An exploratory study of child protective services social worker knowledge of the culture of the deaf

Judith Ellen Lux

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES SOCIAL WORKER KNOWLEDGE OF THE CULTURE OF THE DEAF

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
Judith Ellen Lux
September 1999
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ABSTRACT

It has become a growing challenge within the Department of Children Services, Child Protective Services (CPS) division to respond with knowledge and sensitivity to all of the diverse populations that exist today in San Bernardino County, and the deaf are a minority that cut across all ethnic and cultural barriers. It is not a population that generate a lot of publicity nor is their voice often heard. The purpose of this research was to learn what knowledge CPS social workers possessed about the deaf population and if these social workers believed the deaf would also be considered a double or triple minority if they represented the Hispanic, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander or Native American ethic groups. The study revealed that CPS social workers do not have a working knowledge of the Deaf and their culture.

This study explored how the potential lack of cultural knowledge could have an impact upon the decisions made by social workers responsible for a child’s safety and how a parent’s civil liberties could also be violated. Findings supported the need for education about the minority cultures CPS social workers encounter. Limitations of the research and implications for social work practice are also discussed.
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PROBLEM STATEMENT

The predominant ethnic populations in San Bernardino County, listed in descending order are: White, Hispanic, Black, Asian-Pacific Islander, Native American and Other (U.S. Census 1990). Yet there is a minority population that crosses all ethnic barriers and impacts people residing in the United States legally or illegally. It has a primary language that is not spoken or understood by the majority population of any other culture and has fought hard to have its culture recognized and accepted. This population has lived for centuries knowing that a hearing majority have always had the power to impact and control their lives because their voice was not heard, and that population is the deaf. According to the 1990 Census, the deaf made up .41 percent of the population in San Bernardino county and it is anticipated that the 2000 Census will reflect an increase among this population.

Helen Keller is alleged to have said. "Blindness cuts people off from things; deafness cuts people off from people." (Halpren, 1995, p. 101). The hearing majority have consistently viewed deafness as a defect, something to be overcome in an attempt to make this minority population a successful segment of the
majority culture. The deaf have historically resisted this campaign and have taken pride in creating a language and culture that is uniquely their own. The literature review will support the struggle this population has always faced and the research will confirm the ignorance of the hearing majority that the deaf face every day of their lives. It is the hearing who cut the deaf off from people, not the deaf.

Social workers employed by the Department of Children Services, Child Protective Services (CPS) division in San Bernardino County have been faced with a growing challenge as they have attempted to respond to referrals of abuse and neglect with knowledge and sensitivity to all of the diverse cultures that exist today in San Bernardino County. Regardless of whether one is native born or a current immigrant, individuals are demonstrating an unwillingness to sacrifice their cultural heritage even if they are several generations removed from immigrating to America. As a result a multitude of cultures have flourished, each with a different value system and lifestyle. However, the deaf are still in the process of attempting to have their unique culture recognized, accepted and allowed to flourish. Unfortunately this transition has not been without conflict, confusion and pain because of the
multicultural issues and the disadvantages this population face as a minority, possibly a double minority, in a nation that values the majority.

Having to deal with diversity has placed government and social service agencies in the difficult position of requiring people to conform to a standard of conduct that some cultures are not familiar with or understand. The Deaf possess beliefs and participate in a culture of which a hearing world has no knowledge of, often does not recognize and usually hasn't respected. Pederson (1987) recognized the challenges faced by hearing children of deaf parents and the conflicted emotional struggles this population have as they attempt to live in two or even three different cultures, and the potential clashes that are created for the families when outside interventions are required. The deaf have long suffered with a perception among the hearing that because an individual cannot hear they also don't have normal intellectual abilities. Cohen (1990) re-enforced this by stating that limited access to available resources by the deaf only compounds this belief.

Since the majority of CPS workers represent mainstream Euro-ethnic American culture and are also hearing, the conflict is often compounded through
blatant or overt discrimination against a population that often may not speak, or have knowledge of the English language, and have a tendency to agree to what is being said, regardless of their ability to comprehend (Solomon, 1994).

PROBLEM FOCUS

With this in mind, a study was done that focused on the knowledge CPS social workers in the Victorville region of San Bernardino County have of one specific minority culture, the deaf. The deaf client may be Hispanic, Black, Asian-Pacific Islander, Native American Indian or Other and be considered a double minority; one who does not hear, does not speak or understand the English language and is at the mercy of a hearing social worker.

The original research proposal included a history of all of the predominant minority cultures in San Bernardino County and their parenting practices and the potential impact of their interaction with CPS. However the topic was too broad and was re-evaluated then subsequently narrowed and redefined to focus on the one minority population and the knowledge that CPS social workers have of that population. That population was the deaf and that population may also include other ethnic minorities.
The focus of this study became an attempt to explore the knowledge base CPS workers have regarding the minority deaf population represented in San Bernardino County. If a CPS social worker has no knowledge of this population or hold beliefs that are incorrect their interaction with people who do not hear and/or may not read the English language, could result in an act of prejudice against a potential client.

