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## **Working with ethnic-minority families: Evaluating the need for cross-cultural training within Riverside County Child Protective Services**

Kathleen Fromayan Nebo

Darlana Allen

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WORKING WITH ETHNIC-MINORITY FAMILIES: EVALUATING  
THE NEED FOR CROSS-CULTURAL TRAINING WITHIN  
RIVERSIDE COUNTY CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

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

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

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by  
Kathleen Fromayan Nebo

Darlana Allen

June 2005

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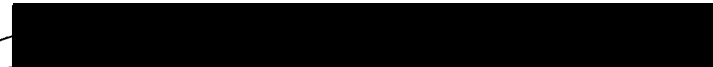
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by  
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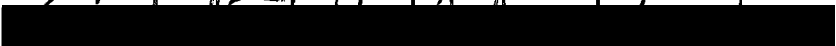
Darlana Allen

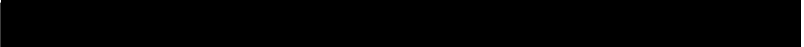
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## ABSTRACT

Various studies have shown that ethnic minority children make up the majority of reported child abuse cases, both within the State of California and throughout the United States. Social Workers working with these families need to have the ability to work with and understand culturally diverse populations in order to provide an effective and culturally sensitive approach to social work practice and intervention. With the lack of effective training and ethnic minority awareness in a working environment, many families receive limited and inadequate services, therefore, increasing the likelihood of repeated reports of child abuse. It is essential that Social Workers receive cross-cultural trainings throughout their employment with an agency to continuously meet the needs of the families and children.

The purpose of this study was to examine the need for cross-cultural training at Riverside County Child Protective Services. Children Services Social Workers received self-administered questionnaires that measured their level of cultural awareness, and evaluated the need for additional training.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to Dr. Rosemary McClasin for providing us with guidance and inspiration throughout this project, and on the overall development and presentation of this research project.

We would also like to thank Riverside County Child Protective Services for allowing us to conduct this research project at various satellite offices.

## DEDICATION

### Kathleen Fromayan Nebo

To my co-workers and supervisor at Riverside County, I thank you for your support and encouragement and countless 'hang in there' when I seemed frustrated. Thanks for believing in me!!!

To my family, thank you for your continued love and endless prayers. Without your love and prayers, I would not have been able to complete this project.

To my wonderful and most loving husband, Jim Nebo, I thank you for your patience, unconditional love and for believing in me throughout the years.

Finally, to my Savior Jesus Christ, I thank You for blessing me with the strength, ability, knowledge and good health that carried me throughout this project and ever more.

### Darlana Allen

I would like to dedicate this body of academic work and accomplishment to my family. Without their love and support none of this would have been possible.

To my gracious mother, Lena B. Allen, I want you to know that you continue to inspire me and you are my hero.

Thank you for your babysitting services, your financial support, and being my subject for many of my papers.

To my talented and beautiful daughter, Kalena L. Allen, you are one of the major reasons why I continued with my educational goals. Thank you for your patience and your maturity when I had classes or papers to write. I thank you for all the sacrifices you had to make with sharing your mommy with other people, places, and things. I hope that I have inspired you to follow your dreams because you are a superstar in my eyes.

To my Heavenly Father, I know that through You all things are possible. I give you the praise and the glory.  
Thank You

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The contents of Chapter One present an overview of the project. The following items are outlined in the chapter: problem statement, policy context, practice context, purpose of the study, and significance of the project for social work.

#### Problem Statement

The maltreatment of children is deeply entwined with historical values and perspectives. The concept of child abuse has been defined and redefined throughout history. Present society is slowly evolving from viewing children as property, to at least recognizing that children do have rights of their own.

There are four major types of child abuse: physical abuse, general neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse (Crosson-Tower, 2002). Physical abuse refers to any non-accidental injury inflicted by a parent or caregiver. General neglect refers to when there is interference with a child's growth and development. Sexual abuse includes any actions of sexual intent towards a child. Emotional abuse occurs when caregivers or parents belittle or

otherwise make a child feel that he/she is worthless and incompetent.

An estimated 896,000 children nationwide were determined to be victims of child abuse or neglect for the year 2002, according to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (2002, p. 1). They also showed that American Indian or Alaska Native and African American children had the highest rates of victimization in comparison to their national population. The report stated that "...while the rate of White victims of child abuse or neglect was 10.7 per 1,000 children of the same race, the rate for American Indian or Alaska Natives was 21.7 per 1,000 children, and for African Americans 20.2 per 1,000 children" (Department of Health & Human Services, 2002, p. 2).

In Riverside County, African Americans, Hispanics, Asian, other, and Native Americans made up over 80% of the referrals that were generated for child abuse and maltreatment in 2002 (Needell, Webster, Cuccaro-Alamin, Armijo, Lee, Brookhart, Lery, Shaw, Dawson, Piccus, Magruder, & Kim, 2003). "[P]arents from different cultural or ethnic groups may be at greater risk of being

defined as abusive" (Chan, Chow, Elliott, & Thomas, 2002, p. 368).

According to Ards, Myers, Malkis, Sugrue, and Zhou (2003, p. 376) African Americans were more likely to be investigated than Caucasians for emotional maltreatment, neglect, fatalities, serious injury, and perpetrator use of alcohol or other drugs. Additionally, the article showed that African Americans were more likely to be reported by social services professionals for child abuse, and be investigated due to those reports. Their research included an examination of child maltreatment data produced from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, which included over 700,000 children in five states. The study also showed that "...there are higher shares of African Americans, Asians, American Indians, and Hispanics among substantiated cases" (Ards et al., 2003, p. 385).

Cross-cultural sensitivity was a primary challenge for Social Workers and their various agencies of employment. As the above data indicated, ethnic minority children encompassed the majority of the Child Protective Services (CPS) referrals, therefore Social Workers having at least a working knowledge of those groups were key to

being effective Social Workers. Many agencies strived to meet the continued needs of all individuals, but fall short on too many occasions. The short falls of those agencies adversely affect service delivery by Social Workers. With the expected increase of ethnic minority children in the child welfare system, social services agencies, particularly CPS, have to be able and ready to provide its Social Workers with cross-cultural sensitivity training (Hogan & Siu, 1989).

Failure to address cultural needs and bring awareness to the need for ethnic-sensitive practice could hinder families from receiving adequate and essential services in the prevention of further and future abuse of children. Cross-cultural competence has challenged individual Social Workers and agencies to develop and deliver "individualized social services within a culturally appropriate context" (Taylor-Brown, 2001, p. 86).

Child abuse and neglect are difficult and complicated areas of practice for Social Workers; therefore, for Social Workers and CPS agencies to work effectively in addressing child abuse issues with diverse families, they need to have a good grasp on

cross-cultural issues. In social work literature, there was a broad consensus on the need for social services providers and Social Workers to take matters of culture into account. A number of texts and training materials promoting culturally competent practice have emerged. Authors such as Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaac (1989), Green (1982) and Orlandi (1992) have all emphasized the need for cultural awareness. The effort to achieve culturally competent practice has been declared "a journey whose time has come" (Lum, 1999, p. 175).

The goal in providing culturally competent training is to increase and enhance self-awareness and knowledge of differences. Cultural competency is beyond an individual social worker's own recognition of his/her culture because it includes having the ability to work with all cultures. "Some individuals and groups promote a perspective that only members of the same ethnic, racial, or cultural group are qualified to serve individuals from the particular group" (Taylor-Brown, 2001, p. 185).

Cultural competence involved the assessment of multiple factors, such as the interplay of social class, gender, ethnic and cultural identity (Anderson & Collins, 2001).

This study examined the extent Children Social Services Worker in Riverside County Child Protective Services were trained to work with families from various ethnic and minority groups.

#### Policy Context

Riverside County's Department of Public Social Services Memorandum 2004-067 (2004) stated that "...Children Social Service Workers III-V...shall complete a total of 20 hours of training per employment year (12-month evaluation period). This training requirement is a component of the...social worker performance evaluation" (2004, p. 1). The goal of the training requirement was to enhance Social Workers' social work practice skills and knowledge. This training policy memorandum (2004) does not include any mandates for cross-cultural training in Riverside County.

The National Association of Social Work (NASW) Code of Ethics (2000) called for all Social Workers to commit themselves to the core values of the profession. NASW Code of Ethics (2000) Ethical Standards, section 1.05, Cultural Competence and Social Diversity, supported and encouraged all Social Workers to expand their knowledge of cultural issues. NASW Code of Ethics (2000, p. 71)



subsection (b) of section 1.05 stated that "Social Workers should have a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups."

