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MINORITIES' PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

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MINORITIES' PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD

PROTECTIVE SERVICES

———————————

A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

———————————

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

———————————

by

Vernae Elaine Hicks

June 2016

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Approved by:

Dr. Janet Chang, Faculty Supervisor, Social Work

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ABSTRACT

The study examined minority persons' views and experiences with Child Protective Services (CPS) in the community. This study used a qualitative design with face-to-face interviews with 12 participants in the community. This study used the "Post-Positivist" data analysis, which is qualitative in evaluation and explained each participant's subjective reality.

The study found that most participants were satisfied with the results and were dissatisfied with the process in and of itself. Overall the study found that most participants felt that there was some sort of a disconnect with social workers in reference to cultural competency. Miscommunication between the social workers at agencies and parents could have played a significant role in why participants had these experiences. However, most participants felt that the agency helped with services that ultimately left the participants feeling a sense of awareness about the purpose of the agency. The study suggests that implementing a program that would allow the community to be informed of all the programs that Child Protective Services can provide be critical in aiding and empowering the members of the community and in helping reduce CPS caseloads significantly.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

ASSESSMENT

Introduction

This chapter explains the focus of the study, which is primarily on Child Welfare clients' interactions and experiences with Child Protective Services. Besides this, the study assessed how different cultural backgrounds have a direct impact on personal perceptions of the participant's experiences, which in turn causes the development of their perceptions of the Child Protective Services agency. This section explained the impact that acculturation has on minorities, and how mainstream western society addresses this issue. The chapter also provides a review of the literature focusing on various cultural norms in child rearing. As well as Child Welfare Agencies attitudes towards minorities and the impact that this imposes on minorities as far as the disproportionally of reported child abuse incidents. Lastly, this section explains the potential contributions to both micro and macro social work practice.

Research Focus

The research focus of this study will be cultural differences in minorities and how this affects various cultures' perceptions of the agency as well as how the organization in question perceives these cultural attitudes. In addition to this, how the participant understands their treatment and interactions with Child Protective Services agencies. Cultural Competency will play a significant

role in determining many of the issues; lack of cultural competency could be a substantial influence on the findings of this study. The researcher will began the study allowing participants to describe what their experiences have been from initial contact and forward until the end of the process, whether there was a removal of said child from the home until reunification. Through the participants' responses with Child Protective Services agency, the researcher will be able to assess a myriad of perceptions through these various interactions and experiences to be able to assess better the results to develop some common theme that can better aid in developing a theory. The use of "The Post-Positivist Paradigm" will support the research, and to get an understanding of the diversity issues to help possibly in developing programs and studies in the field of Social Work. The research can assist in helping families understand the purpose of the agency, and help the organization to build a better rapport with minorities in the community.

<div align="center">Paradigm and Rationale for Chosen Paradigm</div>

The Post-Positivist paradigm was used in this study keeping in mind that objectivity is what the researcher had and was acutely aware of his or her biases (Morris, 2014, p. 3). Qualitative data gathering was used in a naturalistic setting. For simplistic reasoning "The Post-Positivist Paradigm" was chosen to allow the participants' contributions to this research study dictate the theory results. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews, and was able to gain a sense of these experiences through the objective

reality of the participant's stories, and listening to expressions of what was experienced in their interactions with the child protective agency. The face-to-face interviews allowed the researcher to learn from the experiences and aid in developing these themes, which were best, expressed by using this paradigm.

Literature Review

This section of the study introduces previous studies that have looked at how minorities and the Child Welfare System have interacted together as it applies to the theme of cultural differences as noted in "Challenges for marginalized minority parents in different welfare systems: Child Welfare worker's perspectives" (Kriz, Skivenes, 2015: p. 75). The Post-Positivist Paradigm was used in the justification for the researcher to be thorough in the review of the literature as to remain unbiased when developing findings for the research study. The researcher used the peer-reviewed context as a central part of the professional perspective, as well as interviewing participant's to gain insight into the various experiences that may have been experienced being a minority interacting with the Child Welfare System.

In a journal article by (Schrieber, Fuller, & Paceley, 2013) "Engagement in child protective services: Parent perceptions of worker skills", the authors stated that the initial meeting during the first CPS visit had elicited intense negative feelings of fear, anger or shame from parents. According to Combrinck-Graham in "Children Family Contexts: Perspective on Treatment

(2nd Edition)" argue that the country's mental health policy has been shaped by its particular history, its models of citizenship, colonial interests, and immigration trends. The factors determined the country's goals regarding immigrants, whether this was integration into mainstream culture or the promotion of a "multicultural" society. Having looked at the many ways in which culture can be misappropriated, problematized, or idealized Kirmayer & Minas, 2000, conclude that "an analysis of cultural difference in terms of the relative power, social position, and interaction of the local worlds of clinician and patient would be more useful than colorful caricatures of patients' ethnic heritage". This chapter is written in the same spirit and looks at how "culture" gets constructed at a particular interface- that between the professional child protection culture and the culture of the family under assessment.