After a referral has been made to CPS all individuals are at the mercy of the Child Welfare system. It becomes imperative that CPS social workers have sufficient information about the population they are dealing with to make a non-biased recommendation that will protect the child while assisting the parent in understanding any cultural similarities and differences that have created the present situation.

Research was done from a qualitative frame of reference focusing on the possibility that there may be knowledge about what CPS social workers do not know about the deaf culture and the impact of cultural diversity and the Child Protection Services system that can never be fully understood using a strictly qualitative framework. The qualitative perspective enabled the researcher to study the knowledge CPS workers possess of the deaf population from a frame of
reference that takes into account that while objectivity is the ideal it may not always be possible to achieve when dealing with the preconceived beliefs CPS social workers may possess about this minority population. Exploring current knowledge that CPS social workers possess about the deaf underlined that fact that the potential exists for a greater understanding of the deaf and the other minority cultures they may represent by social workers who have the responsibility for a child's safety, and at the same time must not violate a parent's civil liberties. This information also enabled the researcher to suggest a more comprehensive method of developing and implementing cultural sensitivity and knowledge within CPS.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the literature revealed that very few studies have been done on the deaf population and interactions with Child Protective Services. Additionally there has been limited research devoted to the challenges the deaf face when interacting with the hearing majority. There have been even fewer studies done on the deaf as a double or triple minority if they are also Hispanic, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American or other ethnic minority. However an
attempt has been made to provide as broad a review as possible in support of this study.

Padden (1998) has provided a revealing Time-line that provides a colorful but painful overview of the evolution of the Deaf culture and language and their demand for recognition in a majority culture that often denied its existence. In the year 1000 B.C. the Hebrew Law (the Talmud) did not allow deaf persons the right to own property. Between 427 and 347 B.C. Plato's philosophy of innate intelligence was embraced. All intelligence was present at birth because people were born with perfect abstracts, ideas and language already in their mind. It only required time to demonstrate this native intelligence. However, without speech there was no outward sign of intelligence therefore deaf people were not capable of ideas or language.

During the Dark Ages the deaf were thought to be demon possessed because of their speech and committed to asylums. In the Middle Ages, from 476-1453, the deaf could not attend church because you had to be able to "hear" the word of God and being deaf was seen as a sign of punishment from God so the deaf could not be "saved." In the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Martha's Vineyard was settled by a large group of immigrants who carried the recessive
gene for deafness and it was here that the origins of American Sign Language began. In 1816 the first American School for the Deaf was established using French Sign Language, which gradually evolved into ASL and between 1818 and 1912 more than 40 schools for the deaf were opened.

1840 was known as the Golden Age of Deaf Education because approximately 40% of all teachers of the deaf were deaf and ASL flourished. 1864 saw Gallaudet College founded and Abraham Lincoln was the signer of the Charter. Unfortunately 1867 ushered in the creation of the first oral schools as well as the Congress of Milan, which was the International Conference on the Education of the Deaf. Alexander Graham Bell represented the American delegation and the oralist philosophy was established as the preferred method for educating deaf students. Since the deaf lived in a hearing world they had to learn to be like the hearing, and use speech not signs. Sign language was forbidden in the classroom as deaf teachers were dismissed in large numbers. In 1927 oralism was at its zenith and only 15% of teachers for the deaf were deaf.

In 1968 the Bilingual Education Act (PL 89-10) was passed; however ASL was not included because it was not recognized as a language. Total communication (the
use of speech and sign) was developed as a philosophy in 1970. The year 1988 saw three developments; "Unlocking the Curriculum" which was published by Gallaudet University Linguistics Department proposed the return to ASL as the first method of instruction for deaf children, and a Congressional Report entitled "Toward Equality: Education of the Deaf." recommended the same thing with English taught as a second language. It also recommended that ASL be included in the Bilingual Education Act, and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services investigated the possibility. Unfortunately it wasn't approved again because hearing parents objected ASL's designation as a foreign language.

The final event of 1988 saw students and faculty at Gallaudet University protest for one week the selection of Dr. Elizabeth Zinser, a hearing woman, as the new president. It was particularly insulting because Dr. Zinser did not know ASL. Unfortunately, at a university founded exclusively for the education of the Deaf, the institution has become a small island overrun by hearing, speaking teachers and administrators who have neither the desire nor incentive to learn the language or culture of the Deaf community (Treeburg, 1991). The protest ended with the
appointment of I. King Jordan as the first Deaf president of Gallaudet and a change in the Board of Directors.

