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THE IMPACT OF EARLY INTERVENTION ON
CHILD WELFARE CASES

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

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

by
Demetra Ann Vaughan

June 2005

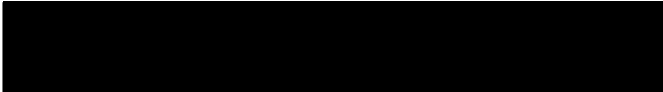
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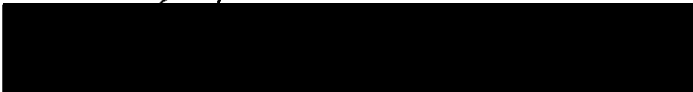
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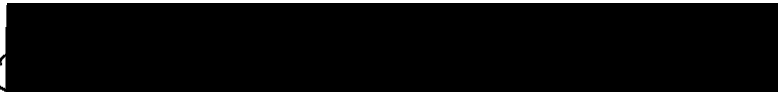
June 2005

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study was to explore the effects of early intervention on substantiated child abuse cases reported to a Southern California Child Welfare Agency's emergency response referral unit. The agency was charged to develop programs that will reduce the recurrence of child abuse. This study design was a survey of 100 case records. A secondary data set was used. In addition, a quantitative closed-ended questionnaire was developed to survey the social workers assigned to the cases. Frequency distributions and bivariate analyses were used to evaluate the data. The findings from the study suggested that there were no difference in the outcome of theses cases when an early intervention in the form of a monitored disposition was provided.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Teresa Morris for all of her support and guidance in writing this project. Completion of this study would not have been possible without her help. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Rosemary McCaslin and the Department of Social Work at California State University San Bernardino. Kudos to Professor Preble, Professor Gordon, and Professor Taylor, thanks for having such interesting classes.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my husband, Mr. Hugh K. Vaughan. Thanks for being my greatest supporter. I am grateful for your love, patience, financial support, and the many sacrifices you've made to help make my dreams come true. You've worked long hours to provide a safe and comfortable home for our family, as well as afforded me the opportunity to attend college as a full-time student. Thanks for taking this journey with me. Having you next to me gave me the strength and courage I needed to achieve my Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology and Master of Social Work degree. Thanks for all you've done, there are not enough pages to list everything, just know that I am eternally grateful. I will always remember your hard work. I share this degree with you.

To my children, Justin Vaughan, T'Keyah Vaughan, Paul Vaughan, Hugh Vaughan, II, and my mother-in-law and father-in-law, Elaine and Lincoln Garbutt, thanks for your love and support, my deepest love and appreciation to all of you. Also, praises and thankfulness to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, without your Spirit, my life would have no meaning and none of this would be possible, AMEN.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Chapter one presents an overview of the project including the historical and theoretical perspective guiding this study. The problem statement and its focus, the purpose of the study, and the significance of the project for social work are also presented within this chapter.

Problem Statement

The problem being addressed here is how to reduce the number of repeat referrals on emergency response referral cases reported to a Southern California Child Welfare Agency's, which will be referred to throughout this study as SCCWA, Emergency Response Referral Unit. SCCWA's Emergency Referral Unit is where reports of child abuse are received. Repeat referrals are described as cases that have been reported to the agency for child abuse or neglect on more than one occasion. One of the main challenges for this agency is to develop programs that will reduce the recurrence of child abuse cases with a goal of forty percent reduction.

SCCWA is a public service agency charged with establishing, managing, and advocating for a system of services for families and children of all ages, races, religions, and economic backgrounds. SCCWA's mission and goals are included in promotional materials that are made available for public use. As noted in these materials, the agency works in partnership with parents, relatives, foster parents, and community organizations. One of its primary responsibilities is to protect children in Southern California from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

SCCWA provides services for the most populated counties in the State of California and has a vision of achieving its goals of ensuring the safety, permanency, and well-being of all children in its care. The agency's emergency response department received over 12,826 referrals during August 2004, in comparison to the 12,322 reports received in August 2003 (Center for Social Services Research, et. al, 2004). The emergency response referrals have increased. As a result, the agency's system is overburden. SCCWA is currently exploring ways to reduce the number of repeat referrals without compromising the

safety of children as well as decrease the number of children being removed from their families.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore and assess the impact of early intervention programs on child welfare cases, in particular, SCCWA's emergency response cases. With changes in child abuse laws and an increase in the number of children being placed in out-of-home care, SCCWA is under pressure to develop and implement programs that focus on three priority outcomes: improve permanence, improve safety, and reduce the number of children being removed from their home.