Professional systems (health, social services, and legal), lay claim to expert knowledge as to what is in the "best interests" of all children within the state. This directly contests the child's location within the "culture of the family"(Combrinck-Graham, 2006). The above-listed literature review is used as an aid in building a theory, and to understand the sentiments felt by minorities regarding their perceptions.

This study will improve the social work practice in the area of child protection services and relations between different cultures by understanding complicated factors related to cultural norms, and Cultural Competency and various adversities minorities are consumed with. It will aid in gaining

extensive insight into diverse cultures and possibly assist in closing the
disproportional gap in reporting of minorities.

Theoretical Orientation

Research finds that "Systems Theory" has a direct impact as to why
these particular types of attitudes amongst minorities can have a direct effect
on services. Since the definition of theory has much to do

> reciprocal relationships among elements that constitute a whole. These
> concepts also emphasize the relationships among individuals, groups,
> organizations and communities and mutually influencing factors in the
> environment. Systems Theories focus on the interrelationships of
> elements in nature, encompassing physics, chemistry, biology and
> social relationships (general systems theory, ecological perspective, life
> model and ecosystems perspective). (San Jose State University, Office
> of Research, 2008, IRB)

The Empowerment theory will also play a significant role in this study
since people of color are considered an oppressed group, (Turner, 1996).
Also, to this Turner also speaks of "Anti-Oppressive Social Work Practice,"
which includes a variety of approaches and theories related to social work's
commitment to social justice. The tenet that social workers engage in
anti-oppressive practice is found in the Code of Ethics as well as both the
National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the International
Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). Using the Post-Positivist paradigm is

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essential to administer objectivity and to be aware of biases that can have the disproportionate impact on this type of research. The research process required that journals were maintained while gathering data from participants, and another reflective journal that was used explain the process that will be utilized in this research study. The problem focus of my research study is "Minorities Perceptions of child protective services".

Potential Contribution of Research to Micro
and Macro Social Work Practice

Contributions related to this study of minorities and their perceptions of the Child Welfare Agency can open many doors of the reality that there are major disproportions in the reporting of incidents and a possibility that there may be culturally incompetent social workers conducting the business of social work.

This research study will add to the social work practice at the micro and macro levels of human beings. About the micro level, this study will be able to show how individuals are faced with a varied level of adversities that could aid in agencies providing resources that will empower these individuals to be aware of their shortcomings and provide better care. The Post-Positivist paradigm will give an objective reality into participants with diverse cultural experiences in this research study when involved with child protection agencies through an inductive exploratory approach to understanding this goal reality.

In macro practice, the Post-Positivist paradigm can aid in legislation that will take into consideration culture and becoming acclimated to social norms and familiarizing organizations with cultural norms of diverse ethnicities. It can also assist in resolving current issues and problems that have been recurring for years. The paradigm would also allow macro practice to apply more of the human experience which will give insight that can assist in better policy-making or producing changes with public agencies that are mandated to conduct business in accordance with procedures that currently do not take into consideration the human experience and the experiences that some ethnicities that may have been accustomed to in their home of origin.

Summary

The Post-Positivist paradigm in the assessment phase research introduced my research focus of "Minorities Perceptions of Child Protective Services". It also addressed the actual question of what are the perceptions of Child Protective Services by minorities. The Post-Positivist paradigm would be the best way to address the research focus since most of the research was conducted by face-to-face interviews. The research was able to gain a sense of these experiences through the objective reality of the participant's stories, and listening to expressions of what was experienced in their interactions with the child protective agency, which was best expressed by using this paradigm. Focusing on the diversity of the cultural backgrounds will produce better results for all involved in this study and abroad.

Also, the literature review is an important tool to use for the researcher's awareness of many of the theories that are important to this area of study and will not be used to guide the research study. However, it was used to understand the focus of the problem. The researcher knows that the natural setting is as relevant to the study along with theoretical knowledge. In the conclusion of the assessment section of this research study as well as the contribution can aid micro and macro social work practice on so many levels from individuals, families, communities, nationally and globally.

CHAPTER TWO

ENGAGEMENT

Introduction

Chapter two has addressed the engagement process of this research. It has described the experiences of the participants. The researcher has also explained how and why the study participants have been chosen for the research study and how it has an impact the findings of the survey.

Study Site

The researcher used individuals located in Southern California from various walks of life from previous foster care parents, emancipated foster youth, single mothers, and adoptive parents. The foster youth were chosen due to the fact that there are a high number of minorities within the foster care system and many foster parents are in direct contact with the Child Protective Agency for different reasons. The experiences of having direct contact had an impact in this study and gave the researcher insight on the objective reality of these foster parents that assisted in developing a theory that provided a clear picture as to why there are a disproportionate number of cases reported in the system. Community members in this community of Southern California where many minority families reside spent approximately 30 minutes conversing about many adversities or positive interactions with this agency.

Engagement Strategies for Gatekeepers at Research Site

Engagement has taken place at either at the participant's homes or over the telephone where the researcher resides. The researcher asked for permission to conduct the study at the locations of the participants and verbal permission was given over telephone due to the hectic schedule that all had, from the participants to the researcher. The researcher ensured that the participants were provided with informed consent forms, and due to scheduling some of the participants gave a verbal signature to proceed with study and save time.