Ninety percent of the deaf are born to hearing parents and so they absorb their culture from peers, not their families (Halpern, 1995). Additionally 88% of those parents do not know sign language. "Deaf children get frustrated with life itself. And their parents don’t learn how to sign. How do you think that makes the Deaf child feel?" (Kellogg, Daily Press, D1, 1999). The primary reasons appear to be denial of the child’s deafness, or an attempt to mold the child into being normal (i.e., hearing), the degree of the child’s hearing impairment, competing communication modes, resources within the family to respond to the problem of communicating with a deaf child (i.e. socioeconomic status, parental education, family size and ethnicity), family attitudes towards the handicap and expectations for the child’s role in the family (Kluwin and Gaustad 1991).

The lack of an effective mode of communication between hearing parents and their deaf child often results in feelings of isolation by the child (Kluwin and Gaustad, 1991). That, combined with the knowledge that Deaf children learn Deaf culture from peers rather
than family provides the foundation for a mistrust of
the hearing that many Deaf experience. A deaf child
with hearing parents grows up on the edge of the
culture of the hearing. If the child is also an ethnic
minority they grow up on the outside of two or more
cultures and have no idea what they are missing; they
know they're missing something because they see the
lips of the hearing move.

The best lip reader understands approximately 30%
of what is being said (Greenberg, 1983). Given that,
most hearing parents don’t learn sign language and
expect their child be act “normal”. Like a hearing
child, that child potentially understands only one-
third of all communication. Because of the hearing
individual’s refusal to repeat a sentence over and
over, when the deaf ask what was said or why someone is
laughing, they are often told it was nothing. The deaf
know something was said. They know they were not
included. They know they were ignored. They conclude
that they are not as important to the hearing majority
as are others who can hear, and with such daily
experiences over a lifetime it becomes easier to
understand why the deaf distrust the hearing in any
arena. It also becomes more apparent why an individual
who is ignored by a majority culture would attempt to create one of their own.

Hearing children of deaf parents live half of their life in the deaf world and half in the hearing, which is very similar to children who grow up in a home in the United States when the family has immigrated and speaks another language within the home. These children are bilingual and bicultural (Cohen, 1990). Conversely if a child who is hearing and has deaf parents who are also from an ethnic minority, they are tri-cultural. Identity development is impossible without a sense of community. The deaf have not found the hearing culture desiring to include them in their community so they have created a culture and community of their own. It is not only the deaf child who needs to learn to navigate between two or more cultures, but also the parents (Desselle & Pearlmutter, 1997).

Marschark (1993) observed that hearing impairment leads to psychological impairment, which leads to problem behavior. The deafness itself isn’t the problem, rather it’s the ability to communicate (Schlesinger & Meadow, 1972). When an individual grows up believing that his or her physical limitation is seen as a defect by family, when they are expected to learn to function as if they were hearing, forced to
lip read and/or wear hearing aids in an attempt to function as a defective hearing person, unable to adequately communicate with their parents and other family members, when they are not valued by their own family for who they are in their own right, self-esteem is affected and more importantly, the distrust of the hearing world has been re-enforced.

Within the Deaf culture, deafness is not viewed as a defect, but as a source of connection. Pride is taken in one's identity without any desire to become a part of the majority culture. Their community is a welcome relief from the isolation and condescension of the hearing world (Halpern, 1995). Treesburg (1991, p. 157) eloquently provided an example of how the hearing majority have devalued the deaf minority by interchanging hearing and deaf for black and white in this statement. In 1981, at a symposium on Black English and the Education of Black Children and Youth, James Baldwin charged, "The brutal truth is that the bulk of white (hearing) people in America never had any interest in educating black (deaf) people, except as this could serve white (hearing) purposes. It is not the black (deaf) child's language that is despised: It is his experience. A child cannot be taught by anyone who despises him, and a child cannot afford to be fooled. A
child cannot be taught by anyone whose demand, essentially, is that the child repudiate his experience, and all that gives him sustenance, and enter a limbo in which he will no longer be black(deaf), and in which he knows that he can never become white(hearing).”

The literature also included some information about the ethnic minorities present in San Bernardino County. The Hispanic community has a culture and language that is unique to that population and when an immigrant relocates to America there is an adaptation to a new culture which is pervasive, intense and presents lifelong stressors among Hispanic emigres (Smart & Smart, 1995). This is also a population that has experienced a similar struggle to that of the deaf, and have refused to relinquish their various cultures (Fox, 1996). Collectively Hispanics represent a much larger minority than the Deaf and because of their sheer numbers have been able to force their recognition within the larger majority population. Their primary language has always been recognized as a language and with the implementation of the Bilingual Education Act, interpreters are now readily available for the Spanish language in almost every arena and government forms in the United States now accommodate their language.
Hispanics, regardless of the country from which they immigrate, bring with them an established history and culture that is rich with tradition. They often have roots that they can return to and have created an environment in the United States that often replicates their homeland.