NASW Code of Ethics (2000) also called for agencies to provide adequate training to their Social Workers that reflected the current status and changes within and outside of the population served. NASW Code of Ethics (2000, p. 79) chapter three, section 3.08, Continuing Education and Staff Development, stated that "Social work administrators and supervisors should take reasonable steps to provide or arrange for continuing education and staff development...that should address current knowledge and emerging developments related to social work practice and ethics."

#### Practice Context

In 2002, Riverside County had over 483,000 children between the ages of 0-17, with slightly over 40,000 children with referrals for child abuse (Needell et al., 2003). Of the 40,000, 80% involved children from ethnic minority groups (Needell et al., 2003). On a micro level,

the practicing social worker served as an activist or advocate for change in relation to those being served. There was a "basic premise that many groups in society experience oppression because of race, gender, social class, ableism, ageism, and heterosexism" (Hardina, 2002, p. 69). The social worker has to be equipped with cross-cultural knowledge if she/he is to intervene or provide services that address the needs of all families, in the prevention of future child abuse. Some of the implications that could arise from Social Workers' lack of cross-cultural awareness include not having the ability to empower families, to educate them on child abuse prevention and to understand cultural barriers in relations to the majority population.

On a macro level, Riverside County needs to ensure that its Social Workers are equipped with the necessary tools to carry out the duties of the job, with an ultimate goal of prevention of child abuse. Ensuring that Social Workers carried out cross-cultural social work practice and intervention could start with ongoing cross-cultural and cultural competent training of all its Social Workers and management team. If Riverside County was to employ a cross-culturally sensitive approach to

its service delivery, it needed to involve all of the key players, not just front line Social Workers.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the extent to which Children Social Service Workers in Riverside County Child Protective Services were trained to work with families from various ethnic and minority groups. This study examined culturally related training that was currently offered by Riverside County, and how Social Workers viewed the relevancy of such training.

This study highlighted the need for continued cross-cultural training due to the fact that 80% of the cases of child abuse involve children from a minority or ethnic groups (Needell et al., 2003). The parents of these children needed to be offered preventative services for the reoccurrence of child abuse. The success or failure of such preventative service depended on whether the services were culturally appropriate, and the Social Workers' understanding of culture. Part of being culturally competent is recognizing one's own biases and prejudices; without such recognition, service delivery would be affected.

This study also explored the cultural competency level of Social Workers, along with their perceived biases and prejudices toward various ethnic-minority groups. Through proper cross-cultural training, one would be able to deal with and recognize prejudices and biases, and put those biases and prejudices in their proper context.

It was important for Social Workers and Riverside County to understand the need for cross-cultural training because one of the greatest impediments to creating cultural competence among social work professionals is the lack of specialized individual training and cross-training, according to a report of the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect (1995).

The other purposes of the study were to develop a survey that highlighted Social Workers thoughts and feelings toward cultural competence, if additional cross-cultural training was needed, and if cross-cultural training should be made mandatory at Riverside County.

It was safe to assume that there were cultural variations in child rearing practices; therefore, the actions that were considered abusive in one society may be accepted in another. There seemed to be researchers in

child abuse who were studying the consequences of acknowledging different cultures on issues of abuse. The authors Chan et al. (2002, p. 361) found that "accepting claims of ethno-cultural differences in raising children increases the possibility that corporal punishment of children by family members, for example, may be further legitimized."

One of the dangers for an untrained social worker and for the child victim was the social worker intervening too little or too late. On the other hand, if cultural differences were dismissed, they may result in the social worker doing too much too soon, thereby harming the family. Chan & et al. (2002) were calling for Social Workers to be exposed to cultural differences, through proper education and training because "it [was] necessary to get some kind of standard in identifying child abuse and neglect and across cultures" (p. 363).

#### Research Method

The research method that was utilized for the purpose of this study was self-administered survey questionnaires from Children Social Service Workers (CSSW) in Riverside County Child Protective Services

(CPS). Survey research provided for one of the least intrusive method of gathering data due to anonymity of the participants. It was also one of the most useful and convenient ways of data collection.

The research results were collected from surveys completed by current Children Social Service Workers at Riverside County Child Protective Services satellite offices in Moreno Valley, Perris and Metro. The sample comprised of 125 Children Social Services Workers, with a returned rate of twenty-nine (29) completed surveys. The quantitative research approach allowed for the generalization of the population from which the sample was drawn, based on the analysis of data collected.

The dependent variable for this study was evaluating the need for cross-cultural training within Riverside County Child Protective Services. Some of the independent variables included cross-cultural self-test, ethnicity, gender, position title, comfort level, life's experiences, and mandatory cross-cultural training. The goal of this study is: Working with Ethnic-Minority families; Evaluating the Need for Cross-Cultural Training within Riverside County Child Protective Services.

The information gathered would assist in future implementation of cross-cultural training at the Department. This research investigated unobservable variables such as Social Workers feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and beliefs toward cross-cultural training in the delivery of services to their clients.

#### Significance of the Project for Social Work

The significance of the project for social work was that it provided an insight into Children Social Services Workers' at Riverside County Child Protective Services (CPS) perception of the need for cross-cultural training, and the impact it had on their service delivery. The research showed that it was crucial for Social Workers in Riverside County to understand that cross-cultural training would help Social Workers develop a fuller understanding of the ways in which diverse families could benefit from their knowledge and understanding, "...sensitizing Social Workers to a range of anti-oppressive issues that impinge on child abuse, and drawing attention to key direct practice issues" (Corby & Cox, 2000, p. 222).

Furthermore, Chan et al. (2002) stated that to ignore the socio-cultural environments in which these ethnic minorities live will potentially cause serious consequences for those families. The views of Social Workers greatly impacted service delivery, and would vary based on personal beliefs, biases, and prejudices.

It was not unreasonable to assume that cultural chauvinism could be mistaken for cultural competence. Cultural competence does not mean that only African American Social Workers can serve African American families or that only Latinos can serve Latinos families (Taylor-Brown, 2001). Many people of the same culture share life experiences; however, these shared life experiences do not explain all or even most of a person's behavior. Instead, it ignores the enormous diversity that always exists within a given culture.

It was virtually impossible to study and understand each culture individually, and agencies have struggled under this challenge. Cross-cultural training should provide a base from which to understand any minority culture by "offering a metaphorical understanding of minority cultural membership" (Rodwell & Blankebaker, 1992, p. 1049). The overwhelming prevalence of child



abuse and need for cross-cultural training of Social Workers were neither easily understandable nor quickly solvable; however, the process have started with Social Workers identifying the need for such training, and their willingness to challenge their biases and prejudices. Being an effective social worker in a cross-cultural society requires awareness of many barriers that impede the ability to function effectively in society.

The various steps in the generalist intervention model were influenced by the social worker's knowledge of cross-cultural issues. Social Workers who received cross-cultural training would utilize their knowledge and skills differentially within each stages of the model, which included the change processes. In order to implement changes in any given organization, there has to be a beginning stage, and an assessment stage.

The beginning stage of this study involved the Children Social Services Workers at Riverside County Child Protective Services, and their input on the need for cross-cultural training. The Social Workers were engaged through a series of questions on a survey on cross-cultural training in relations to their duties as social worker. Their responses were not influenced by the

agency, and they were assured anonymity. The Social Workers were made to feel free to answer questions without any interference from the researcher or the agency.

The gathering of data and the outcome results were both parts of the assessment phase of the research. This study demonstrated the extent of Social Workers training and personal knowledge of ethnic minority groups, and need for continued or additional cross-cultural training. The data collected helped to inform the agency that Social Workers have recognized their own lack of awareness on cross-cultural issues and have requested additional cross-cultural training. This assessment phase allowed the researchers to analyze and present the findings to the agency.

The data helped the researchers and agency in acquiring an understanding of the problem or issues in Social Workers' knowledge of ethnic minority families. It is now up to the agency to further the results through planning, implementation, evaluation or termination of cross-cultural training. The question that this research answered was: Evaluating the need for cross-cultural training at Riverside County Child Protective Services.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter consists of a summary and critical review of the relevant literature. Outlined in this chapter is the definition of child abuse, the need for culturally competent Social Workers, recognizing cultural competency vs. cultural chauvinism, and multicultural practice and systems theory as theories guiding conceptualization.