We discussed study focus, timelines, and the potential impact of the research and the benefits of the survey in society. The researcher used active listening and effective interviewing skills, to gain the support of all participants involved.

Institutional Review Board and Human Subjects Committee approved the researcher to been the study on 5/29/15. All research data was collected, and the study was completed Winter Quarter 2015.

Self-Preparation

The researcher has prepared a statement that addressed each participant to ensure that they feel confident enough to proceed with the study, as well as their individual informed consent forms and explanation in detail of what this study entails. The participants will not be coerced into taking part in

this study if any feelings of concern arise and will be informed that they can withdraw from the study whenever they feel necessary.

Diversity Issues

In this study, diversity will be an essential focus since it is the very essence of doing the research for this study. In reading Chapter 18 of Dr. Morris' 2006 version of Social Work Research methods, it clearly states that in doing micro research for the Post-Positivist Paradigm in regards to diversity it is imperative that the researcher recognizes the differences between him/herself and the researched. "Differences in perceived power over the situation…minority versus majority ethnic identity, vulnerable client versus researcher with status. Can a partnership be formed between the researcher and the researched by acknowledging and reflecting on these differences?" (Morris, 2014, p. 265). In this section of the research project, there will be sensitivity and focus on the part of the researcher as to the norms of the topic and the implementation. There will be questions to address what is formal and informal behavior when interacting with different minorities. When doing surveyed questions the researcher had one on one interviews to address any concerns in regards to the way study questions had been presented, this was done with the participants of the study, to gain insight of any cultural diversities.

Dr. Morris also addresses issues with differences in perspectives, language, and history. These questions will be discussed at initial engagement

with gatekeepers to ensure no one is offended and to build rapport with the client population being researched. Also noted in Chapter 18,

> the researcher will keep in mind cultural differences in regards to eye contact, body language, and space. There is also mention of verbal/following, and listening first then following, the researcher will conduct this with many of the culturally diverse people being engaged. There will be research done to ensure nothing offensive is committed intentionally. (Morris, 2014, p. 265).

Although researcher is a minority, it is imperative that the researcher remains objective as an outsider looking inward, only using the objective reality of the experiences of the subjects being researched.

Ethical Issues

The researcher assured that the participant's identities in the study were kept in a locked secure and safe place where only the researcher and advisor have access. The ethical issues that surround this study will mainly deal with issues of "voluntary participation, informed consent, no harm/distress to participants protecting subject's privacy and confidentiality, no deception, no scientific fraud or misconduct, avoiding bias and insensitivity, having an obligation to professional colleagues" (Morris, 2014, p. 252). The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at California State University, San Bernardino will decide if the researcher has identified and addressed the issues regarding ethics to be able to assess whether or not this research study falls within the guidelines

of the NASW, CSWE, any other required licensing bodies and professional associations. Also San Jose State University's Policy for the Human Research Subjects (2008), defines research as "a systematic investigation designed to contribute to generalizable knowledge. The task of administrators is to determine whether a proposed project meets this definition and needs to go through an IRB review" (San Jose State University, Office of Research, 2008, IRB).

Likewise, the Council of Social Work Education (CSWE) describes research as, "a systematic process of investigation and analysis that develops and promulgates general knowledge to inform professional practice and social policy" (Secondary Source, 2009, as cited in San Jose State University, Office of Research, 2008, IRB).

> Throughout the research process—which typically includes the conceptualization of a research idea, development of a viable design, purposeful selection and recruitment of study participants, implementation of the survey in the field, data entry, analysis, and interpretation, and, finally, dissemination of research findings—there are numerous ethical considerations to be addressed and decisions to be made. (Secondary Source, 2009, as cited in San Jose State University, Office of Research, 2008, IRB)

In its National Statement on Research Integrity in Social Work (2006), the CSWE explains "research knowledge is used by students to provide

high-quality services; to initiate change; to improve practice, policy, and social service delivery; and to evaluate their practice" (Secondary Source, 2009, as cited in San Jose State University, Office of Research, 2008, IRB). "This statement clearly indicates how research is integral to all realms of social work practice," says Shore (Secondary Source, 2009, as cited in San Jose State University, Office of Research, 2008, IRB). This study will address all of the above ethical issues to be able to move forward with this research process.

<div align="center">Political Issues</div>

The political issues that can evolve surrounding this research study will have to do with the researcher developing a theory from the research data remaining completely objective.

> Although the researcher has the power to decide what data to collect and use, Post-Positivist attempt to curb the influence of their values on the research project and maintain an active stance that the researcher, if careful, will not affect the research setting. Thus, study participants are a source of data, not collaborators in the project. (Morris, 2006, p. 71)

It is through this statement that I hope that some change can be made regarding my research study and hopefully for the best interest of humankind.

The Role of Technology in Engagement

The only tools the researcher will plan to use will be face-to-face interviews, notebooks, pens, telephones, voice-recording applications that are secured and locked by fingerprint access only to the researcher. Also, computers to access the Internet for peer-reviewed research, and research-developed charts to compare data that have been retrieved from the participants during the engagement. The technology of today allows us to access information at a much faster rate than we once were able to by physically going to the library to check out books and audio equipment. In this research study, the researcher used the Internet, as well as journals and theoretical information in articles. Listening to the participants and taking notes, while staying engaged in the conversations of different experiences, was obtained as the primary source of information.

