responsibility for those cases.

The final explanation for the missing cases concerned the Closed Files unit's impending move to another location. Unfortunately, some of the files had already been packed for the relocation. It was possible that some of the missing cases were already in transit.

There were data collection problems in addition to those presented by the missing case files. Upon examination of the cases which were available for the extraction of
subgroup data for the study, we discovered that information was not consistently or accurately documented in the CPS case files. The extent and accuracy of the case documentation was dependent upon the style of the individual social worker. For example, the SOC 158 form, which is the basis of this state’s Foster Care Information System (FCIS), must be completed by the worker. The SOC 158 contained some pertinent information which we required for this research. One particular subgroup data category we wanted to examine was the health condition of each dependent minor. However, the majority of the SOC 158’s indicated that the child had no health problems, contradicting the fact that a significant number of the children suffered from physical abuse or neglect. Therefore, we could not include this variable in our study.

In regard to the case documentation dilemma, another problem area was the court reports. Unfortunately, the name of the child’s school was not consistently documented. The difficulty in procuring the cases for this study and the inconsistency in case documentation created an inability to assess the exact number of families who resided within the elementary school’s specific service area. This resulted in the decision to modify this study’s original population of interest sample from the families who lived within the school’s particular catchment area to a sample which incorporated the entire 92507 zip code.
PROCEDURE

The design of this positivist study was the one-group pretest-posttest design. Since the social worker was assigned to the designated school in January 1991, the dependency rates of adjudicated children were examined from two time frames: the 1989-1990 school year, which is the period prior to the existence of the social worker and, the 1993-1994 school year, the one-year period following the establishment of the school-based worker. The variables required to extract the necessary data from the ACT system included: the mother’s name, dependency date, zip code, and the minor’s date of birth.

To obtain a fuller understanding of the relationship between the elementary school social worker and CPS dependency rates, it was necessary to include a brief qualitative component which consisted of interviews with several of the key stakeholders in the project. This was not intended to be a formal analysis; rather, the purpose was to take into consideration the experiences of these participants with the project during the process of interpreting data.

More specifically, it was felt that if the quantitative approach was strictly adhered to, it would not provide information about the experiential aspects of having a social worker on-site to work directly with students, their families and school personnel. To provide only statistical
data would essentially be a denial of a basic assumption of
social work practice, that individuals function within a
variety of systems that are complex, interactive and
dynamic.

PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants in
the study were protected by coding a new and unique number
to each case record that had been collected since DPSS
already had a case numbering system that was permanently
assigned by the mother's name. The master list of these
case numbers was destroyed when the research was completed.
Also, the identities of the school's staff members who
participated in the interviews were not revealed in order to
assure confidentiality. Last, the specific name of the
elementary school which was the subject of this research
project was not identified.

DATA ANALYSIS

As noted earlier, the purpose of this study was to
determine whether there was a correlation between the
services provided by a Riverside County CPS social worker
based at an elementary school and the number of adjudicated
cases in the 92507 zip code region which incorporates the
catchment area served by the school. Since this was a
Positivist, descriptive study, the majority of the data collected was quantitative.

Variables included: gender, ethnicity, language, type of abuse, parental information (number, marital status, age, education level) and sibling information (number, age). Each variable was coded with a numerical value.

The majority of the variables that were studied were nominal, in that the codes that were assigned to them were merely labels or names and had no other significance. Nominal variables in this study included: "type of abuse", "gender", "language", "ethnicity," and additional parental and sibling information. Of the ratio variables, when the interval between the values is meaningful and there is a true zero, the most significant one that was collected by the researchers in this research project was the total number of adjudicated/dependency cases that occurred each in the pretest (1989-1990) and posttest (1993-1994) groups. Again, these groups represented the periods before and after the CPS worker was assigned to the school in January 1991.