#### What Is Child Abuse?

Several organizations were developed to help combat issues of child abuse. In 1875, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (SPCC) began a movement towards protecting children from intentional harm. In 1912, with the enactment of the Children's Bureau, maltreatment of children was investigated by public agencies, and the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA). In 1972, the National Center for The Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect was established to provide and offer training for "...recognizing and preventing child abuse to interested professional" (Crosson-Tower, 2002, p. 12).

Child abuse has been made a vital concern in our society; therefore, it most important now for practitioners to be able to identify cases of child abuse. Along those lines, there continues to be the need to adequately train professionals in better understanding child abuse. As professional Social Workers, being educated from a systems perspective is not inclusive to working with the children, but to working with families, communities, and cultural groups with understanding of child abuse.

There are four types of child abuse. Abuse of a child can mean physical abuse, general neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. Physical abuse can include hitting, kicking, biting, beating with an object and burning of a child, and when those actions are intentional, continuous, extreme and pervasive. General neglect are actions such as not providing the child with adequate food, clothing, or leaving the child unattended for extended periods of time and not providing a safe or healthy environment. Sexual abuse includes actions such as fondling, touching, or kissing a child's sex organs, having sex with child, and having the child engage in sexual acts with someone else. Emotional abuse occurs when the child has to endure constant belittlement or

sense of worthlessness and in competency from caregivers/parents.

There are cultural variations in the child rearing practices, and actions considered abuse in one culture may be acceptable in others. In addition, children's rights are regarded differently by cultures as well as by governments (Chan et al., 2002). Chan et al. (2002) suggest that many professionals, including Social Workers, may retain attitudes on child maltreatment that reflect their own cultural values rather than trans-cultural agreement on children's rights or child abuse.

Fully defining child abuse was beyond the scope of the previously mentioned definitions. For example, verbal shaming is assumed to teach children acceptable behaviors needed for adult life, in most ethnic minority groups, according to Rodwell et al. (1992). The same can be said about a family not meeting the unmet needs of the children, which can be interpreted as efforts of that culture to help children become independent and learn how to function on their own (Nielsen, 1984).

Rodwell and Blankebaker (1992) also wrote in their cultural wounding article that "just as psychologically

abusive parent refuses to acknowledge the child's worth, so an abusive majority culture refuses to acknowledge the worth of a minority's culture. The myth of a homogeneous society, the 'melting pot' into which we all have been assimilated, has contributed to the denial of the importance of each minority's own culture" (p. 1044). They also stated that an environment that produces cultural wounding has the same confusion and unhappiness as an environment that houses child maltreatment. Children are wounded through child abuse and the ethnic minority members suffer cultural wounding. The parallel was that just as child abuse can lead to death, cultural wounding can lead to the same outcome.

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Literature

As America moves away from the notion of the 'melting pot,' the belief that all people who come to America will assimilate and adapt to the majority culture, it is increasingly difficult to negate the realities that cultural diversity is an inherent part of society. With the emergence of culturally diverse populations, there is even more pressure on social work

profession to meet the needs of those individuals and families. In the ever-complicated arena of investigating child abuse, along with the changes in and differences of families being serviced, it became even more important for Social Workers to become aware of those differences. The old approach of providing the same type of service delivery plan for all families is becoming extinct. The push for individualized and culturally appropriate service plans is slowly being emphasized in some agencies, but much work and research are still on the horizon.

By 2050, almost one-half of the U.S. population will come from the four traditional ethnic minority groups, African Americans, Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian Americans (Needell et al., 2003).

Data collected by Needell et al. (2003) showed that children between the ages of 0-17 years made up over 80% of the reported cases of child abuse in Riverside County in 2002, and the number is expected to rise in the next several years as more people migrate to the U.S.

The articles by Ards et al. (2003), Fluke, Yuan, Hedderson, and Curtis (2003) and Rodwell and Blankebaker (1992) all presented findings that supported the

conclusion that ethnic minority children were reported for child abuse more frequently than non-minority children. Fluke et al. (2003) showed that in more than 700,000 children in five different states, African American children were over represented and Caucasian children consistently under reported for each state. Their information was obtained from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System in 2000.

It was not clear "whether or not they were disproportionately represented in Child Protective Services investigations and dispositions" (Fluke et al., 2003, p. 360). Racial and ethnic minority groups examined in this article were African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic, and Native Americans. This article mentioned that the results have been concerning and troubling to advocates for over two decades, but did not offer possible explanation for the disparity.

The article by Ards et al. (2003) looked at the Social Services Information System (SSIS) from Minnesota. SSIS is a single data system that officially traces reported cases of child abuse. The results examined showed that when comparing variables (age, race, family conditions) for substantiated and unsubstantiated cases,



there are higher "shares of blacks, Asians, American Indians, and Hispanics among substantiated cases than among unsubstantiated cases" (Ards et al., 2003, p. 385). The reason offered by this article is the possibility "...of confounding influences of race and place, and increases in the potential for aggregation bias in their data collection (Ards et al., 2003, p. 385).

Rodwell and Blankebaker (1992) called for the development of cross-cultural sensitivity in social work practice to counter ethnocentrism that does exist in the field of social work. Their emphasis was placed on cultural understanding in the wake of child abuse. They discussed cultural understanding from a systems perspective, in that a more "holistic view of both the process of child abuse and cultural wounding may allow a richer understanding of the issues and clearer conceptualization of useful approaches toward change" (Rodwell & Blankebaker, 1992, p. 1044).

The Report of the U.S. Advisory Board of Child Abuse and Neglect (1995) gave dramatic information on the devastating impact of child abuse. It demonstrated the need for adequately trained Social Workers due to the high number of reported deaths of ethnic minority

children. It examined cases where Social Workers failed to complete a thorough assessment, with the end result being the child's death. It placed emphasis on the agency's responsibility to provide its Social Workers with proper cross-cultural training in the delivery of services, in particularly in relationship to child abuse. It showed that 85% of childhood deaths from abuse and neglect were systematically misidentified as accidental, disease related, or due to other causes. This aroused mostly from uncompleted CPS investigations, and the lacked of cross-cultural awareness on the part of social work profession.

Books by Green (1982), Lum (1999), and Orlani (1992) agreed that more data are needed on the processes of culturally competent organizational developments. They stressed that there was a need for social services to provide for and take matters of culture into account, and in essence, promote culturally competent practice for Social Workers and agencies.

Lum (1999) stated that "cultural competency is a process and arrival point for the social worker. The social worker achieves cultural competency after developing cultural awareness, mastering knowledge, and

skills, and implementing an inductive learning methodology" (p. 175). The authors agreed that training and education in cultural competence in social work service delivery will broaden Social Workers self-awareness, enhance their knowledge of the differences that families bring, and enrich the range of intervention skills and strategies.

One significant point that these authors made was to not only focus on the social worker's individual growth and skills, but examined the agency's policies and regulations in the context of cultural competency. If the agency's policy framework and organizational structure were not designed to embrace cultural diversity, the goal of culturally competent Social Workers within that agency was a lost cause. These authors called for and challenged agencies to undertake cross-cultural competency that was parallel to the social worker's journey towards cultural competency.

Authors Chan and el al. (2002) wanted to bring awareness to the field of social work, in relation to child abuse, that Social Workers have to be equipped with a working knowledge of cultural variations in determining child abuse. As Social Workers attempted to become

effective Child Protective Services investigators and Social Workers, including cultural competency, it was important to understand that abuse in one culture may be acceptable in others. The authors used evidence from literature and from two Singapore studies to explore the possibility that many professions may retain attitudes of child abuse that reflect their own culture.

The results of the study recommended that a strategy for training and education of cross-cultural issues be developed. Chan et al. (2002) argued that with the increase in reporting of child abuse in ethnic-minority population, the reports could be looked at as a violation of not only the parents' rights, but also of the child's rights. They also encouraged large organizations like the World Health Organization and United Nations to standardize a definition of child maltreatment or abuse. These authors felt that standardized frameworks from such organizations could contribute tremendously towards the increasing of cultural awareness in child-rearing practices throughout the world.

Their method of collecting data comprised of people from different professions (Social Workers, nurses, lawyers, doctors, and educators in Singapore) showed that

across different professions, opinions do vary on issues of abuse. The results also showed that people from different ethnic-minority groups viewed abuse differently as well. For example, Chinese respondents were more likely than Indians to render canning (beating) acceptance. With the presence of permanent injuries, nurses were significantly less likely to see this as making canning acceptable than doctors and educators. Social work was often the profession most tolerant of canning as acceptable form of discipline.