Summary

The engagement phase of my research shows how the participants were involved in the initial development of the research focus. The ethical issues surrounding this study include informed consent, the privacy of the individuals that will be a part of the survey and protecting their identities. Diversity issues were adhered to when dealing with different cultures and such as cultural awareness of being respectful, how you address the participant and allowing them the opportunity express themselves to not be misunderstood. The political issues that the engagement process can have are the chance to

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advocate for policy changes to bureaucratic systems that have been set in place that do not take into account cultural norms of different minorities. Technology played a large role as far as comprising the data collected, from the use of the Internet, the use of applications to record interviews, the creations of charts, to the basic pen and notepad to compose of the information that was collected for this research study.

CHAPTER THREE

IMPLEMENTATION

Introduction

This chapter describes the engagement with the selected participants

and the researcher's preparation for the beginning stages of the investigation

process. The researcher informed members of the details of the

comprehensive study to ensure that there was a clear understanding as to

whether or not they would or would not like to participate.

The researcher selected members in the community that were known

for having had interactions with Child Protective Services. Most of the

participants were either foster parents, parents, single parents, or guardians to

children that had been in a circumstance that the Child Protective Services felt

was endangering the child's safety, some of the participants are emancipated

youth and others were adoptive parents.

Chapter three discusses the selection of study participants. This

selection process has allowed the researcher to develop a case sample. The

interview questions and data gathering techniques have also been reviewed in

addition to the different phases of data collection that were used.

Study Participants

As stated above, the details of the survey have been explained to the

clients and want accomplished to see if they would agree to participate. The

particulars of the investigation were done so that the researcher could develop a case sample. Demographics will be used to be able to assess ethnicity, age, gender, education level, the number of children in the household, and the number of times contacted by the Child Protective Services agency.

Data Gathering

Data gathering will consist mainly of face-to-face interviews. These interviews were conducted with questions developed in advance, which are attached to Appendix A. The researcher plans to use descriptive open-ended questions to identify patterns and regularities, along with structural-inclusive, verification questions, and some substitution frame questions. During the interview process researcher inserted some probing questions.

Phases of Data Collection

Engagement, development of focus, maintaining focus, and termination is steps described by Dr. Morris regarding the interview stage (Morris, 2014)

The researcher engaged with the participants and explained the purpose of the study, which is detailed thoroughly on the informed consent form, then the researcher assured members if there were any concerns regarding answering any questions and ask would they be willing to participate in the study. Once participants agreed to take part in the study researcher will get the demographics before beginning the interview process as stated above in data gathering. This information will be used by the researcher to develop a

chart that can assess whether or not any of these factors have an impact on participants perceptions.

Data Recording

The researcher maintained two journals one of the actual interview session, and the other for the reflective process, this would be an important part of the qualitative study and needs to be accurate. One journal will be the Interview Journal, and the other will be the Reflective Journal.

Termination and Follow-Up

The researcher informed the participants when the study has ended and will thank them for their participation and time for the study. The researcher will follow-up with the participants by inviting them to the presentation of the researcher study at California State University, San Bernardino when the dates are known.

Communication of Findings and Dissemination Plan

As stated in the Termination and Follow-Up the gatekeepers and participants will be invited to attend the presentation of the study at California State University, San Bernardino and will be given a copy of the findings and dissemination plan if requested.

Summary

The Implementation chapter covered how participants were engaged to participate in this study. The researcher has accomplished the process of

selecting the members. The data gathering process was done by face-to-face interviewing, as well as phone conversations, note taking, data analysis, telephones, voice recorders and lastly reflective journals. Asking open-ended, structural, inclusive and probing questions were done in phases of data collection. Data was be recorded by note taking only, and voice recording. Termination and follow-up was done at the different locations and participants were thanked for their participation in the study process. The members were notified of the date that the presentation of the study will be conducted and will be given a copy of the survey at their request.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION

Introduction

This chapter presents data analysis of the findings of the research as well as data interpretation. This chapter also includes the implications of the findings for micro service delivery and macro practice. This chapter summarizes the overall evaluation for this component of this research study.

Data Analysis

There were 12 participants in this study. Nearly 75% were female participants and 25% were male participants. Approximately 80% of the participants in this study were African American and 20% were Hispanic. The ages of the participants ranged from 24 to 66 years with an average age of 42.3 years. There were approximately 16% of the participants that were in their 20's, and 24% were in their 30's, 32% in their 40's, 16% in their 50's and approximately 8% in their late 60's. The age differential showed a wide enough age gap to see what the experiences were like from different life stages. All participants in their twenties did not have any children, and there was only one participant in their thirties that did not have any children as well. Most participants had between 1 through 5 children.

When participants were asked about their experience with Child Protective Services, there were 6 negative responses, 4 positive responses,

and 2 neutral responses. The negative responses were mostly based on either

feeling victimized due to retaliation calls to the agency and false reporting and

feeling helpless in these cases and the fear of having their families broken up.