The Black population, also an ethnic minority, has faced a historical struggle similar to that of the deaf. The history and traditions of Africa did not accompany the slaves so they established a culture of their own, unique to their situation and created Black history on American soil, unlike any other ethnic minority that has emigrated to America. They, too, constructed a culture that contributed to the community. However this community was different from that of other ethnic communities, which were organized to serve the people who lived within them. The slave community was intended to serve the slave owner (Jones, 1996). The Black minority population is possibly more Americanized that all other ethnic minorities because their culture was created on American soil and they did not have the historical ties to families because of the manner in which their immigration occurred. Language that has been their primary language for over 200 years is English, and while this population has developed
Black English vernacular, which provides intercultural unity (Burlow & Burnett, 1997) it is still a form of the primary language of the United States.

In a documentary history on black women in white America, Lerner (1992) focused on the struggle this population has always faced and on the resulting emergence of strength, racial pride and the sense of community among black women.

Asian/Pacific Islanders are a much smaller minority and represent more than 29 distinct subgroups who differ in language, religion and culture. They have different origins, ecological adaptations and histories (Feng, 1994). Some immigrants are refugees from countries torn apart by war, painful separation and loss, changed forever by circumstances beyond their control; some are middle class from stable countries; some came with nothing, others with skills and affluence (Brand, 1987). Others have been in America for several generations. All bring with them centuries of history and culture. Family ties and family unity are extremely important. Many family members rely on their extended family for most advice and support and problems are solved considering how the decision will affect the whole family, not just the individual. Traditionally families care for family members with
disabilities their entire life and as a result families may feel that using community services for the child shows irresponsibility (Xiong, 1996).

Asian cultures are steeped in collectivist values. Ranking high in these values are the obligations to show respect for another person, to show humility, to suppress one's individual interests in favor of others and to avoid offending others. In some cultures, especially the Japanese, mere body language can convey volumes. Intentions and meanings are often difficult to discern, especially for people from another culture (James, 1997).

Harris (1986) addressed the barriers to the delivery of speech, language and hearing services to Native Americans and demonstrated how a distrust of the Anglo population has impacted this population. Native Americans have a rich culture and history and yet share some similarities with the deaf. They have suffered at the hands of a majority population that displaced them and has tried to force them to ignore and forfeit a culture that is centuries old.

Another mix that has been added to minority cultures in America is the growing phenomena of intermarriage. During the past two decades America has produced the greatest variety of hybrid households in
the history of the world (Smolowe, 1993). According to Karen Stephenson, anthropologist at UCLA, "If you really want to affect change, it's through marriage and child rearing. This is not assimilation in the Eurocentric sense of the word: one nation under white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant rule, divided, with liberty and justice for some. Rather it is an extended hyphenation" (Smolowe, 1993).

Including the deaf in this hybrid mix is inevitable, so in addition to racial intermarriage, there is also deaf-hearing intermarriage, and the deaf-hearing couple could be a racially mixed couple as well. Family alienation, societal discrimination, cultural differences and language barriers also pose challenges (Burlew, Burnette, & Hudson, 1997). The land of immigrants may be giving way to a land of hyphenations. But the hyphen still divides even as it compounds (Smolowe, 1993).

The communication challenge between the Deaf and the hearing could be defined as attempting to live between sound and silence. Can the world of sound ever understand the world of silence and vice versa? Padden (1999) has identified a belief that many deaf hold; speech and thinking like a hearing person are negatively valued in Deaf culture. She added that there
is a fierce loyalty among the Deaf population, regardless of ethnicity, and this may extend to protectively withholding information about the Deaf population's language and culture.

Many people think that American Sign Language (ASL) is the English language that is just spoken with the hand but ASL is not a form of English. It is a visual as opposed to an auditory or written language. And it has its own grammatical structure. It is not a universal language as each country has its own sign language (Buchino, 1990).

The deaf population in the United States regard ASL as their natural language because it reflects their culture and values and keeps their traditions and heritage alive. Deaf immigrants who are also an ethnic minority are faced with the monumental challenge of potentially having to learn two new languages and adapt to two new cultures. Being unable to hear may also have prevented the understanding of and participation in their native culture. The challenges that any immigrant faces are compounded if that immigrant is also Deaf.

It has not been uncommon for deaf parents to be faced with an uphill battle in their struggle to be "heard" and for their civil liberties to be respected and acknowledged. Karen and Kenneth Rothchild are
examples of just such a struggle. They fought for nine years to have their school district provide them with an interpreter for school/parent activities, basing their request on Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Zirkel, 1990).