The limitation of the study was that it used only Singapore for gathering data, but the information obtained was deemed valuable in understanding how professionals' opinions in various ethnic-minority groups differ in relations to defining child abuse, and the importance of cross-cultural education.

Crosson-Tower (2002) assisted with defining child abuse, and its impact on the child and family. The book lacked specific information related to the research topic; therefore, the book was not very useful with assisting in gaining more insight to the problem.

## Recognizing Cultural Competency versus Cultural Chauvinism

The article by Taylor-Brown (2001) cautioned the profession and Social Workers to not mistake cultural chauvinism for cultural competence. The author stated that cultural chauvinism comes into play when some individuals from ethnic minority groups have tendencies to promote the perspective that only members from that particular group are qualified to serve that group.

Taylor-Brown (2001) and Anderson and Collins (2001) agreed that cultural competence required more than an understanding of a person's racial, ethnic, or cultural identity, and it must involve assessing the interactive influence of multiple factors. Anderson and Collins (2001, p. 5) developed a matrix of domination to examine the interplay of social class, in conjunction with racial, ethnic, or cultural identity. The authors found that Social Workers must acknowledge and understand these intricate variables and use them in an assessment of their own existence and how they influence their interactions with those served.

Author O'Hagan (1999) cautioned against the over use of cultural competency. The article examined some child

abuse injury reports and concluded that culture and aspects of culture had "impinged upon events leading to the deaths of children" (p. 277). This conclusion has apparently been the subject of much study.

It was "suggested that Social Workers involved were far too optimistic in their assessments of careers at the centre of these inquires, and that abusive behaviors were interpreted as aspects of culture, which those from other cultures (i.e. White middle class Social Workers) had no right to criticize" (O'Hagan, 1999, p. 277). The article stressed that it was important for Social Workers working with families from ethnic-minority groups not to give culture and ethnicity an unjustifiably decisive influence, thereby failing to make a balanced overall judgment on the issue of child abuse.

This article, along with articles by authors Corby and Cox (2000) and Hogan and Siu (1989) also showed that there was neglect of culture, with manifested negativity towards culture due to over simplification of the need for cross-cultural training and competency.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization:  
Multicultural Practice and  
Systems Theories

There were two theories that guided the research reviewed and which guided this current project; they were systems theory and the multicultural model. Systems theory was used to examine the small systems such as ethnic minority children and families, and the larger agencies and communities in which child abuse investigation arises.

Child abuse was examined from a macro level of cultural perspective and the articles and books tried to lend explanation to the variations in definition of child abuse, and how they might influence Social Workers' service delivery.

Systems perspective placed emphasis on maintaining interactions on both the macro and micro levels, which guided in the development of a holistic approach. Culturally skilled Social Workers must be familiar with their biases and the dynamics of those biases in social work practice.

Systems theory guided this research by addressing cultural competence in social work practice. This theory was used to examine racial discrimination,



institutionalized racism, and other related cultural issues. It allowed the research to examine cross-cultural issues from both the micro and macro levels, which helped in providing a holistic understanding of cultural issues.

In addition, as agencies moved toward a holistic view of child abuse and ethnic minority families, Social Workers would begin to develop service approaches that encompass cultural awareness and sensitivity.

Through the multicultural model, Social Workers and agencies would begin to recognize the need for cultural awareness in the delivery of services to ethnic minority families.

All of the researches reviewed in this study have supported cross-culture training for Social Workers. With over 80% of children reported as being abused being ethnic minorities, various authors have called upon social service agencies and large organizations to have culturally competent Social Workers. If the ultimate goal of each Child Protective Services agency and Child Protective Services worker is to eliminate or reduce the acts of abuse against children, it could start with cross-cultural competence and awareness at the individual and larger agency levels.

The multicultural model, as illustrated in several articles, emphasized mutual learning between the clients and Social Workers. It was not only important to learn from the clients, but for Social Workers to be open to such learning. As part of awareness and education on culture, Social Workers were encouraged to practice mutual learning in carrying out their duties.

This study built on cross-cultural training for Social Workers. This research was in an addition to recent studies of how lacked of cultural awareness caused job limitation in service delivery, and how they adversely impacted the families and children being served.

#### Summary

Data did show the need for cultural competence at both the micro level, Social Workers, and the macro level, agencies. They also cautioned Social Workers to recognize their own biases and prejudices, and not to use cultural awareness as an end-to-all approach. Becoming too overly cautious or too eager to prove cultural competency could be detrimental to families. The authors called for a balance, which started with obtaining proper

cross-cultural training for social work profession and  
the larger agency.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODS

#### Introduction

Chapter Three outlines the specific steps that were used in researching this project. This section includes a discussion of the design of the research, the sample, data collection and instruments, procedures, protection of human subjects, and data analysis.

#### Study Design

This research study examined the knowledge base of current Children's Social Service Workers in Riverside County for working with ethnic minority families and children, and the need for cross-cultural training. The survey used was comprised of questions about Social Workers' thoughts, feelings, beliefs and attitudes about the need for cross cultural training, cross-cultural training received since date of hire, and their comfort level with working with clients from different ethnic minority backgrounds other than their own.

The research method that was used was self-administered questionnaires because they were easily distributed to a large sample, as well as ensuring the

protection and anonymity of the human subjects. This method was also less intrusive, and offered convenience for gathering data.

The limitation of this survey research was that it did not include all employees in Riverside County, including mid-upper management and administration. It only included current front line Children Social Service Workers III-V, and not Children Social Services Workers I-II or other aides.

Riverside County Child Protective Services was comprised of two levels of Social Workers, I-II and III-V. Children Social Service Workers' I-II primary duties were more related to case management services after termination of parental rights, and Children Social Services Workers III-V focused primarily on investigation, court dependency services, family reunification and maintenance, adoptions, and long-term out of home services. There were over 350 Children Social Services Workers III-V in Riverside County.

The findings of this research study were limited to the above mentioned population and could not be generalized beyond that population in Riverside County.

This study evaluated the need for cross-cultural training within Riverside County Child Protective Services.

#### Sampling

The survey was administered to Children Social Service Workers (CSSWs) III-V in five regions at Riverside County. The five regions were Metro, Valley, Mid-County, Second Shift and Desert. There were over 350 CSSWs employed throughout the regions, which represented the population studied. The researchers distributed 123 surveys and received twenty-nine (29) or 24.25% completed surveys.

This sample was chosen because they dealt directly with the assessment and investigation of child abuse alleged against a parent or caregiver. They also did the initial investigation of allegations of child abuse, and were the first agency's representative that came into contact with the families.

These CSSWs appeared to have a lot of power, in terms of their assessment and determination of alleged abuse when dealing with all families, particularly ethnic minority families, as they comprised of the majority of

of employment with Riverside County and how many families from ethnic minority groups have you worked with within the past six months.

Using the Likert scale, the independent variables with ordinal level of measurement included the following: how comfortable do you feel working with families from an ethnic-minority group other than your own, should cross-cultural training be made mandatory by the agency and is cultural awareness/knowledge important in order to provide effective services.

There were fourteen (14) survey questions and twenty-four (24) cultural competence self-test questions that were used in the cross-cultural training study questionnaire.

This instrument was developed by Goode (2000) of Georgetown University Child Development Center-UAP, and the content validity was established given the ease with which the questionnaire was read. The measurement tool of the cultural competence self-test was chosen because it had been used in the Primary Health Care Services to assess the quality of services to culturally diverse populations (see Appendix A).

The cultural competence self-test utilized the ordinal Likert scale of measurement and was comprised of sub-scales covering physical environment, materials and resources, communication styles, and values and attitudes to identify the practices of Social Workers in relations to working with diverse populations.

The sub-scale of physical environment, materials and resources was comprised of four questions related to the physical environment of the social worker. The sub-scale of communication styles was comprised of six questions related to how Social Workers communicated with their diverse populations. The sub-scale values and attitudes was comprised of fourteen questions related to the Social Workers' personal values and attitudes about working with ethnically diverse populations.

The use of Likert scales permitted the researchers to separate themselves from the research participants and data analysis. Data could then be analyzed via an iterative process, and like responses could be grouped together.