For example, participant #11 stated, "I was afraid, the first time I met them.

Exactly. I was afraid of not knowing what they were gonna do because the

most I've heard about CPS is they come in and they take away your kids"

(Survey Interview, December 2015). Similarly, participant #12 said,

> In a way I think it's good and in a way I think it's bad because it breaks
>
> of families up instead of pretty much trying to find a solution of the
>
> problem in the home. It just snatches the kids and their, what their
>
> habitat is and what they're used to, they snatch them out of the homes.
>
> Now if there is abuse there, I feel like they need to seek help for the
>
> individual, whether it's the father… Okay. My opinion of why it could be
>
> good, in the case of a real abuse being taken place against children,
>
> ladies and things, one of the parents, which should be the mother, you
>
> know, take them out of that environment and maybe find them a better
>
> home if this situation is really unbearable and bad. (Participant #12,
>
> Survey Interview, October 2015)

The statements regarding the positive responses were related to the

agency providing helpful services, which ultimately left participants feeling

positive about their experiences. For example, participant #16 stated,

Excuse me. I'm sorry. I had a pretty positive experience with them.

They seemed to be really helpful and stay on top of things when there

was an emergency, and get the children to me as quick as possible and

in a safe manner, to make sure they were protected, so I had a pretty

good experience with them. They kind of informed me, as well as they

could, of what I would be dealing with, and it was kind of based on the

information they were given, so I don't think anything was really being

held for me, and they're trying to keep me knowledgeable about what

was about to happen, the type of kids I was gonna be dealing with.

(Participant #16, Survey Interview, January 2016)

Statements in the neutral response category were related to the ease or

the initial uncomfortable feeling but ended with tolerable results. For example,

participant #6 stated, "My experience with Child Protective Services went

pretty easy. It was pretty much like a smaller case that was kind of open and

shut closed" (Participant #6, Survey Interview, September 2015).

When the participants were asked about the impact of CPS had on their

life, their responses were overall mostly positive, even if they felt their

interactions with CPS were negative. The initial contact may have been

negative but once participants went through the process they felt that the

impact was either minimal or no considerable impact that changed the

structure of their life style. This is evident by some of the responses and an

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overall assessment of all of the participant's responses. For example, participant #6b said,

At the time – as I think about it now it made me a better person. It made me appreciate things, you know – don't take life for granted because it could be easily – you know, the material things will be easily, will be taken away from you real quick. It just had – just gave me a whole another outlook on, on life period. Just not, you know – just –I don't want to say being caged up, but you might as well say being caged up because. (Participant #6b, Survey Interview, August 2015)

Participant also said, "Well, they would come to the house to see the condition of how the girls were living and they were very impressed with that. The agency had a great impact on us because they facilitated us with certain agencies that we got vouchers to send the girls to private school" (Participant #6b, Survey Interview, August 2015)

Most of the participant's reflections of the various incidents and their overall perceptions ultimately allowed participants to think critically and truly assess the overall process. Most participants found in retrospect that the experience was a learning process to receive needed assistance.

When the participants were asked about their opinions of Child Protective Services, 90% of the participants felt that the agency was necessary in the protection of children. But there was some inhibition about the way the agency goes about investigating cases and felt some social

workers were too eager to place or remove children from the home, and some participants even referred to the agency as the police. For example, Participant #14 stated,

> I think they do the best that they could or they can. I'm aware that a lot of CPS workers have a lot of caseloads and very minimal workers in the field. I'm also aware that when you file a case, it's hard to go and investigate because of the specific evidences that we need in order to go out and investigate in the field. And so, I think a lot of cases that should be investigated don't get investigated, so I feel like the CPS system needs a lot more work. (Participant #14, Survey Interview, December 2015)

When the participants were asked about how CPS has helped them and their family, seven of the participants felt that this agency did not help their family at all. In fact some participants stated that this agency destroyed their families and others felt that they did help and hoped to never have contact with this agency again. For example, Participant #15 stated, "It hasn't done nothing but destroy my family" (Participant #15, Survey Interview, January 2016).

On the other hand, other participants that felt this agency helped them by providing resources for independent camps, parenting classes, and improvements in the way they operate their foster home.

When the participants were asked to describe their experience with the process as a whole, the results remained exactly the same (there were 2

neutral responses, 4 positive responses, and 6 negative responses), although the participants did not answer the same way. For example, the participants originally reported that they had a neutral experience overall stated that the experience was negative as a whole. The same was noted vice-versa the two neutral participants discussing the process as a whole stated that they initially had negative experiences. This could be a result of not understanding the question or a result of their actually objective realities.

The participants were asked to express their feelings with CPS in either a statement or one-word answers. The researcher was able to apply social work skills of validating, empathizing, and normalizing as the participants expressed their subjective realities to the researcher. Most participants (approximately 50%) felt some depressed feelings, felt helplessness, angry, and hopelessness. Some participants stated they did not feel any one particular way about having contact with this agency. The following are some of the statements given by the participants:

- Participant #6b "It's a depression" (Participant #6b, Survey Interview, August 2015).