Another segment of the deaf population are those individuals who were raised without any language. It may have been the result of living in a remote village in another country or simply being shuffled around among family members and/or friends. People who are deprived of language until after puberty are like feral children; they have a difficult time acquiring language as adults (Davis, 1993). An abominable example of this is the case of Junis Wilson of North Carolina, arrested in 1925 for attempted rape but was deemed mentally incompetent to stand trial because he had no language. Instead he was remanded to the state hospital where he was eventually castrated as a sex offender. He was discovered in 1992, at age 90, by social worker John Wasson, who had him moved to a transitional cottage. The additional tragedy was that four other deaf individuals were found as a result of a settlement with Wasson (Davis, 1993).

The Americans with Disabilities Act and all of its revisions and updates is still not respected or
implemented when dealing with the Deaf and because they do not have a voice, this injustice is not heard. The Deaf are still often the products of the failure of the educational and social service systems. It seems inconceivable that people can still grow up in a world where no one teaches them language, and even more inconceivable that in the 20th century that individuals are punished because of something they did not bring about (Davis, 1993).

An exploration of the Deaf and the on-going struggle for their culture and language to be accepted will hopefully lead to improvements in the hearing populations response to the Deaf. It is hoped that this research will provide direction and knowledge for those social workers in Child Protective Services that will enable them to improve the quality of services provided to any Deaf client.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to determine what knowledge social workers employed in Child Protective Services in San Bernardino County had of the Deaf as a minority and of their culture. It is important for the
social work profession because it would help social workers become more attuned to the different and subtle ways in which hearing impairment can affect and identify relationships. From this foundation it would help social workers become more skilled at helping a population that presents a complex and specialized clinical challenge.

Research Design

This study utilized a post-positivist paradigm, which is based on inductively building theory by collecting and analyzing data. The post-positivist method was selected because it is a design that focuses on data collection and analysis conducted while doing the research. It allowed the interviewer to discover theory about the research topic. The project utilized a research design known as Grounded Theory Approach, which is based on the inductively building theory through the qualitative collection and analysis of data. According to Gilgun (1991) there are a number of parallels between grounded theory and what social workers do in direct practice, and this permitted the researcher to focus on data collection and the analysis involved in doing the research. The knowledge base became wider as information was collected, one of the strengths of using this type of research design.
While there are as many different reasons for research to be conducted as there are people who conduct it, it is generally accepted that research provides opportunities for creating new knowledge. Instead of looking at the areas of research, practice and social theory as completely separate from one another, research should demonstrate the connection between research and practice.

Size and Characteristic of the Sample Population

This research was done utilizing a convenience sample of fifteen (15) social workers in the Victorville office of Child Protective Services (CPS) in San Bernardino County. Social workers within CPS are assigned to Units and the Victorville office is comprised of seven (7). Each Unit is assigned an average of eight (8) social workers representing two (2) different classifications: Social Worker II (SW II) and Social Service Practitioner (SSP). No measures were taken to screen or recruit a particular classification of social worker.

SW II’s are hired based upon the number of upper division college units in the behavioral sciences the worker has earned and experience providing services to youth and/or families. A four year degree is preferred but not required. SSP’s may be hired with a Master of
Social Work and no experience; MA in a related field and documented intern hours or two years of SW II experience. The MSW is preferred but not required.

All interviews were conducted in a private interview room usually reserved for foster parent activities. It is located on a different floor than the social worker offices. Before the interview, each participant signed an Informed Consent form (Appendix B) that had been approved by the Institutional Review Board of California State University San Bernardino. When the Consent Form was signed, it was placed randomly in a separate file to guarantee that each CPS employee participant was assured of their confidentiality and anonymity as they responded during the interview. Each participant was informed as to the purpose of the research: that their participation was voluntary and that they could terminate the interview at any time if they chose to do so. A Debriefing Statement Appendix C) was also presented to each participant. A letter was also obtained from the Department of Children's Services (Appendix D) stating that permission had been granted to conduct interviews within the Department.
Data Collection Procedures

Social workers were identified via telephone using the CPS directory, and then workers representing five (5) Units were randomly selected to be interviewed. To prevent the fear of discovery precluding their participation or inability to answer each interview question as honestly as possible, all participants were asked to identify themselves only by the Unit to which they were assigned.

This study was framed within a post-positivist paradigm, and standard, open-ended interviews were employed as the means of data collection. Interviews were between twenty and thirty minutes in length and addressed three major questions. They were: What were the social worker's educational qualifications? What knowledge did the worker possess about deaf culture? Could a child's safety or a parent's civil liberties be compromised if the language the parent speaks is not understood? Additional questions included: Would you consider a parent who is Hispanic, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander or other minority and deaf a double minority? Do you believe all Deaf can read lips or read written language? How much lip reading do you believe the Deaf understand? Would you expect a Deaf parent to be suspicious of you because you were a social worker,
hearing or both? And Do you believe that when hired a County should educate CPS social workers about the minority cultures that they may encounter? (See Appendix A).