SCCWA is not alone in its efforts to deal with the high reoccurrence rate of cases of child abuse. The United States' child welfare system is also faced with serious challenges that have been growing for more than a decade. One of the primary issues plaguing the nation's child welfare system is the prevalence of child maltreatment. For the purpose of this study, the terms child abuse and neglect and child maltreatment are used interchangeably. The number of children in the care of the child welfare system has continued to grow from 260,000 children in out-

of-home care in the 1980's to more than 550,000 in care by 2000 (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004).

All states and the District of Columbia are mandated by the federal government to implement programs to prevent further maltreatment of children in the child welfare system. Preventing child maltreatment is an enormous task for child welfare agencies, considering the vast number of emergency response referrals reported nationally and locally. The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (referred to as NCANDS) estimated that in 2002, more than three million children were referred to Child Protective Services (referred to as CPS) and of those reported, approximately 896,000 children were determined to be victims of child abuse or neglect by CPS agencies (Child Maltreatment, 2002).

The safety of children is the primary goal of the child welfare system, particularly those children who have already been identified as victims of maltreatment. To aid child welfare agencies in providing more effective services, the federal government and states have enacted laws and policies that identify, protect, and assist children that are victims of child abuse (McGowan and Meezan, 1983).

In 1962, the Social Security Act was amended and required all states to develop a plan to provide child protective services. By 1967, all states passed laws requiring professionals to report child abuse and Title XX of the Social Security Act made protective services mandatory for all states and provided federal money to pay for the services. The Child Abuse Prevention Act of 1974 provided financial assistance for programs and in 1978, the Indian Child Welfare Act was introduced to strengthen the standards governing removal of Native American children from their families.

The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (ASFA) of 1980 was established to address the child welfare systems effectiveness and its ability to produce defined and visible outcomes for children and families through a continuum of services (McGowan and Meezan, 1983). ASFA is an important piece of child welfare legislation because it recognized major problems in the child welfare system. This act modified Title IV-E and Title IV-B of the Social Security Act and produced a new Act, Title IV-E, which established funding and criteria for child welfare agencies' delivery of services and research based practice approaches (Proctor, 2004).

Given that the goal of SCCWA is to reduce the number of repeat referrals on emergency response referral cases, this study examined how SCCWA's social workers intervene on substantiated child abuse cases. This study assessed the effectiveness of the emergency response referral unit when intervening on child maltreatment cases that come to its attention. These were child abuse cases reported to the ER and after being substantiated, the cases were transferred to the Family Maintenance and Reunification Department.

To address the concerns of safety, the removal of children and maintaining intact families, this study focused on the impact of implementing early intervention at the opening of a child abuse case. Provided that an early intervention program is implemented at the opening of a child maltreatment case, it was hypothesized that there would be a reduction in the reoccurrence of child abuse cases reported to ER, as well as a decline in the number of children being removed from their home.

Significance of the Project to the Social Work Profession

This project had implications for social work at the micro and macro practice level. Historically, social workers have worked vigorously on behalf of children and families, helping them to live happier, healthier, and more meaningful lives. The child welfare system relies heavily on social workers' innovative expertise, which allows child welfare agencies to better meet the needs of children and families. One of the primary challenges for social workers is how best to provide effective services to at risk children and families. Currently, research on early intervention programs is quite limited. This study provide opportunities to further research in this area, advancing the knowledge base of social work and contributing to the array of literature on early intervention.