The Likert scale of measurement included the responses (3) Things I do frequently, (2) Things I do occasionally and (1) Things I do rarely or never in



relations to working with and providing services to culturally diverse populations. The cultural-competence self-test was utilized to assist the researchers identify areas in which Social Workers might improve the quality of their services to culturally diverse populations.

As illustrated in the cultural competence self-test, physical environment, materials and resources encompassed how the Social Workers were displaying pictures, posters, artwork and other décor that reflected the cultures and ethnic backgrounds of the clients served by the agency. Are the Social Workers ensuring that the reception areas reflected the different individuals and families served by the agency through the use of magazines, brochures and other printed materials? If the Social Workers are using videos or films, do they ensure that they reflect the cultures and ethnic background of the individuals and families served by the agency? Also, do the Social Workers ensure that printed information by the agency takes into account the average literacy levels of individuals and families receiving services?

Under values and attitudes, the researchers were seeking information on how Social Workers perceived their own values and attitudes in relations to their clients.

Are Social Workers avoiding imposing their values that may conflict or be inconsistent with those of the cultures or ethnic groups other than their own? This also took into consideration whether Social Workers screen books or other media resources for cultural, ethnic or racial stereotypes before sharing them with the individuals and families served by the agency.

The researchers also wanted to know if the Social Workers intervened in appropriate manners when they observe other staff or clients within the agency engaging in behaviors that show cultural insensitivity, racial biases and prejudices? Does the social worker recognize and accept that individuals from diverse backgrounds may desire varying degrees of acculturation into the dominant culture?

The values and attitudes scale included whether the social worker understood and accepted that family is defined differently by various cultures? Does the social worker accept and respect that male-female roles may vary among different cultures and ethnic groups? Does the social worker understand that age and life-cycle factors must be in interactions with individuals and families?

Does the social worker understand that grief and bereavement are defined by culture?

Also important to understanding values and attitudes are the Social Workers' willingness to seek information from individuals, families or other key community informants that will assist in service adaptation to respond to the needs and preferences of culturally and ethnically diverse families served by the agency. Should the Social Workers keep abreast of the major social concerns and issues for ethnically and racially diverse client populations residing in the geographic locales served by the agency? Should the social worker be aware of socioeconomic and environmental risk factors that contribute to the major mental and physical health problems of culturally, ethnically and racially diverse populations served by the agency? Does the social worker agree that he/she should avail him/herself to professional development and training to enhance the knowledge and skills in the provision of services and supports to culturally, ethnically, racially and linguistically diverse groups?

Final, does the social worker believe that he/she should advocate for the review of the program or agency's

mission statement, goals, policies and procedures to ensure that they incorporate principles and practices that promote cultural and linguistic competence.

Under communication styles, the researchers were looking to see how Social Workers communicated with their clients. When Social Workers are interacting with individuals and families who have limited English proficiency, do they always keep in mind that limitations in English proficiency are in no way an indication of their level of intellectual functioning or that their limited ability to speak the language has no bearing on their ability to communicate effectively in the language of origin or that they may or may not be literate in their language of origin or English?

Are the Social Workers using bilingual-bicultural staff and/or personnel and volunteers during service implementation? In addition, for individuals and families who speak languages other than English, do the Social Workers attempt to learn and use key words in their language so that they are able to better communicate with the clients during assessment, treatment or other interventions?

Regarding familial influences, do the Social Workers attempt to determine any familial colloquialisms used by the individuals or families that may impact assessment, treatment or other interventions? When possible, are the Social Workers ensuring that all notices and communiqués to individuals and families are written in their language of origin.

Last, do the Social Workers understand that it may be necessary to use alternatives to written communications for some individuals and families, as word of mouth may be a preferred method of receiving information?

The limitations of the cultural competence self-test included, but were not limited to, the honesty of the participants, as well as perception and interpretation of the questions being asked. Constant or systematic factors to be considered included the stability qualities of the responses to the measuring instrument.

Selection-treatment interaction may have served as an external validity problem, in that the respondents who decided to respond to the questionnaire may have felt that they were culturally competent but additional cross-cultural would be beneficial. Or conversely, those

respondents who did not feel culturally competent or felt the need for cross-cultural training may have responded for the express reason of venting feelings of anger and disdain about cultural competency.

The strengths of the self-test were that it had been utilized by various healthcare professionals, its simplicity, and that it covered different aspects of what cultural competency represented. For example, the self-test addressed areas of physical environment, communication styles, and values and attitudes, which were all areas of importance in the understanding of cultural competency and for Social Workers to demonstrate if they are providing culturally sensitive services.

#### Procedures

The surveys were distributed at the satellite offices located in the regions of Metro, Valley, Mid-County, Second Shift and Desert. Metro, Valley, Mid-County and Second Shift questionnaires were administered via hand delivery, except for the Desert region, which were sent through intra-office mail. Each satellite office had a questionnaire box for returned and completed surveys. The Desert office surveys included a

self-addressed return intra-office label attached to the surveys for intra-office mail.

All of the questionnaires were accompanied by a questionnaire cover letter explaining the purpose and benefits of the study, and asked for assistance in completing the survey.

As an incentive and to encourage and solicit participation, each questionnaire had an attached raffle ticket for a chance to win one of three Starbucks gift cards with a value of \$10.00 each.

Upon approval from the Department of Social Work Sub-Committee of the California State University San Bernardino Institutional Review Board (IRB), a letter of intent was distributed to the satellite offices' supervisors explaining the purpose, as well as the benefits of the survey, and asking for their assistance in assuring the completion of the survey. The supervisors were also requested to make an announcement about the survey in their unit meeting.

The data collection took place at the various satellite offices within a three-week span. The gift cards' drawing occurred after the completion of the questionnaires.

## Protection of Human Subjects

This study protected the anonymity of all its participants through self-administered questionnaires and cultural competence self-test. Informed consent and debriefing statements were attached to each survey. This provided the participants the reassurance that their information will be used in strict confidence, and included an overview of how the information will be used. It provided contact information for further questions regarding the study.

## Data Analysis

The data collected were analyzed to assess relationships between the independent and dependent variables utilizing univariate and bivariate analysis. Univariate analysis included frequencies for demographic information, such as age, sex, number of years at the County, and number of cross-cultural trainings received since the date hired. These descriptive statistics were used to provide an overview of the study's sample.

Bivariate analysis was used to examine the relationship between two chosen variables, for example, looking at comfort level working with ethnic groups other



than your own, and rating the quality of delivery of services to those families and children.

Pearson's Correlation Coefficients were used to examine the relationship between the independent variables (position title, length of employment at Riverside County, how comfortable do you feel with working with families from an ethnic-minority group other than your own, how important is awareness/knowledge of cultural differences important in order to provide effect services, should cross-cultural be made mandatory, could you benefit from additional cross-cultural training, does the physical environment reflect the cultures of the clients, does the communication style reflect the culture of the clients and do values and attitudes reflect in your work practice) and the dependent variable of to what extent are Social Workers trained to work with ethnic-minority families. A Pearson r was utilized to measure associations among interval variables.

#### Summary

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the need for cross-cultural training within Riverside County Child Protective Services.

This study examined the relationship between chosen variables, and determined any significant relationships between the dependent and independent variables. It also examined Social Workers' attitudes, views, and beliefs about cross-cultural competency in relations to their service delivery to ethnic minority families and children.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize the data collected and to report the findings on the research questions. First, presented below, are the results of the statistical analysis of the characteristics of a random sample of 29 Children Services Social Workers who voluntarily responded to the questionnaire. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key findings of this research project.

#### Presentation of the Findings

There were a total of 123 questionnaires distributed to Children Services s in Riverside County. Of the 123 questionnaires distributed, 29 (24%) completed questionnaires were received. Frequencies and univariate statistics were computed for all demographic variables. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the 29 respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Children Social Services Workers

Variable	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	29		
18 - 35		12	41.4
36 - 55		10	34.5
56 - 98		1	3.4
Missing		6	20.7
Gender	29		
Male		5	17.2
Female		24	82.8
Ethnicity	29		
African American		11	37.9
Asian		1	3.4
Caucasian		10	34.5
Hispanic		5	17.2
Other		2	6.9
Degree	29		
Bachelor		12	41.4
Master		17	58.6

Almost all respondents were between 18-35 years of age (41.4%) or 36-55 years of age (34.5%). Of the 29 respondents, 82% (n = 24) were females, and 17% (n = 5) were males. Education level was measured by asking the respondents the highest degree obtained. There were 12 respondents, 41.4%, who had bachelor degree, while 17 respondents, 58.6%, had master's degree.