- Participant #3:

  Sometimes I felt embarrassed. Sometime – because I wasn't able to do stuff that regular teenagers did a lot, like everything was kind of special. I was kind of extra protected and extra put away, and you know, I didn't get to pretty much do a lot of the

stuff that I wanted to do, so it was like – I don't know. Sometimes

it was good, sometimes it was bad. It changed often, so there's

no real general answer, when you say when I think about my

having contact with child protective services. (Participant #3,

Survey Interview, September 2015)

- Participant #6: "Helpless" (Participant #6, Survey Interview,

  September 2015).

- Participant #11: "I feel frustrated" (Participant #11, Survey

  Interview, September 2015).

- Participant #12: "Angry" (Participant #12, Survey Interview,

  September 2015).

When the participants were asked to describe the level of cultural

sensitivity of the caseworker they had interactions with, a half of the

participants (50%) felt that the social worker was culturally sensitive. Some

participants stated that the social worker was the same ethnicity as the

participant, and some participants said that some of the social workers really

did not want to intrude into home but needed to follow through so that the

cases could be unfounded. Forty percent of the participants felt that the social

workers that were less culturally sensitive and more interested in removing

children from home, only concerned with doing their job at any costs. Other

participants stated that the social workers had a law enforcement like

disposition, and others stated the lack of cultural sensitivity was due to the

social worker being of a different culture, or social status. Lastly 10% of participants felt neutral due to having several contacts where one was a positive display of cultural sensitivity and the other was a very low in cultural sensitivity.

When the participants were asked of any additional support or services they wish to receive from CPS, 75% of the participants stated that there was not any additional support or services needed from Child Protective Services. But 25% of the participants felt for various reasons that additional support and services would be necessary to either support parents or grandparents when trying to advocate for grandchildren and custody, or when foster youth have been placed in foster homes they should be allotted the opportunity to receive their driver's license. Lastly one participant felt that being a foster parent of children that are placed CPS custody, there should be some type of emergency funding so that the child could be provided with clothing, diapers or any immediate need that may arise for this parent to adequately care for the child. The following is some of the statements from the participants.

- Participant #3:

  You know if you have good behavior – I know a lot of the youths are troubled youth, so it might not be the best idea for troubled youth, but you know helping a young teenager learn how to drive is important. There's a lot of reasons why, but that would've been

one of the things that I asked for help for. (Participant #3, Survey Interview, August 2015)

- Participant #15:

  Yes. I wish there were more advocacy support groups that were accessible to parents because a lot of the parents that these children are being taken from, only people that are allowed, per se, they'll say that you're allowed a lawyer. So they'll appoint the child a lawyer. And the parents were so called appointed a lawyer. But when you really look back into it, the lawyers that they appoint to the parents aren't really lawyers and they worked right there in the Department of Child Protective – they work right there for the same company. So in actuality, they all work together. (Participant #15, Survey Interview, January 2016)

- Participant #16:

  Let's see. I think – I'm trying to remember, because it's been a while since I had foster kids, but I think, at the time, I was hoping they had a few more activities to keep the kids involved, especially, for the teenager. They had a lot of programs for the younger girls, like from ages four to like 11, or four to 12, but once they turned 13 they don't have enough activities to keep them involved, to me. I had to really keep busy and have a lot of flexibility. (Participant #16, Survey Interview, January 2016)

Data Interpretation

The researcher developed a vocabulary of codes and themes that were conducive to interpret, conclude, and predict the meaning of the codes and themes. The words in the participant's responses allowed the researcher to use open coding and these responses were analyzed in depth. This analysis allowed the researcher to develop concepts to categorize into themes. The axial coding was developed through the linkage of the themes and words. This process, according to Morris (2014), allows the researcher to use selective coding to integrate and refine the categories and their concepts, to build a theory about minority's perceptions as they relate to experiences with CPS (Child Protective Services).

The data that presented show the differences between certain minorities who have had some form of interaction with a child protective service agency and what their experiences were like. The researcher will display each person's subjective reality to analyze the data.