Micro Practice Social Work

There are many challenges that are germane to social work practice, particularly working with individuals, families, groups, and various environmental systems. The generalist intervention model provides social workers with

a wide repertoire of approaches that can be used in early intervention programs. At the inception of receiving an emergency response referral, the social worker immediately assess the severity of the issue, plans appropriate actions, implements the plan, as well as monitor and evaluate until termination. It is believed that this research might have direct implications for micro and macro practice social workers in identifying the contributing factors that cause the recurrence of child abuse, in addition to providing strategies and techniques for working with re-referred child abuse cases.

Macro Practice Social Work

Macro practice social work is central to the development, implementation, and effectiveness of social welfare services. Both bureaucratic and standardized procedures have burdened child welfare agencies with the responsibility of implementing appropriate and cost effective service programs. Since social workers are one of the primary sources of management personnel for most child welfare agencies, this study can help them in determining which programs are effective and what categories of clients will benefit most from a particular

service. This research can assist child welfare agencies in providing data on early intervention programs.

Within this study, the following general research question was addressed: "Do early intervention programs decrease the reoccurrence of child maltreatment in child welfare cases." Due to the current changes in child welfare policies and the contending forces in the political arena, there is an increased emphasis on social work practice and its ability to utilize research based approaches. Given that social workers are challenged to provide a rationale for the effectiveness of their work, it is believed by the author that intervening early on child abuse cases may facilitate a reduction in the reoccurrence of child abuse and neglect; an outcome that is important not only to the profession of social work, but to society in general.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Chapter Two is a discussion of the relevant literature and includes a brief historical overview and clarification about the concept of early intervention. Specifically, this chapter discusses the importance of intervening early and its effect on child welfare services, and the outcome as well as an evaluation of evidence based practice for working with child abuse cases. Finally, theories guiding conceptualization of child welfare services are discussed.

Historical Overview and Development of Early Intervention

The theories and practices developed over the last two centuries can be organized into five philosophical roots of early intervention: Early childhood education, child development, pediatrics, and social welfare (Brambring, Rauh, and et. al. 1996; Richmond and Ayoub, 1996). Early childhood education is the first sphere that can be traced back to several different models of early

childhood education programs, such as kindergarten programs and nursery schools. Evidenced based studies provided information about the effects of early education and intervention on the behavior and development of infants and preschoolers (Brambring, Rauh, et. al, 1996).

Child development is the underlying model for early intervention. This field underscores the impact of the early experiences in a child's life, particularly during infancy and the preschool periods. According to this perspective those early encounters influence the child's behavior and development (Richmond and Ayoub, 1996; Brambring, Rauh, and et. al).

At the turn of the century, the concern for the physical health of children became the focus. Interests in infant mortality, poor physical health and the well-being of children began to shape the direction of early intervention. Social welfare, the final philosophical influence on early intervention emerged with a focus and commitment to the needs of children with disabilities (Brambring, Rauh, et. al.; Richmond and Ayoub).

The primary issue for early intervention is the impact of the service system and the service providers on the effectiveness of early intervention. Research has not

yielded a complete assessment of the structure of early intervention and all its interactions and temporal changes. According to Brambring, Rauh, et. al., (1996), more research is needed for a more precise and differential assessment of the complex structure of early intervention in order to develop the best possible services that meet the needs of families and individuals.

Concept of Early Intervention

The idea of early intervention includes both a preventive measure and a continuum of services that range from monitoring the individual or family's progress to providing them with resources (Graham, 1993).

Traditionally, early intervention was regarded as the provision of support to parents of children with disabilities. Early intervention has evolved now from a child-centered approach to a more family-centered paradigm (Brambring, Rauh, et. al)

Currently, early intervention focuses on the persons within a family rather than the issues surrounding the child. There is a major movement towards involving families in the process of change and the advancement of self-empowerment. According to Block and Block (2002),

involving the family in the intervening process is empowering for families. The family's involvement allows it to view itself as the primary determinant of the growth and long-term quality of life for the child. As such, they should be collaborators of change and part of the group or team involved in the planning and implementing of programs that assist in meeting the outlined objectives (Grahm, 1993).