In regards to ethnicity, African Americans made up 37.9% (n = 11) of the respondents in the sample, while Caucasians made up 34.5% (n = 10) of the respondents. Hispanics made up 17.2% (n = 5) of the respondents, while 10.3% (n = 3) of the respondents indicated other as their identified ethnicity.

Table 2. Position, Years of Employment, Cross-cultural Courses and Training

Variable	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Social Workers	29		
III		7	24.1
IV		4	13.8
V		17	58.6
Missing		1	3.4
Years of Employment	29		
0 thru 5		23	79.3
6 thru 11		5	17.3
12 thru 17		0	0
18 thru 23		1	3.4
Cross-Cultural Academic Courses	29		
Yes		29	100
Cross-Cultural Training Received	29		
Yes		14	48.3
No		15	51.7

The respondents were comprised of seven Social Workers III, which made up 24.1% of the sample. Social Workers IV made up 13.8% (n = 4) of the respondents, while Social Workers V made up 58% (n = 17) of the respondents. There was one missing value in this category, which made up 3.4% of the respondents.

There were 23 respondents with zero to five years of employment services, which comprised of 79.3% of the sample. There were only five respondents with employment services between six to eleven years, which made up of 17.3% of the respondents. None of the respondents had employment between 12 to 17 years but one respondent had been employed with the county between 18 to 23 years, which made up of 3.4% of the sample. This respondent had been employed with the county for 23 years.

Regarding cross-cultural academic courses taken while obtaining their degree, all 29 of the respondents (100%) selected 'yes' to receiving some form of cross-cultural education while in college. Social Workers who completed this questionnaire were almost equally divided on if they had received any cross-cultural training since their employment with the county. Of the 29 respondents, 14 (48.3%) responded 'yes' to have

received some cross-cultural training at the county, while 15 (51.7%) responded 'no' to not receiving any cross-cultural training since their employment at the county.

Table 3. Caseload of Families, Comfort Level, Mandatory Cross-cultural Training

Variable	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Caseload of Ethnic families	46		
0 thru 15		7	24.1
16 thru 30		6	20.7
31 thru 45		6	20.7
Over 46		10	34.5
Comfort level	29		
Very Comfortable		21	72.4
Comfortable		8	27.6
Mandatory Cross-Cultural Training	29		
Strongly Agree		24	82.8
Somewhat Agree		2	6.9
Agree		3	10.3

There were seven respondents (24.1%) who had caseloads of 0-15 ethnic-minority families. There were six respondents (20.7%) who had caseloads that comprised of 16-30 ethnic-minority families. There were also six respondents (20.7%) who had caseloads that comprised of

31-45 ethnic-minority families, while over 10 respondents (34.5) had caseloads of over 46 ethnic-minority families.

Regarding comfort level of the respondents, 21 respondents (72.4%) stated that they were 'very comfortable' working with other ethnicities than their own, while eight respondents (27.6%) stated that they were 'comfortable' working with other ethnicities than their own.

Of all of the respondents who answered the question should 'cross-cultural training be made mandatory within the county,' 24 (82.8%) stated that they 'strongly agreed' that cross-cultural training should be made mandatory. Of these respondents, two (6.9%) 'somewhat agreed' that it should be made mandatory while three (10.3%) of the respondents 'agreed' that cross-cultural training should be made mandatory.



Table 4. Additional Cross-training, Cross-cultural Knowledge, Awareness of Cultural Differences

Variable	N	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Additional cross-cultural training	29		
Yes		25	86.2
No		3	10.3
Life experience cross-cultural knowledge	29		
Yes		26	89.7
No		3	10.3
Awareness of cultural differences	29		
Strongly Agree		24	82.8
Somewhat Agree		1	3.4
Agree		4	13.8

As seen in Table 4, all but three respondents (86.2%) answered 'yes' to the question 'would you benefit from additional cross-cultural training.'

Regarding the question of cross-cultural knowledge stemming from life's experiences, 26 respondents (89.7%) responded 'yes,' while three respondents (10.3%) respondents answered 'no.'

Of the 29 respondents in the sample, 24 (82.8%) 'strongly agreed' that awareness/knowledge of cultural

differences is important in order to provide effective services. One respondent (3.4%) 'somewhat agreed,' while four respondents (13.8%) 'agreed.' None of the respondents selected the choices 'disagree,' 'somewhat disagree,' or 'strongly disagree' as their answer to whether or not they felt that awareness/knowledge of cultural differences is important to providing effective services.

Table 5. Total Score of Cultural Competence Self-test

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Things I do Frequently	14	48.3
Things I do Occasionally	14	48.3
Missing	1	3.4

Table 5 indicated that there was no statistical difference in things that Social Workers 'do frequently' and things that Social Workers 'do occasionally' in regards their physical environment, communication style, and values/attitudes; to ensure that they practice culturally competent social work. There were 14 respondents (48.3%) who indicated that they 'frequently' practice cultural appropriate social work, as well as 14 respondents (48.3%) who indicated that they

'occasionally' practiced cultural appropriate social work, as evident by their physical environment, communication styles and values and attitudes toward their clients. There was one missing value accounting for 3.4% of the sample.

### Bivariate Analysis

Bivariate analyses were used to assess the hypothesis that Social Workers at Riverside County demonstrate cultural awareness and competence in their social work practice and service delivery. Bivariate correlations were run to analyze the degree to which Social Workers demonstrated cultural awareness in all levels of practice and evaluate the need for additional cross-cultural training.

A Pearson's  $r$  correlation (2-tailed analysis) was utilized to determine the association between the variables (see Appendix D).

Hypothesis 1: Social Workers attainment of cross-cultural knowledge from their life experiences will positively correlate with recognizing the awareness of the importance of cultural differences in order to provide effective services. In order to assess the

strength of the relationship, a Pearson's  $r$  (see Appendix D) was conducted ( $r = .496$ ,  $p = .006$ ,  $n = 29$ ) along with independent t-test. The correlation results showed support for this hypothesis; however, t-test results showed that there were no statistical differences in the responses of the different categories of Social Workers (Social Workers III - V). All of the Social Workers either selected 'strongly agreed' or 'somewhat agreed' or 'agreed.'

Hypothesis 2: Social Workers attainment of cross-cultural knowledge from their life experiences will positively correlate with the opinion that cross-cultural training should be mandatory. A Pearson's  $r$  correlation (see Appendix D) was conducted ( $r = .386$ ,  $p = .039$ ,  $n = 29$ ) which showed a significant relationship between the two variables; however, the independent t-test analysis did not show any statistical differences among the responses of the Social Workers. All of the Social Workers either answered that they 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' to mandatory cross-cultural training.

Hypothesis 3: Social Workers having high caseloads of ethnic-minority families will positively correlate with seeking additional cross-cultural training. A

Pearson's  $r$  correlation (see Appendix D) was conducted ( $r = -.375$ ,  $p = .049$ ,  $n = 28$ ) which showed a negative significant correlation between the two variables; however, independent  $t$ -test results showed no statistical differences between the two variables. All of the Social Workers answered 'yes' to benefiting from additional cross-cultural training despite the number of ethnic-minority families on their case loads.

Hypothesis 4: Social Workers having cross-cultural training since their employment will positively correlate with agreement with mandating cross-cultural training. A Pearson's  $r$  correlation (see Appendix D) was conducted ( $r = .418$ ,  $p = .024$ ,  $n = 29$ ) which showed a significant positive relationship between the two variables and showed support for this hypothesis. An independent  $t$ -test analysis was conducted but there were no statistical differences in the responses. All of the Social Workers 'agreed' with mandatory cross-cultural training even though they had received some cross-cultural training since their employment.

Hypothesis 5: Social Workers who have high levels of awareness of the importance of cultural differences when providing effective services will most likely agree with

mandatory cross-cultural training. A Pearson's  $r$  correlation (see Appendix D) was conducted ( $r = .890$ ,  $p = .000$ ,  $n = 29$ ) which showed a high significant positive correlation between the two variables and also supported the hypothesis; however, an independent  $t$ -test analysis did not show any significant differences in how the Social Workers responded. All of the Social Workers 'agreed' with mandating cross-cultural training with apparently no influences based on their levels of awareness of cross-cultural issues.