During the interview process, a field journal was utilized and extensive notes were taken by the interviewer throughout each interview that were detailed and concise. In order to obtain consistency throughout the process of data collection, the researcher conducted each interview in the same location and the same questions were asked of each participant.

Data Recording and Analysis

After each interview the data were reviewed and coded. Upon examination of the data, it became clear that there was a high degree of consistency among the respondents. Since the goal of this research was to determine the knowledge base of the CPS worker regarding a specific population, reliability was not an issue. The study focused on the individual social worker's knowledge of the Deaf and their ability to communicate. What is true today may not be true a few months from now. On the other hand information pertaining to a participants' feelings and motivation may be highly reliable; more research is necessary to
determine whether this is the case. For these reasons, valid rather than reliable measurement was considered to be an appropriate goal.

RESULTS

Qualitative procedures were used in analyzing the collected data, using the inductive method of data analysis. Open coding techniques and the use of categories were used to verify the findings from the literature review. Interview notes were conceptually processed by responses to the questions that occurred during the interview. The responses were examined, compared, contrasted and further explored in an effort to gain new insight. The information was then grouped into categories and initial proposed relationships began to emerge as the coding of the questions and responses was done in a question by question format.

Strategies outlined by Guba and Lincoln (1985) were used in order to operationalize the process of open coding and carry data analysis to completion. Each response was recorded on an index card. Information on the index card was then used to facilitate the process of categorizing described above. After all of the cards had been categorized and reviewed, the categories were then examined and refined to determine how they related to one another and whether any aspect of the data had
been overlooked. A final examination of the relationships among the categories of data enabled the researcher to come to some conclusions.

Eight questions were asked of fifteen participants.

Question One focused on the educational qualifications for employment as a social worker in CPS. There were four potential responses based upon the hiring criteria for San Bernardino County. Fifty three percent of the participants held a Master of Social Work (MSW); 6.6% had a Master of Arts (MA) in Counseling and 40.1% held a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in either Sociology, Psychology, Human Development, Social Psychology or Liberal Studies.

Question Two asked what knowledge the participant possessed about the Deaf culture? Out of fifteen responses, 60% answered that they had very little knowledge and 40% responded that they had none. Those who responded that they had little knowledge added comments that included they didn’t know they had a culture, or someone had worked with an interpreter in Adult Services, and another had attempted to take a signing class because they thought it would be easy and it wasn’t. Another added that it was a culture as well as a challenge and another knew that there are different philosophies for educating deaf children. Of
the respondents who held a MSW or MA, 40.1% stated they possessed little knowledge about Deaf culture while 33.3% of those who hold a BA stated the same thing, and 20% who held MSW’s and 6.6% with a BA had no knowledge of this culture.

Question Three asked if the participant would consider a parent who is Hispanic, Black, Asian/Pacific-Islander, Native American or other ethnic minority and deaf a double or triple minority? Sixty percent answered yes they would and 40% stated they would not. Forty percent of those who responded with a No held a MSW/MA degree, and 20% a BA. Twenty percent each, of those possessing a MSW or BA agreed the parent would be a double or triple minority.

Question Four asked if the respondent believed all deaf can read lips or read written language. Regardless of the level of degree held responses overwhelmingly agreed; 86.8% stated No, 6.6% responded with a Yes, and 6.6% provided a split answer; No, they can’t all read lips, but Yes, they thought they could all read written language, whatever the language was.

Question Five asked how much lip reading they believed the Deaf understood and the responses were somewhat scattered. Responses covered six categories and included the following: No Idea; Everything; Some;
It Depends; 30-50%; and Over 50%. Twenty percent responded that they had no idea what the deaf understood, while 6.6% thought it was Everything. Another 13.4% believed it was Some while 26.7% of the participants said It Depends and another 26.7% believed it was between 30% and 50%, concluding with 6.6% who stated it was over 50%. There did not appear to be a pattern in the way participants responded based on the type of degree they held and each category had at least one respondent. Comments included statements such as they never thought about it before, or they thought the Deaf would understand a lot if you spoke slowly. Another believed that it depends on age, exposure, life experiences, training, etc.

Question Six asked if the participant would expect a deaf parent to be suspicious of them because they were a social worker, hearing or both? Of those responding, 26.7% of the participants with a MSW and 13.4% with a BA stated the Deaf they were a social worker and also because they were hearing, while 33.3% of the respondents stated that they didn’t believe a deaf parent would be suspicious of someone, regardless of whether they were a social worker and could hear. Twenty percent of the participants (one with a MSW and two with BA’s) believed that the deaf would only be
suspicious of a person if they were a social worker and not because they could hear. Additional comments addressed the belief that no one wanted to have any interaction with a CPS social worker, regardless of whether one could hear or not. No one really likes to have a social worker come to your door. One participant believed that the Deaf might believe that a CPS social worker might see them as less able to parent, but felt that was definitely not true.