An important piece in the development of early intervention programs is family-centered services. This component gives the family an opportunity to be a facilitator and collaborator in the services provided by agencies. Brock and Brock (2002) contended that those professionals, who work with families rather than focus exclusively on the child as the primary client, will be in partnership with the families. This philosophy can be translated into a role expectation for social work practice. Social worker's can benefit from understanding and genuinely respecting various family systems and use this knowledge to develop strategies and techniques that will increase their capacity to work with those families that come to the attention of child welfare agencies.

The concept of early intervention represents the accumulation and integration of varied ideas and transformations into practice across disciplines. Recent advances have provided the basic framework that has significantly expanded the manner in which early intervention is conceptualized and implemented (Brambring, Rauh, et. al., 1996).

Why Intervene Early

Intervening early in child welfare cases can have a significant impact on the overall functioning of the child and family. Most children involved with the child welfare system have experienced abuse or neglect and tend to come from high-risk home environments characterized by poverty, instability, and parents or caregivers with poor psychological well-being (Semidei, Radel, and Nolan, 2001). These traumatic experiences can lead to a variety of behavioral and emotional problems including severe attachment disorders (Cearley, 2004).

According to Semidei, Radel, and Nolan, children that are involved in the child welfare system due to a reported abuse or neglect referral are likely to have a reoccurrence of a child abuse report. Intervening early

can provide the family with a full continuum of services that can protect the safety of a child, prevent further maltreatment, and help reduce reoccurrence of child abuse.

Prevention programs can be classified into three main levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention. The goal of primary prevention programs is to stop the maltreatment before it starts. Secondary prevention programs target families at high risk of maltreatment to alleviate conditions associated with the problem. Tertiary prevention directs services to families where maltreatment has occurred to reduce the negative consequences of the maltreatment and to prevent its recurrence (Block and Block, 2002).

Collaboration

In working with child maltreatment cases it is best to understand how to successfully work with the families and to have knowledge of which factors have emerged as successful. Lewandowski and Pierce (2004), proposed that families who are treated as experts and collaborators in goal setting and planning solutions have produced successful outcomes. A plan centered on keeping families together can be useful in improving family functioning and

can be used as an initial response to families where maltreatment is an issue.

Lewandowski and Pierce (2004) and Cearley (2004) concur that families referred to the child welfare system should be treated as experts and collaborators. Social workers that work with child maltreatment cases must be able to demonstrate to these families that they can take action to improve their situation and if they are to change their condition, they must be aware of their choices and be given opportunities to select their course of action from among those choices (Lewandowski and Pierce, 2004). All of the preceding factors identified by the researchers, particularly, empowerment, collaboration, and viewing the family as experts, as well as evidence based practice will be discussed further.

Empowerment

In addition, Cearley, (2004) suggested that when working with families, social workers must empower their clients and utilize a plan that is successful, such as being culturally sensitive, action oriented, and carried out in collaboration with family members. Moreover, social

workers that use empowerment in their work are able to help their clients attain empowerment.

Empowerment is described as a perspective that uses a strengths perspective and emphasizes strengths and areas for improvement. The empowerment perspective differs from the medical model in that it does not focus on problems, symptoms, or pathology. The theory of empowerment involves identifying client strengths and pointing to how the client has successfully used those strengths in past and current situations (Cearley, 2004).

Evidence Based Practice

Yet, given all the techniques that have provided successful outcomes, Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) is a challenge for social workers. Factors that are thought to lend meaning and support to EBP seemed to be incompatible with routine application in social work practice. Policies and laws have set criteria for child welfare agencies' service delivery and required that social work practice decisions be based on evidence from scientific research (Rosen, 2003).

Furthermore, social workers are guided by principles set forth by National Association of Social Workers

(NASW). Adhering to some of the principles such as the client's best interest, values and commitment to scientific research can be a daunting task for social workers (Rosen 2003). Social workers working for organizations with other objectives and limited resources are at times faced with decisions that may not be in the client's best interest, may not be evidenced based, or goal directed practice.

In an overwhelmed child welfare system, some social workers tend to use a readily available method of solving problems based on informal methods or experience (Rosen, 2003). Rosen described the preceding method as coping heuristics, in that social workers assign higher probability to events that are correlated with a familiar category, and that even though the probability may provide good enough or satisfying solutions in an individual case, it may be laden with biases and errors. To address the concept of coping heuristics, Rosen (2003), proposed that treatment must be explicit, systematic, and a rational problem-solving process.