Open Coding and Axial Coding

According to Morris (2014), open coding is the process of identifying the social phenomenon's concepts, categories of concepts, the properties of concepts, and the dimensions of those properties. Morris also stated that axial coding is a procedure for linking the emergent categories and making statements about the relationship between categories and their dimensions.
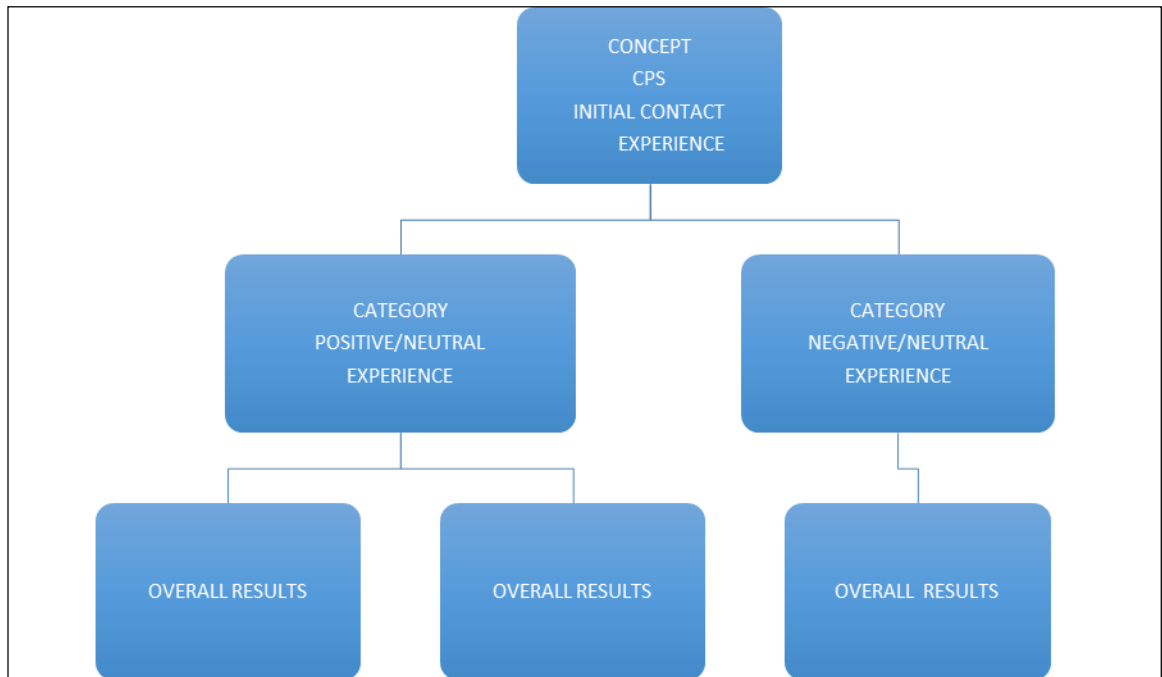
Figure 1. Social Phenomenon = Child Protective Services Contact

The researcher used the information taken from the participants objective realities to create the above listed categories to simplify concepts and dimensions of these objective realities to develop themes that will be labeled in the following sections of this research presentation.

Child Protective Services Intial Contact Experience

The researcher found that the results of the intial contact experience for 75% of the participants was negative. This was mainly due to cultural competency issues. Many of the participants referred to the social workers as police and this gave an overall sense of being victimized, or afraid. Minorities face many barriers when interacting with agencies that are in a position to have an impact on their families, such as police or CPS. Instinctively, this

would justify the reasons for the emotions of anger, fear, depression, hopelessnes, and helplessness. Schrieber, Fuller, and Paceley (2013) stated that the initial meeting during the first CPS visit had elicited intense negative feelings of fear, anger or shame from parents. Lu et al. (2004) noted the following,

> significant differences were detected when race/ethnicity was analyzed with respect to the case opened, length of stay in the foster care, and length of time for family reunification. African American subjects are consistently observed in each outcome category at higher proportions than all other racial/ethnic groups, both mainstream and minority populations. (Lu et al., 2004. 447)

Negative Experiences

The study found that most of the participants' negative experiences with the agency were related to cultural compentency of the social worker and the entire investigative process. Participants felt that they were being wrongly accused and really did not see why their homes were being investigated. Many participants felt violated and felt as if they had been criminalized. The majority of the negatives they experienced mainly were in regards to the surprise visits to their residents as it related to foster care, or a follow-up to an anonymous call to the agency. This area of negative responses was given by over 90% of the participants.

Generally, most of the emotions felt from this group was a sense of frustration when dealing with the bureaucracy of the system.

The researcher felt that the participants' negative experiences with CPS were related to the theme of issues with cultural competency. It is important to note that most of the participants felt as if the social workers were not trying to help until an understanding in communication was accomplished, this is a critical area when interacting with diverse populations.

In this study, the majority of the participants were African American and all the Hispanic participants had negative experiences. It appears that minority's perceptions are developed by their experiences with the agency. Minorities are overwhelmingly overrepresented in the child welfare system, while 82% of Child Welfare Workers are white and female. In the child welfare system, minority clients often feel that their dignity and worth of the individual are disregarded. These factors justify the reasons why the majority of the participants' perceptions were negative in this study. Power imbalances in roles between the worker-client relationships are another factor to developing negative perceptions about the agency.

Neutral Experience

There were only two participants who had neutral opinions regarding their interactions with the agency. The researcher placed these participants in a neutral category due to the fact they really did not express a like or dislike, or possibly did not grasp the concepts of the context of what was being asked of

them. The researcher did make a diligent effort to ensure that participants understood the questions they were being asked. However some participants did not answer directly but answered by verbalizing the incident that took place.

<u>Positive Experience</u>

The study found that many of the positive experiences were related to receiving services from this agency. Particularly, most of the participants who used to be either ex-foster youth or foster parents showed more of the positive responses. It was found that one perfect reason why there was more of a positive opinion noted for these participants was due to their perception of positive intervention they received from their social workers.