The hypothesis that was tested posited that the dependency rates would decrease in the period following the assignment of the school-based social worker. The null hypothesis presented that there was no difference in the dependency rates in the periods prior to or, following the year that the social worker was based at the school.
Frequencies, correlational matrices and chi square were used to examine the distribution of differences between pretest and posttest groups for particular independent variables. The chi square was calculated for each of the variables and the researchers attempted to confirm or deny an association between dependency rates and each of the independent variables. If the probability or observed significance level was less than .05, then the null hypothesis could be rejected and one could interpret the findings as a possible trend for the type of abuse reported for each ethnic group. If the hypothesis of the researchers was correct, it was anticipated that a strong relationship between dependency rates and the school-based social worker could be determined.

FINDINGS

When the type of child abuse was examined in relationship to the age of the father, the finding was insignificant. When the type of child abuse was examined in relationship to the age of the mother, chi squared was insignificant. The type of child abuse in relationship to the grade of the child was also insignificant.

The subgroups examined in this study were limited to Caucasians, Hispanics, and African Americans (see Table 1). The relationship of ethnicity to the type of abuse showed that Caucasian people were less likely to be reported for
sexual abuse but they are more likely to be reported for neglect. Hispanics were more likely to be reported for sexual abuse and less likely to be reported for neglect. African Americans were more likely to be reported for sexual abuse and caretaker absent. Single women were more likely to have drug-exposed babies. There was a relationship between location of the biological father and the type of abuse reported (see Table 2). Fathers more often physically abused their children than did unrelated adult males living in the home. However, the unrelated adult males were accused of sexually molesting the children more often than biological fathers. More physical and sexual abuse was reported with men as the perpetrators.

Abuse reviewed by ethnicity (see Table 3) for the years 1989-1990 and 1993-1994 showed an increase in abuse among white and Hispanic groups and a decrease in rate of abuse reported among African American families.

The dependency rates in the 92507 geographical area increased during the 1993-1994 academic year, after the CPS social worker was based at the elementary school. In June of the 1989-1990 school year, the period which preceded the social worker's assignment, the ACT computer indicated that 54 children were made dependents of the court due to child abuse and neglect. The number expanded to 136 by June of the 1993-1994 academic year. However, this increase was consistent with dependency rates in Riverside County and the
state of California during those same time periods. In June, 1990, there were 2,399 children who were adjudicated in Riverside County; this number increased to 3,068 in June 1994. Statewide dependency rates recorded in June, 1990, revealed that a total of 74,760 children were dependents of the court and, the number grew to 86,551 in June, 1994 (see Tables 4 and 5.

Based upon the information obtained in telephone and face-to-face interviews with key participants in the school’s Project SMART program, the general feeling was that the placement of the CPS social worker at the school was beneficial to the school and the surrounding community. The social worker was constantly available to students, parents, and school staff. The worker’s presence on the school’s campus created an atmosphere of trust. This was evidenced by the fact that a significant number of individuals came to the CPS worker voluntarily, via an informal process, such as by word of mouth.

Residents in the neighborhood felt comfortable to drop in for crisis counselling and resource and referral services. Since the social worker is English- and Spanish-speaking, cultural and language barriers were not a deterrent to those who required assistance. The office of the social worker was stocked with some basic living supplies such as dry and canned foods, hand-crocheted blankets, diapers, and toilet tissue. The accessibility of the school-based social worker
was exemplified in the physical location of the worker’s office, in that it was situated next to the school’s entrance.

The number of child abuse referrals from the elementary school’s staff has increased since the assignment of the worker. This has been attributed to several factors, such as an increased willingness of staff to make referrals; improved referral skills due to staff’s enhanced knowledge base; less denial about the issue of child abuse; more information about how to access "the system;" changing neighborhood demographics; and a growth in the number of dysfunctional families which comprise the core group of recipients served by Project SMART.

It was the staff’s perception that the CPS worker was available for ongoing consultation which has resulted in an expanded awareness of the risk factors associated with child abuse and neglect. Due to the social worker’s high level of competence and the resulting sense of trust that has been developed with the school personnel, it was not unusual for staff to take the initiative and seek out the worker. And, when a CPS referral was made and the child interviewed as part of the investigative process, there was an increased level of comfort on the part of the staff and child due to familiarity with the social worker.