In order for social workers to better locate and retrieve the best empirically supported interventions relevant for the outcomes, they must utilize practitioner

friendly tools. Moreover, when applying an empirically supported intervention to a particular client and practice situation, it must be critically weighed. When necessary, the intervention should be supplemented, modified, or replaced for best fit (Rosen, 2003).

According to Usher and Wildfire (2003), what makes the concept of Evidence Based Practice (EBP) appealing is its disciplined approach to policymaking, program development, and practice that is grounded in rationality, quality of care, and cost-effectiveness. Working with EBP involves discrete, time-limited evaluations of services for a particular target group or the refinement of a specific service component linked with a package of supports and services. Child welfare agencies that implement EBP to guide their practice can better assist the families that come to their attention.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

The behavioral and psychoanalytic perspectives view intervention as a product that is directed towards individuals or families emphasizing that the source of their problems is within either the individual or the family. Although there are some obvious differences

between the behavioral and psychoanalytic model, they share a common focus when identifying and locating the problem within the subsystem of either the individual or the family. In contrast, general systems and ecological theory underscore the person-in-environment, in that problems that humans experience develop as the outcome of transactions between environments and people and intervention must be directed towards all systems with which the individual or family interacts (Mattaini, 1990).

The preceding theories part when developing an approach for intervening. The behavioral and psychoanalytic views tend to suggest that the problems that individuals and families face are clinical in nature like a disease or illness. They differ in where they identify the disease. The psychoanalytic model views the family dysfunction in terms of interlocking pathologies in which symptoms are a function of the pathological relationships among family members, stemming from an individual family member's psychopathology. On the other hand the behavioral view stresses specific behavior patterns resulting from exchanges of reinforcement and punishment among family members (McGowan and Meexan, 1983).

In addition, the psychoanalytic approach isolates the pathology that is identified in the family and suggests that the problem could result from communication among family members, e.g. one family member may not express his or her needs or expectations. This model highlights the various subsystems and alliances among specific family members (McGowan and Meezan 1983).

In viewing the various subsystems, general systems and ecological models for practice broadens the worker's view beyond the individual case to the case-in-situation. Taking into consideration the case-in-situation, it is suggested that people and their environments can be thought of in terms of an adaptive balance and when human problems develop, they are caused by the product of the transaction between their environment and them. To the extent that the adaptive balance is threaten, this threat causes physical, psychological, or even social needs, thus creating stress or disjunction between people and the environment they rely on (McGowan and Meezan, 1983).

In examining the theories presented, the generalist and ecological perspectives seem to be most useful for this study. They are more flexible and provide a broader view for social workers' assessment, planning, and

intervention. They support, for example removing environmental blocks and obstacles that hinder the client's growth and development, and relieving, developing, and helping clients to identify and rely on their inner strength for growth and adaptation. The behavioral and psychoanalytic model seems narrow and is not flexible, in that the problem is diagnosed within a narrow system, which becomes the goal for intervening.

Summary

The literature important to the project was presented in Chapter Two. The preceding literature offers discussions of techniques useful for implementing early intervention, assessing critically the use of evidence-based practice in social work practice, and examining the theory that would be most relevant to this study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Introduction

Chapter Three describes the methods used in obtaining and analyzing the data for this study. Specifically, this chapter describes the study's design, the sampling methods utilized, the data collection methods and instruments used for the project, the procedures for gathering the data, and a description of the data analysis. Furthermore, this chapter addresses the procedures for assuring confidentiality and anonymity of the cases and overall protection of human subjects.

Study Design

The purpose of this study was to explore and assess the impact of early intervention programs on child welfare cases. This study design was a survey of case records. A secondary data set was used to assess substantiated child abuse cases reported to SCCWA's emergency response referral unit. This approach was chosen because it provided summary data on demographic characteristics, the type of abuse reported, the perpetrator of the abuse, if

the case had a prior history, and whether or not the case received a monitored disposition.