#### Summary

Overall, the survey results indicated and supported the hypothesis that Social Workers at Riverside County feel that they demonstrate cultural competency in their service delivery, with no statistical differences in the responses. Bivariate analyses and frequencies showed that Social Workers denoted the ability to transform knowledge and cultural awareness into social work practice that supported and sustained the client system functioning within the appropriate cultural context.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

Chapter Five includes a brief summary of the research findings, comparison of the findings to other previous research, limitations of the research and recommendations for social work practice.

#### Discussion

The purpose of the study was to examine the extent to which Children Social Service Workers in Riverside County Child Protective Services were trained to work with families from various ethnic and minority groups. Given the extent of the Social Workers' knowledge of cross-cultural issues, this study evaluated the need for cross-cultural training at Riverside County based on the Social Workers' perceived cross-cultural awareness and self-evaluation concerning cross-cultural competency.

The study was comprised of 29 Social Workers out of a total of 123 questionnaires that were distributed (24%). The questionnaires were comprised of 14 survey questions and 24 cultural competence self-test questions. The self-test questions were collapsed into three main

categories: physical environment, communication style and values and attitudes. The Social Workers were asked to rate their cultural competence behaviors on a Likert scale as 3 = Things I do frequently, 2 = Things I do occasionally and 1 = Things I do rarely or never.

One of the most notable findings in the current study was that in the overall analysis, all but one of the 29 Social Workers equally selected 'Things I do frequently' or 'Things I do occasionally' as their response to the self-evaluation of practicing cultural competency in their work, as reflective in their physical environment, how they communicate with their customers and co-workers and their values and attitudes.

Social Workers seemed to have demonstrated that they have the knowledge that is needed to understand the clients' life experiences and life patterns. The Social Workers also seemed to demonstrate that their skills are tailored to meet the needs of the clients from different cultures, including cross-cultural communication skills and physical environment. Their attitudes seemed to be related to their awareness of assumptions, values, and biases that are parts of their own culture and worldview; therefore, understanding the worldview of the clients who



are members of different cultures which include the principles such as understanding ethnocentric thinking and learning to appreciate differences.

The Social Workers in this study seemed to have some knowledge base of cross-cultural issues as evident by their responses, which were supported by O'Hagan (1999). O'Hagan emphasized that Social Workers should give due consideration to culture and cultural background of children and their families and practicing cultural competency should be evident in all aspects of that workers' practice. The results of the survey showed that Social Workers are culturally competent to provide services to diverse populations and seemed to be striving to become better Social Workers.

In the social work literature, there is a broad consensus on the need for Social Workers to take matters of culture into account. Lum (199) states that "cultural competency is a process and arrival point for the social worker. The worker achieves cultural competency after developing cultural awareness, mastering knowledge and skills, and implementing an inductive learning methodology" (p. 175).

All of the Social Workers surveyed were either 'comfortable' or 'very comfortable' working with ethnicities other than their own, with most selecting being 'very comfortable' with other ethnicities. None of the Social Workers selected 'not feeling comfortable' with working with ethnicities other than their own even though it was an option. This could represent that the Social Workers have the ability and the will to work across cultures and to appropriately serve clients of cultures different from their own.

This could also represent that Social Workers have educated themselves about cultural differences, learned new skills and behaviors to provide appropriate services for diverse populations, and learned to effectively exchange information and perception about the client's presenting problem.

This could suggest that Social Workers with higher levels of education may perceive that they have a better understanding of ethnic-minority issues, and thus feel more competent about working with ethnic-minority families. This study included mostly Social Workers with master degrees and a smaller group with bachelor degrees. Winefield & Barlow (1995) found that increased training

opportunities and advancement in level of education were essential components toward self-growth in the field of social work, thereby, increasing cross-cultural competence.

Training and education in cultural competence in social work service delivery should target workers with the goals of broadening self-awareness and enhancing knowledge of differences that clients bring (Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1995). In this study, all of the Social Workers 'agreed' that cross-cultural training should be mandatory in Riverside County. Ethnicity did not have significant impact on whether cross-cultural training should be mandated. None of the Social Workers 'disagreed' with mandating cross-cultural training at Riverside County.

All but three of the Social Workers indicated that they could benefit from additional cross-cultural training even though their cross-cultural knowledge stemmed from their personal life experiences, which was supported by Corby & Cox (2000). Corby & Cox (2000) supported the need for further and fuller understanding of cultural issues, thereby, "sensitizing [Social Workers] to a range of anti-oppressive issues that

impinge on child protection work and drawing attention to key direct practice issues" (p. 266).

This seemed to indicate that Social Workers at Riverside County accept that cultural competence is a journey and not a destination that one can ever fully attain; however, they are willing to learn and enhance their current skills in cross-cultural and culturally specific practices through additional training.

#### Limitations

The obvious limitation of the research project is the small sample size which excludes Social Workers I and II that also work within Riverside County Child Protective services and provide services to ethnic-minority families. Furthermore, the generalizability of the research findings existed only to the Social Workers sampled and may not present the perceptions of other Social Workers throughout Riverside County that service ethnic-minority clients.

Another limitation of the research project is in regards to social desirability. Participant Social Workers may have responded in ways that reflect a favorable impression of themselves. In others words, the

respondents' values/attitudes may or may not be demonstrated in their physical environment and communication styles.

The research instrument, in particular the Cultural Competence Self Test, may have been a limitation in the research project due its length, some questions may not have been relevant to the participants job duties, and easy comprehension of the content of the questions.

#### Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

The goal of the research was to assist the county to recruit and select individuals who will perform optimally in the social work profession. This leads to the recommendation that all Social Workers receive at least eight hours of Cross-Cultural training as part of their mandatory twenty hours of continual annual training. Another recommendation would be for Riverside County Child Protective Services to have their various client-centered areas in regards to physical environment reflect all the clients served by the agency as stated in the mission and vision statements of Riverside County.

Also, a recommendation for coping with communication issues may be forming an unit of interpreters that could

be comprised of student interns from local colleges with foreign language education programs where internship are a requirement. Finally, the recommendation is research into the outcome measures of client satisfaction, in particular with ethnic-minority families be conducted to assess any significant relationships between client satisfaction and cross-cultural practice of Riverside County Social Workers.

### Conclusions

The study found that Social Workers at Riverside County Child Protective Services perceive themselves to be culturally competent to provide effective services to ethnic-minority families. In addition, the research found that Riverside County provides some cross-cultural training for its Social Workers and those respondents implied that they could benefit from additional cross-cultural training. All the respondents indicated that they either 'strongly,' or 'somewhat,' or 'agree' that cross-cultural training should be mandatory. The questionnaire, which included a Cultural Competence Self Test, evaluated the extent to which Social Workers put into practice their cross-cultural knowledge. This study

indicates that Social Workers believe that cross-cultural awareness as well as training is crucial in providing effective services to families.

APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE



## Study of Cross-Cultural Training Debriefing Statement

Instructions: Please circle or fill in the blanks.

1. Gender  
(1) Male (2) Female
2. Age \_\_\_\_\_
3. What is your ethnicity?  
(1) African American (5) Native American  
(2) Asian (6) Pacific Islander  
(3) Caucasian (7) Other  
(4) Hispanic
4. What was your last degree completed?  
(1) Bachelor Degree (3) Doctorate  
(2) Master Degree  
Specify the degree earned (i.e. Master of Social Work) \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is your position title?  
(1) Social Worker III (3) Social Worker V  
(2) Social Worker IV
6. How long have you been employed as a social worker with Riverside County? \_\_\_\_\_
7. While earning your degree, did you take any courses that discussed or emphasis was cultural diversity and/or awareness?  
(1) Yes (2) No
8. Excluding induction, since your employment with Riverside County have you received cross-cultural training?  
(1) Yes (2) No
9. How many families from ethnic minority groups have you worked with in the past six months?  
(1) 0 to 15 (3) 31 to 45  
(2) 16 to 30 (4) Over 46
10. How comfortable do you feel with working with families from an ethnic minority group other than your own?  
(1) Very comfortable (4) Slightly uncomfortable  
(2) Slightly comfortable (5) Very uncomfortable  
(3) Comfortable
11. Cross-cultural training should be made mandatory by the agency  
(1) I strongly agree (4) I disagree  
(2) I somewhat agree (5) I somewhat disagree  
(3) I agree (6) I strongly disagree
12. Do you think you would benefit from additional cross-cultural training?  
(1) Yes (2) No
13. Does your cross-cultural knowledge stem from life experiences?  
(1) Yes (2) No
14. Awareness/Knowledge of cultural differences is important in order to provide effective services  
(1) I strongly agree (4) I disagree  
(2) I somewhat agree (5) I somewhat disagree  
(3) I agree (6) I strongly disagree

## Cultural Competence Self-test

The following self-assessment can assist physicians in identifying areas in which they might improve the quality of their services to culturally diverse populations.