Overall, the assignment of the CPS worker was viewed by the community and school as a sign of goodwill. Due to the
trust that has been established and the wide range of services that the worker has provided, the school-based social work program has produced its own halo effect for the Riverside County DPS, in that it is now viewed in a less adversarial light. It was the fervent hope expressed by all who were interviewed that the current political climate and atmosphere of fiscal restraint would not decrease or eliminate the funding sources for the school-based social service program.

DISCUSSION

There is a significant stigma attached to families accused of sexually abusing their children. It may be that sexual abuse is underreported for Caucasian families because it is taboo to admit that such behavior occurs within the dominant culture. It is not socially acceptable to make inquiries regarding sexual abuse against this group. However, it is appropriate to report sexual abuse by minority groups because they represent a subculture that is stereotyped as being dysfunctional by the dominant society. The increase in neglect cases by Caucasians may reflect the fact that hospital staff are mandated to report drug-exposed infants. Private hospitals have a tendency not to drug test all newborn babies. However, babies born at Riverside General Hospital are tested on a regular basis. It appears families without medical insurance are more apt to use the
county hospital. This may account for higher rates of neglect reported for Hispanic and African American women who are likely to be without insurance.

There was an increase in the number of abuse cases reported for years 1989-1990 and 1993-1994 amongst white and Hispanic groups and a decrease in the number of abuse cases reported for African American families. This increase in the number of cases reported may be the result of better training regarding abuse issues for mandated reporters and a heightened sensitivity to child abuse issues by the media which stimulated the public to report abuse. A decrease in the reported cases of abuse among African American families may be the result of assimilation. As this group becomes more accepted into the mainstream, they will be evaluated by the same standards as the dominant culture.

Severe neglect cases were examined in which a baby was born drug-exposed. Single women were more often reported to have drug-exposed babies. This may be skewed by the fact that single women are more apt to use the county hospital because they do not have private insurance. As noted earlier, public hospitals routinely run drug testing on newborns, which is not regularly practiced at private hospitals.

The records indicated that there were more male perpetrators than female perpetrators of sexual abuse. One possible explanation for this is that people may feel more
comfortable reporting abuse by men than women because it is more culturally acceptable to identify males as perpetrators in this society. Therefore, abuse by women may be underreported, especially in the area of sexual abuse where sexual abuse by women is rarely reported. Caretaker absence abuse increased when an unrelated male was present in the home and decreased when the father was in the home. This may be the result of a lack of bonding and interest by the male in caring for unrelated children.

CONCLUSION

Considering the increasingly conservative mentality that appears to be sweeping this nation it appears that women, children, and minorities will continue to be at risk of losing desperately needed services. Funding cuts for services provided for children and families have become a reality. The programs offered by school-based social workers to strengthen families at risk may be considered expendable under this current administration.

It is hoped that federal policy makers will put aside requests of their primary constituencies and view the nation as a whole and thus focus on issues in this country which include building strong, healthy families. Grassroots programs which involve the utilization of school-based social workers are designed to strengthen families. These types of programs are essential to the well-being of this
nation. A commitment by this administration to acknowledge and fiscally support school-based social workers is needed.

To address care files and records systems problems, the researchers make the following suggestions. First, it is recommended that closed files utilize a cross-referencing method that identifies dual closure dates when logging in a CPS case that also has a corresponding Income maintenance file. It is further recommended that additional SOC ISF training be provided to social workers. Continued emphasis should be placed on the importance of accurate record-keeping, since the state determines local funding levels based on the information contained in this document.