A quantitative closed-ended questionnaire was developed because the data set did not specify if case goals were met. To evaluate whether or not the cases achieved their goals when provided with a monitored disposition the social workers assigned to the cases were surveyed.

This study hypothesized that if an early intervention service is initiated by the child welfare agency to families at the opening of an emergency referral child abuse cases, there will be a decrease in the number of reoccurrences on child abuse emergency response referral cases.

Sample

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Cases

Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
<hr/> Sample (N = 100) <hr/>		
Age Mean = 7.74		
1 - 6	48	48.0%
7 - 12	31	31.0%
13 - 18	20	20.0%
Missing	1	1.0%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	83	83.0%
African American	1	1.0%
Caucasian	13	13.0%
Other	3	3.0%

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample for this study. The sample was randomly selected. It consists of 100 substantiated child abuse cases that were reported to SCCWA's emergency response referral unit between March 2004 and November 2004. This

sample is representative of the population served by this Southern California agency.

This study reviewed 100 cases and the demographic variables are as followed: The gender characteristics consist of (47%) boys and (53%) girls. The age range for the cases examined was 1 to 18 with an average age of 7.73% (see Table 1). Almost half (48%) were 1 to 6 years of age, over one third (31%) were 7 to 12 years of age, and (20%) were over 13 years of age. The ethnic make up included more than half (83%) Hispanics/Latinos, (13%) were Caucasian, (1%) were African American, and (3%) reported their ethnicity as "other."

Data Collection and Instruments

This study collected data on the following independent variables: age, gender, ethnicity, abuse type, perpetrator of abuse, whether or not a monitored disposition was provided, and prior history. The abuse types that were reported and substantiated are labeled by SCCWA as physical, sexual, and general neglect.

Physical abuse refers to the non-accidental bodily injury that has been inflicted on the child. Sexual abuse is described as the victimization of a child by sexual

activities and general neglect means the negligent failure of a person having the care or custody of a child to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical treatment, or supervision where no physical injury to the child has occurred.

Other categories of abuse identified by the agency include emotional abuse and child abandonment. Emotional abuse refers to the nonphysical mistreatment of a child, the results of which may be characterized by disturbed behavior on the part of the child such as severe withdrawal, regression, bizarre behavior, hyperactivity, or dangerous acting-out behavior. Such disturbed behavior is not deemed, in and of itself, to be evidence of emotional abuse.

The perpetrator of abuse is defined as the person responsible for the abuse. Recurrent maltreatment is a child abuse referral that has been previously reported to the agency. Monitored disposition refers to the type of intervention given to the clients. Intervention is defined as the social worker's outlined case plan goals, which includes supervised visits, phone calls, as well as monitoring or evaluating the case to ensure the case plan objective was achieved.

The dependent variable was the final outcomes for the cases and it was measured by survey of the case carrying social workers (see Appendix A). The social workers were asked to respond with "Strongly agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly disagree," to the following questions: "Whether or not the case plan goals were met," "If movement towards permanency was successful," and "If they had success with case." The independent variables were cross tabulated with the social worker's responses.

The independent variables were measured at the nominal level and the dependent variables were measured at the ordinal level. These variables were selected because they provided information about each case, such as the services the clients received from this agency and an evaluation of the social worker's responses to the survey. The variables were examined to determine if there was a relationship between the intervention and the success of the cases.

Procedures

A clearance from the unit manager to access the data base was obtained. After approval, the manager directed the researcher to the Family Reunification (FR) and Family

Maintenance (FM) Service unit where the supervisor authorized a security pass to access the unit's child abuse cases from the data base system.

A data matrix form was developed (see appendix B) to unify the collected data. In the data system, the social workers were listed under the authorized supervisor's unit. Each case assigned to the social worker was listed numerically in the data system and only the odd numbered cases were chosen. After selecting the odd numbered case, the independent variables were gathered and written on the data matrix form. The collection of data lasted over a three day period, requiring about seven hours each day until achieving the sample size of 100 cases.