### Promoting Cultural and Linguistic Competency

#### Self-Assessment Checklist for Personnel Providing Primary Health Care Services

Directions: Please enter A, B or C for each item listed below.

A = Things I do frequently

B = Things I do occasionally

C = Things I do rarely or never

#### Physical Environment, Materials & Resources

- 1. I display pictures, posters, artwork and other decor that reflect the cultures and ethnic backgrounds of clients served by my or agency.
- 2. I ensure that magazines, brochures and other printed materials in reception areas are of interest to and reflect the different of individuals and families served by my program or agency.
- 3. When using videos, films or other media resources for health education, treatment or other interventions, I ensure that they reflect the cultures and ethnic background of individuals and families served by my or agency.
- 4. I ensure that printed information disseminated by my agency or program takes into account the average literacy levels of individuals families receiving services.

#### Communication Styles

- 5. When interacting with individuals and families who have English proficiency, I always keep in mind that:
  - Limitations in English proficiency are in no way a of their level of intellectual functioning.
  - Their limited ability to speak the language of the culture has no bearing on their ability to communicate effectively in language of origin.
  - They may or may not be literate in their language of origin or English.
- 6. I use bilingual-bicultural staff and/or personnel and volunteers skilled or certified in the provision of medical interpretation treatment, interventions, meetings or other events for individuals and families who need or prefer this level of assistance.
- 7. For individuals and families who speak languages or other than English, I attempt to learn and use key words in their language so that I am better able to communicate with them during assessment, treatment or other interventions.
- 8. I attempt to determine any familial colloquialisms used by individuals or families that may impact on assessment, treatment or other interventions.
- 9. When possible, I ensure that all notices and communiqués to individuals and families are written in their language of origin.
- 10. I understand that it may be necessary to use alternatives to written communications for some individuals and families, as word of mouth may be a preferred method of receiving information.

#### Values & Attitudes

- 11. I avoid imposing values that may conflict or be inconsistent with those of cultures or ethnic groups other than my own.
- 12. I screen books, movies and other media resources for cultural, ethnic or racial stereotypes before sharing them with individuals and families served by my program or agency.
- 13. I intervene in an appropriate manner when I observe other staff or clients within my program or agency engaging in behaviors that show cultural insensitivity, racial biases and prejudice.
- 14. I recognize and accept that individuals from diverse backgrounds may desire varying degrees of acculturation into dominant culture.

- \_\_\_ 15. I understand and accept that family is defined by different cultures (e.g., extended family members, fictive kin, godparents).
- \_\_\_ 16. I accept and respect that male-female roles may vary among different cultures and ethnic groups (e.g., who makes major for the family).
- \_\_\_ 17. I understand that age and life-cycle factors must be in interactions with individuals and families (e.g., high value placed on the decision of elders, the role of eldest male or female in families, or roles and expectation of children within the family).
- \_\_\_ 18. I understand that grief and bereavement are by culture.
- \_\_\_ 19. I seek information from individuals, families or other key community informants that will assist in service adaptation to respond to the needs and preferences of culturally and ethnically diverse served by my program or agency.
- \_\_\_ 20. Before visiting or providing services in the home setting, I seek information on acceptable behaviors, courtesies, customs that are unique to the culturally and ethnically diverse groups by my program or agency.
- \_\_\_ 21. I keep abreast of the major social concerns and issues for ethnically and racially diverse client populations residing in the geographic locale served by my program or agency.
- \_\_\_ 22. I am aware of socioeconomic and environmental risk factors that contribute to the major mental and physical health problems of culturally, ethnically and racially diverse populations served by my program or agency.
- \_\_\_ 23. I avail myself to professional development and training to enhance my knowledge and skills in the provision of services and supports to culturally, ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse groups.
- \_\_\_ 24. I advocate for the review of my program or agency's mission statement, goals, policies and procedures to ensure that they incorporate principles and practices that promote cultural and linguistic competence.

### **How to use this checklist**

This checklist is intended to heighten the awareness and sensitivity of personnel to the importance of cultural and linguistic competence in health and human service settings. It provides concrete examples of the kinds of beliefs, attitudes, values and practices that foster cultural and linguistic competence at the individual or practitioner level. There is no answer key with correct responses. However, if you frequently responded "C," you may not necessarily demonstrate beliefs, attitudes, values and practices that promote cultural and linguistic competence within health care delivery programs.

Self-assessment developed by Tawara D. Goode, Georgetown University Child Development Center-UAP. Adapted with permission *Promoting Cultural Competence and Cultural Diversity in Early Intervention and Early Childhood Settings* and *Promoting Cultural Competence and Cultural Diversity for Personnel Providing Services and Supports to Children With Special Health Care Needs and Their Families* (June 1989; latest revision July 2000).

APPENDIX B  
INFORMED CONSENT

## **Study of Cross-Cultural Training Informed Consent**

The study in which you are being asked to participate in is designed to investigate cultural awareness/competency of Social Workers and the need or extended need for cross-cultural training within Child Protective Services in Riverside County. Kathleen Fromayan Nebo and Darlena Allen are conducting this study under the supervision of Professor Rosemary McCaslin, Ph.D., A.C.S.W., of the Master of Social Work Department at California State University, San Bernardino. This questionnaire is an anonymous survey therefore does not require you to write your name on any part of the consent or questionnaire. Checking the box below indicates that participants understand and agree to voluntarily participate in this study.

In this study you will be asked to respond to questions regarding demographics as well as a cultural competency self-assessment and attitudes, beliefs, and practices surrounding cross-cultural awareness and training. The following questionnaire and self-test should take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete. All of your responses will be held in the strictest of confidence by the researchers. Your participation in this study is totally voluntary. You are free not to answer any questions and withdraw at any time without penalty.

In order to ensure the validity of the study, we ask that you not discuss this study with other participants. All data will be reported in group form only. You may receive the group results of this study upon completion at during the summer of 2005 at CSUSB Pfau Library or Riverside County Child Protective Services. If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. McCaslin at (909) 880-5507.

I have read the above statement and agree to participate in this study. Date \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX C  
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

## **Study of Cross-Cultural Training Debriefing Statement**

The study you have so graciously completed was designed to investigate cultural competency and the need or extended need for cross-cultural training. The study is assessing Social Workers' attitudes, beliefs, and practices surrounding cross-cultural awareness and training to determine to what extent Social Workers are trained to work with families from various ethnic minority groups. The graduate student researchers, Kathleen Fromayan Nebo and Darlena Allen, thank you for completing the questionnaire. Your participation and insight is appreciated.

If you have any questions and/or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact Professor Rosemary McCaslin at (909) 880-5507. The study findings will be presented to Riverside County *Department of Public Social Services Child Protection Services* and also will be available at Pfau Library during the Summer of 2005.

Once the survey has been completed please place it in the designated survey box. We appreciate your time and energy.

APPENDIX D  
CORRELATION TABLE



### Significant Correlations

Variables	Cross-Cultural Effective Service	Cross-Cultural Training Since Employment	Additional Cross-Cultural Training	Cross-Cultural Life Experience
Cross-Cultural Mandatory Training	P = .890** R = .000 N = 29	P = .418* R = .024 N = 29		P = .386* R = .039 N = 29
Case Load of Ethnic Minority Families			P = -.375* R = .049 N = 28	
Cross-Cultural Effective Service				P = .496** R = .006 N = 29

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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## ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES PAGE

This was a two-person project where authors collaborated throughout. However, for each phase of the project, certain authors took primary responsibility. These responsibilities were assigned in the manner listed below.

1. Data Collection:

Assigned Leader: Kathleen Fromayan Nebo

Assisted By: Darlena Allen

2. Data Entry and Analysis:

Team Effort: Kathleen Fromayan Nebo

Darlena Allen

3. Writing Report and Presentation of Findings:

a. Introduction and Literature

Team Effort: Kathleen Fromayan Nebo

Darlena Allen

b. Methods

Team Effort: Kathleen Fromayan Nebo

Darlena Allen

c. Results

Team Effort: Kathleen Fromayan Nebo

Darlena Allen

d. Discussion

Team Effort: Kathleen Fromayan Nebo

Darlena Allen