Question Seven asked if the social worker believed a child’s safety or a parent’s civil liberties potentially could be compromised if the language the parents speak is not understood? An overwhelming majority of the respondents (86.7%) stated Yes; 6.6% answered No, and that response came from a MSW who added that they would simply trust their instincts and training, concluding with 6.6% who was also a MSW and provided a split response. They believed that the parent’s civil liberties could potentially be violated, but not a child’s safety.

Question Eight asked social workers if they believed that a County should educate CPS social workers about the specific minority cultures that they may encounter when they are hired. This question received the highest percentage of identical responses
and also generated the most discussion, as 93.4% of fifteen respondents answered Yes, while 6.6% responded with a split answer. That respondent held the MA in Counseling, and believed most of the minority cultures that are encountered are covered in courses required for graduation with both Bachelor and Master's degrees, yet the Deaf culture is not, unfortunately, covered in most university courses. It is also not commonly encountered in CPS work. They did believe that trainings should be made available to those 1.) most likely to encounter the need and 2.) those interested in learning more about it. Other participants believed it was definitely necessary, especially if the culture engages in harmful practices. Another added that they could be much more effective and credible with greater knowledge. Still another believed it could make a big difference when responding to referrals. Another thought that having information about the minority and some cultural highlights would help workers respond more effectively to the needs of the child and family because there has been such an influx of immigrants from places all over the world.

Several respondents concluded that it would be really helpful and make the job less stressful having a quick overview to refer to, and one added that during
the training at the Child Welfare Academy in Riverside, someone suggested that the county create some type of resource that a worker could quickly refer to when assigned a case that represents a culture and/or language about which they have limited or no knowledge. The instructor responded that it was the social worker's responsibility to educate themselves.

**DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this research study was to determine how knowledgeable San Bernardino County Child Protective Service (CPS) social workers were about the Deaf and their culture, as a minority population. A secondary desire was to learn if CPS social workers would consider the Deaf a minority, or potentially a double or triple minority if they were also from a minority ethnic population. Lastly, there was a desire to learn if CPS social workers believed a county should educate workers about the minority populations they may encounter. The results described in the previous section can be used to gain some insight regarding the knowledge base that CPS social workers have of the Deaf. Some of the data fit in well with previous explorations of this issue. Most importantly, the data collected can be used to postulate some possible interpretations about the beliefs and lack of adequate
knowledge CPS social workers have of the Deaf and their culture. Moreover, suggestions regarding the effectiveness of potential trainings are given.

The results of this study supported the supposition that the knowledge of the deaf population or their culture that CPS social workers have is very little or none. There was a high level of agreement on 62% of the questions asked during the interviews. For example, 100% agreed that they had little or no knowledge about the Deaf or their culture and 86% did not believe that the Deaf could all read lips or written language.

This researcher had speculated that CPS social workers would not possess any more knowledge about the Deaf and their culture than the general hearing population. This researcher also speculated that obtaining a college education in a behavioral science would not increase the knowledge base about the deaf or their culture, and the study confirmed those speculations.

Hispanic, Black, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans are all considered minority populations. However the results from Question Three revealed that only 60% of the respondents believed that the Deaf would be a double or triple minority if they
were also a part of the above mentioned ethnic populations. These are painful struggles that a deaf experience if they have the additional challenge of being an ethnic minority and that was born out in the literature (Jones, 1996).

The findings were supported by the information provided by Padden (1998)'s Time-line, which presented a historical overview of the Deaf. The hearing population continue to have limited knowledge and obtaining a knowledge base continues to remain a non-priority among the social services as well as advanced educational institutions. Few social workers are attuned to the different and subtle ways in which hearing impairment can affect identity and relationships (Luey, Glass & Elliott, 1995). Additionally, the findings of this study should be generalized to the population of CPS social workers and to management, as the findings are significant, supported by the literature and should be considered for future analysis.

Unanticipated Results

There was one unanticipated result Ninety three percent of the social workers interviewed agreed that the hiring county should educate CPS social workers about the minority cultures they will encounter. This
researcher did not anticipate that the social workers would feel as vulnerable and unprepared to deal with the various minority populations as their responses indicated. One explanation could be that social workers do want to provide the best service possible to their clients and have more knowledge available to keep a child safe, and potentially with their family, whenever possible.

To that end, a recommendation would be to provide trainings to all CPS social workers that would provide an overview of the various minority populations that CPS potentially encounters. The overview should include a historical perspective and data that addresses the culture, language, familial structure and role of extended family in decision making. This would help CPS workers provide an increased level of service to a potentially vulnerable population.