Protection of Human Subjects

Although human participants were not present for this study, the confidentiality and anonymity of case information was protected by not collecting any personal information that would identify the clients. Such as names, address, or social security numbers, each case was identified by its assigned odd number. The data matrix form was kept in a file drawer at the agency. After

successfully collecting and entering the data, the data matrix form containing case information was shredded.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted with descriptive and analytic procedures. Descriptive statistics including measurement of means and frequency distributions were used. Bivariate statistics, including chi-square tests were used to assess the associations between demographic, independent, and dependent variables. SPSS Student Version 11.0 for Windows was used for all statistical analysis, and an alpha level of $P < .05$ was specified as a measure of significance.

Summary

The objective of this study was to identify the effects of early intervention on substantiated child abuse cases reported to a Southern California child welfare agency's emergency response referral unit. This chapter described the design of the study, the target sample population, and the data collection methods and procedures. Methods used to insure the protection of human subjects were described. Descriptions of the instruments

used and data analysis methods employed were also reported.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

Chapter Four presents the results of the study. The demographic characteristics of the cases are described. The relationship between the dependent variables and the independent variables are also reported. The chapter concludes with a summary of the results.

Presentation of the Findings

Table 2 presents the social workers' responses on the progress of their cases and the Chi-Square statistics testing the relationship between this and the independent variable. The social workers were asked 3 questions. The first two questions they were asked to respond with a yes or no answer to "If case plan goals were met" and "If permanency was successful." The final question was asked to get an understanding of the social workers success with their cases. They were asked to respond with strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree, to "Was your work with this client successful." The social workers' responses were contrasted with the primary

independent variable, "Did the case receive a monitored disposition".

More than half, 52 of the cases did receive a monitored disposition, 35 cases did not receive a monitored disposition, and for eight of the cases there was no response given. There were only 17 cases that did achieve permanency, 28 cases did not, and for 41 of the cases there was no response to the question. The social workers were asked if they had success with their cases, 10 cases received an answer of strongly agree, for 76 cases the answer was agree, and disagree was reported for 2 of the cases. There were no responses for the category "strongly disagree," and 51 cases did not receive a response from social workers about their success.

The chi-square tests were used to measure the dependent variables: If case plan goals were met, if permanency was successful, and the social worker's success, with the independent variables: Did the case receive a monitored disposition, age, race, and ethnicity. The dependent variables measured with age, gender, and ethnicity, showed no relationships. This may result from the subjective response given by the social workers and because there were an extremely high number of

Hispanics/Latinos in one group and too few in the other racial groupings.

Case plans goals were not significantly related to the case getting a monitored disposition (Chi-Square = .337), the null hypothesis was not rejected. The success of permanency was also compared with the case receiving a monitored disposition (Chi-Square = .076), the null hypothesis was not rejected. Whether or not the case achieved permanency did not seem to matter when no disposition was given. The social workers success with the case compared with the case receiving a monitored disposition, (Chi-Square = .651), null hypothesis was not rejected. The social workers reported that they agreed that the case plans were met, their responses seemed to have no significance to if the case did or did not receive a monitored disposition.

Summary

Chapter Four reviewed the results of this study. One of the independent variables, did the case receive a monitored disposition was compared with dependent variables, the social workers' answers given on the survey, were the case plans goals met, was permanency

successful, and if they had success with the case. The null hypothesis was not rejected on all measurements. Even though the social workers reported that permanency was successful, the case plan goals were met, and reported that they did significantly well with their cases, the results from the study seemed to suggest that there is no difference in the outcome of these cases when a monitored disposition was provided. There was also no relationship between the social workers' responses and independent variables gender and ethnicity.

Table 2. Chi-Square Results for Relationships

	Monitored Disposition Given		Chi-square	P <
	Yes	No		
Case Plan Met			.337	.762
Yes	35	52		
No	3	2		
Missing = 8				
Permanency Success			.076	3.044
Yes	17	28		
No	9	5		
Missing = 41				
Social Worker Success			.651	.857
Strongly agree	3	7		
Agree	34	42		
Disagree	2	2		
Missing = 10				

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

Chapter Five presents a discussion of the results of the study, the limitations of the study, implications for further research, and recommendations indicated for social work policy and practice. The Chapter concludes with a summary of the discussion.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore and assess the impact of early intervention programs on child welfare cases at a Southern California Child Welfare Agency. It was hypothesized that when an early intervention service is initiated by the child welfare agency to individuals or families at the onset of an emergency referral case. There will be a decrease in the number of reoccurrences on reported child abuse emergency response referral cases.