Perhaps, a different type of research strategy is necessary to evaluate the school-based social work program. Holmes (1982) addressed the utilization of qualitative research techniques to assess school-based social service programs. He noted the limitations of quantitative methods which have been traditionally used to evaluate such programs in order to attempt to provide administrators and policy makers with "hard data." He presented an evaluation strategy called a "Service Delivery Assessment", (SDA). Holmes’ SDA requires data collection via intensive interviewing of the providers and recipients of school-based social services, on-site observation, and document analysis. The first tasks of an SDA includes establishing a main objective, identifying the primary sources of information.
and determining specific data collection methods. The second task is to select school sites, preferably those which are diversified in service delivery. Data analysis is then conducted on descriptive, comparative and interpretative levels. Although SDA is qualitative in nature, it would meet the needs of the aforementioned key players in the school-based social services arena.

This study also has implications for graduate schools of social work since the number of school-based social service programs are on the rise. Adler and Gardner (1993) discussed a graduate-level training program for the integrated services specialist, a professional who would be involved in school-based or school-linked interagency services for children. They proposed that in order to effectively train an individual to work in the field of "collaborative human services," a university should model partnership and interprofessional practice by adopting an interdisciplinary approach first in its faculty makeup, then, in the program's coursework and fieldwork components.
APPENDIX A

LETTER OF APPROVAL
May 25, 1994

Research Project Committee  
Graduate School of Social Work  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to inform you that I am aware of the graduate research project, "Longfellow Elementary School: Impact of the School-Based Social Worker On Dependency Rates," which is being conducted by Terry Mitchell and Yolanda White. This study has the approval of Riverside County Department of Public Social Services.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Rout  
Assistant Director
APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT

The research project in which you are being asked to participate is a study of the relationship between the services and interventions provided by a Riverside County Child Protective Services social worker based at a local elementary school, and the number of children in the 92507 zip code region, which includes the school’s geographical area, who have been made dependents of the court due to child abuse and neglect. This study is being conducted by Terry Mitchell and Yolanda A. White, under the supervision of Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, professor of Social Work. This research project has been approved by Mr. Paul Rout, Assistant Director of Riverside County’s Department of Public Social Services, and by the Institutional Review Board of California State University San Bernardino.

In this study you will be asked a series of questions by the researchers that will pertain only to the school-based social work program. The researchers will make a written record of your responses. Please be assured that any information you provide will be held in strict confidence and at no time will your name be reported along with your responses. This study requires approximately 30-45 minutes for the interview. The anticipated benefits of this study may involve an expansion of the services provided by the school-based social work program.
Please understand that your participation in this research is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time during this study without penalty and to remove any data at any time during this study.

I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate. I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

Participant's Signature ___________________________ Date ____________

Researcher’s Signature ___________________________ Date ____________
The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the services and interventions provided by a Riverside County Child Protective Services (CPS) social worker based at a local elementary school upon the number of children who have been made dependents of the court due to child abuse and neglect in the geographical area that is served by the school.

Although there are numerous factors that effect dependency rates, the researchers hypothesized that dependency rates in the 92507 zip code region, which includes the school's catchment area, decreased after the CPS social worker was assigned in January, 1991. Since the school-based social work program is still in the early phases of development, and dependency rates is a long-term issue, the findings from this research can only suggest possible future trends in school social work intervention. It is hoped that, as a result of this study, there will be an expansion of services provided by the school-based social work program.
APPENDIX D

TABLES
Table 1. Relationship between ethnicity and type of abuse.

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Chi-Square Value  DF  Significance
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Table 2. Relationship between location of father and type of abuse.

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Chi-Square Value

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Pearson 16.69005  6  .01049

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Chi-Square Value: 8.47783, DF: 2, Significance: .01442
Table 4. CPS Dependency Rates – June 1990.
Table 5. CPS Dependency Rates - June 1994.
REFERENCES


Holmes, Dennis H. "The Application of Qualitative Research Strategies to School-Based Program Evaluations", 1982. (paper presented at a convention)


Oppenheimer, J. The Visiting Teacher Movement, with Special Reference to Administrative Relationships, 2nd ed.