Limitation of the Study

A limitation of the study was the sample size and the limited geographic area of the county that the sample included. Although fifteen social workers did represent 25% of the Victorville social worker staff, increasing the number of participants would increase the validity of the results. Also, incorporating the
diverse geographical areas of San Bernardino County into one collective study would enrich the results.

**Implications for Social Work Practice**

The implications for social work practice are tremendous. The basic tenant of social work is to be an advocate of those who are unable to advocate for themselves and to assist in empowering them to ultimately be able to advocate for themselves. Luey, Glass and Elliott (1995) stated it best: "Understanding someone with a hearing loss is a complex and specialized ....challenge. To be of help, a social worker must join each deaf or hearing impaired person in a full and multifaceted exploration of all pertinent dimensions of life - hearing, communication, language, culture and politics. The process takes time and may at first seem remote from the problem at hand. But the exploration is essential for developing a positive relationship, for assessing needs accurately, and for delivering high-quality service." Those human beings who live in a world that is silent, but who must participate in a world of sound, deserve no less.
Appendix A

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about your educational background, including your degree and/or qualifications for CPS employment.
2. What knowledge do you possess about the deaf culture?
3. Would you consider a parent who is Hispanic, Black, Asian-Pacific-Islander or Other and Deaf a double or triple minority?
4. Do you believe all Deaf can read lips or read written language?
5. How much lip reading do you believe the deaf understand?
6. Would expect a deaf parent to be suspicious of you because you were a social worker, hearing or both?
7. Could a child's safety or a parent's civil liberties potentially be compromised if the language the parent's speak is not understood?
8. Do you believe that when hired a County should educate CPS social workers about the specific minority cultures they may encounter?
Appendix B

INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Participant,

You are being asked to participate in a research project being conducted by Judi Lux, a student in the MSW program at California State University, San Bernardino. This research project will consist of an interview to determine what knowledge Child Protective Service (CPS) employees possess regarding the Deaf as a minority culture in the High Desert region of San Bernardino County. Your participation in the project is voluntary and will be in the form of a taped interview. You are free to discontinue the interview at any point, and all information given will be destroyed and none of the information given will be used for any other purpose now or in the future.

If you decide to complete the interview process and consent to it being used in the research paper, your confidentiality will be upheld in the following manner:

1. No statements will be included or details given which could be connected to you.
2. Your name and physical description will not be used.
3. No other person will have access to the information given.
4. All information and materials will be kept under locked conditions and will only be accessible to the researcher.
5. Your participation will not affect your employment with Child Protective Services in any way.

The researcher will be asking questions about: Your educational background; Your knowledge regarding the minority culture included in this study and if you believe a county has a responsibility to educate CPS social workers on the minority populations they will be working with.

California State University, San Bernardino, and the researcher named below have responsibility for insuring that participants in research projects conducted under university auspices are safeguarded from injury or harm resulting from such participation. If any concerns should arise in this regard, you may contact the researcher at 760 243-6718, or the project supervisor, Rosemary McCasklin Ph.D., LCSW at 909 880-5507. This project has been approved by the California State University, Department of Social Work sub-committee, Institutional Review Board.
My mark below indicates that I voluntarily agree to participate in this project.

Mark Only

Date
Appendix C

Debriefing Statement

The research project you participated in is sponsored by the Department of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino. The researcher, Judi Lux, is a graduate student in the Master's program in Social Work, and the project supervisor is Rosemary McCaslin, Ph.D., LCSW.

The information you made known will be available for viewing at the University's library sometime after September, 1999. You may obtain information regarding this final document by contacting the Department of Social Work at the university, or Judi Lux, at the address and phone number listed below. The information may, at some other time in the future, be used in other published works.

Additionally, if at any time hereafter, you have questions or concerns about the report or your involvement in the project, you can contact the Department of Social Work for assistance.

I sincerely appreciate your participation.

California State University, San Bernardino
School of Social Work
Atten: Rosemary McCaslin, Ph.D., LCSW, Advisor
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407-2397
909 880-5565

Judi Lux
9344 Pecan
Hesperia, California 92345
760 243-6718
Agency Approval Letter

June 3, 1998

Dr. Rosemary McCaslin
Department of Social Work
California State University San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407-2397

To: Dr. McCaslin:

Re: Research Project by Judi Lux

This letter serves as notification to the Department of Social Work at California State University San Bernardino that Judi Lux has obtained consent from the Department of Children Services, San Bernardino County to conduct the research project regarding CPS worker knowledge of the Deaf and Deaf culture represented in San Bernardino County. This letter also serves as notification to the Department of Social Work that the Department of Children Services, San Bernardino County is giving consent to allow the Social Worker II assigned to the Victorville office of Child Protective Services to participate in this research project.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

[Name (Printed)]

6-10-98

Date
REFERENCES


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Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Department 34, Code of Federal Regulations, part 104, (Section) 504.