This study found no significant relationship between the dependent variables: Achievement of case plan goals, success with permanency, and the social workers' success; and the independent variable: Receipt of a monitored

disposition. Other independent variables, such as gender and ethnicity were also measured with the dependent variables and the results yielded no relationship. The researcher found these results puzzling, because in theory providing a monitored disposition should work. However, when the social workers' responses were compared with the cases that did not receive a monitored disposition, the null was not rejected.

Fifty-two of the cases that did not receive a monitored disposition, as reported by the social workers, the case plan goals were achieved. These results were also evident when permanency success was compared with receiving a monitored disposition. Twenty-eight cases achieved permanency, 17 cases did not, and 41 cases received no response from social workers. In comparing the social workers' response to the surveys with successfully case outcomes, the results seem to suggest that it did not matter if the cases received a monitored disposition. These results appear to be contrary to the concept of intervening early on child welfare cases.

Although the results showed no relationships between the dependent variables: "If case plan goals were met, if permanency was successful, and the social worker's

success," and the independent variables: age, and ethnicity. These findings differ from the literature reviewed for this study. According to the literature, child abuse cases that receive an early intervention such as, a monitored disposition tend to have successful outcomes and the possibility of a reoccurrence is lessened.

Limitations

The limitations associated with this study consisted of the researcher's inability to control the variables and the subjective responses supplied by the social workers. The variables extracted from the cases could not be controlled with either the use of statistics or by manipulation. Due to the personal responses provided by the social workers there was no suitable procedure for measuring personal responses.

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

This study found no relationship between the dependent variables and the independent variables. Yet, in theory, if clients received an early intervention, the

probability of their success is greater. These findings may mean that early intervention needs to be reviewed for effectiveness or may be the problem is with the social worker's subjective response of success. Further research is needed for client success as well as further integration between child welfare agencies, research, planning, and the policy makers in the areas of social welfare.

Conclusions

The findings of this study are inconsistent with the concepts discussed throughout the literature review. In theory, providing cases with a monitored disposition should have a significant outcome with the success of permanency, achievement of case plan goals, and success with social workers intervening on the cases. The results showed that the null hypothesis was not rejected, suggesting that whether or not a case received a monitored disposition, did not affect completion of the case plan goals. Permanency was successful, and the social workers were successful with their cases.

Further research is recommended to explore the impact of early intervention programs on child welfare cases

using control groups to examine the differences between the success of cases that did and did not receive a monitored disposition. A larger scale study would also have greater significance if the sample consists of a more diverse group.

APPENDIX A
QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire

Please respond to the questions below regarding your clients. No identifying information for either the client or social worker will be used. This data will only be used for the purpose of this research study and will be destroyed after it has been successfully entered. Your support will be greatly appreciated in helping to complete this thesis project. For each box, please circle one of the following:

Y = yes, N = no, SA = strongly agree, A = Agree,

D = disagree, and SD = strongly disagree.

CASE NAME	WERE CASE PLAN GOALS MET?	WAS THERE SUCCESSFUL MOVEMENT TOWARDS PERMANENCY?	YOUR WORK WITH THIS CLIENT WAS SUCCESSFUL
	Y OR N	Y OR N	SA A D OR SD
	Y OR N	Y OR N	SA A D OR SD
	Y OR N	Y OR N	SA A D OR SD
	Y OR N	Y OR N	SA A D OR SD
	Y OR N	Y OR N	SA A D OR SD
	Y OR N	Y OR N	SA A D OR SD
	Y OR N	Y OR N	SA A D OR SD
	Y OR N	Y OR N	SA A D OR SD

APPENDIX B
DATA MATRIX FORM

Data Matrix Form

[illegible]

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