It appears that many minorities are unaware of the many services and resources that this agency can offer outside of child protective custody. There are many programs that need to be utilized by parents to help them with developing a rapport with the agency that would actually increase their awareness and help with raising their children. It would provide insight on what is expected, acceptable and prohibited when raising children. In addition it will make the parent aware of what to do for children who have behavioral issues, so that they can receive these services as well before the child becomes part of the juvenile system. Maiter, Palmer, and Manji (2006) stated,

> Parents appreciated workers who were caring, genuine, empathetic,
> exceptionally helpful, non-judgmental, and accepting. Negative qualities

of workers identified by parents were being judgmental, cold and

uncaring, poor listeners, critical, and insincere. Child protection

interventions can result in greater actual and/or perceived power

imbalances between the client and the worker compared to other social

work interventions. (Maiter, Palmer, & Munji, 2006, p. 167)

Overall Results

The overall results of the participants with neutral/positive/negative

experiences were all similar except for one participant. This participant had the

child removed from the home and was never reunified with the child again. All

participants had positive outcomes due to it being their first or second contact

with the agency. In addition, the majority of the participants in this study used

services that were provided to better learn about the agency as to not have

this form of encounter. The study found that the participants felt it was better to

cooperate and understand the system that has an overwhelming amount of

power to destroy or keep families together. According to Lundy, 2004, this

study also found that this power-imbalance between the social work and the

client is what ultimately creates these feelings of anger, helplessness, and

hopelessness. Lundy (2004), also pointed out the importance of the

worker-client relationship in social work generally and the need to increase

client power within this relationship. She suggested that "reducing the power

imbalance between client and worker be integral to the helping relationship"

(Lundy, 2004, p. 66). Moreau and Frosst (1993) expanded on this earlier,

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noting that the power differential between workers and clients in social work settings can be reduced by "maintaining respect for the client's dignity and autonomy, validating strengths, articulating limits to the professional role, clear contracting, encouraging self-help and the use of groups, and self- disclosure" (Moreau & Frosst, 1993, p. 126).

<div align="center">Implications of Findings for Micro and Macro Practice</div>

Implications of the findings for micro practice would be to implement a program that would allow the community to be informed and empowered by information about all the programs that Child Protective Services can aid in helping reduce caseloads significantly. Prevention is key in any community and providing information, or even mandating that every new parent that gives birth at a hospital be required to engage in a parenting class as a requirement before leaving the hospital or during pregnancy can aid in assisting new parents in knowing where to turn in a crisis, understanding roles within the agency, and in addition possibly networking with someone who would be able to help with navigating the agencies that would be involved in the family's life.

The findings show a power imbalance, communication issues, and cultural/diversity issues as well. Creating a program that can protect children without ostracizing the parents would provide major support for minorities. The key thing is building a trusting relationship with someone within the agency or that has navigated the agency before.

As for macro practice policy makers should actually do the research on minorities and bring awareness to the states they represent to develop policy that will allow all social service agencies to collaborate and develop a plan on how to best engage minorities without ostracizing them to make them feel as if they are being patronized but to inform only. Agencies would also need to develop a mandatory learning process of different diverse populations of all socio-economic backgrounds, as to not stereotype any set of minorities. In addition, for macro change collaboration with local community leaders such as churches, salons, barbershops, and school officials, teachers, foster agencies, probation officers for juveniles would be an excellent way to start a enormous proactive community statewide program that will advocate for change, empowerment, and education for all minorities that may fall through crack.

Summary

Chapter four revealed the data analysis section of the study. The researcher used the data tool from the participant's interviews, to develop a chart of labeling categories and themes that built the theory of the experiences of the participants. The researcher discovered that there were justifying reasons for the participants to feel hopeless, depressed, and helpless through their personal reflections, due to the statistics in regards to the disproportionate ratio of minorities and the power imbalance represented by the agency. These social phenomena's in regards to how they were treated during the process played a significant role as well. Finally this chapter

explores the different ways that this study can contribute to micro and macro

social work practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

TERMINATION AND FOLLOW UP

Introduction

Chapter five discusses how the researcher conducted the termination process of this study. This chapter also describes the method the researcher selected to develop to communicate the research findings to the participants. The researcher explains methods that she used to terminate the study from a post positivist perspective.

Communicating Findings to Study Site and Study Participants

As stated previously, this study was conducted from a Post Positivist perspective. The qualitative evaluation of the Post Positivist perspective states to report findings back to the study participants. The researcher will prepare a presentation that introduced the results that the researcher has found. The researcher will present the findings of the study during a poster day presentation in June of 2016 at California State University, San Bernardino. The study participants were invited to attend this event.

The study findings were also typed into an official typed document. Upon approval, the study will be located in the Scholar Works database at the John M. Pfau library at California State University, San Bernardino as a means for the study participants to view the study.

Termination of Study

Termination for this study involved reporting the research findings to the researcher's advisor in the process and to the Pathways Distance MSW program research site.

Plan for Follow Up

The researcher does not expect to follow up with the study participants or this research study. The researcher will provide a presentation during poster day where participants can receive the findings of the research study. The researcher would like to be able to develop a program that can assist minorities in their quest to feel as if they are not victims in the process of conducting mandated duties. However, there will be a gap of time that will pass, as I will not be focusing on any macro duties while preparing for my licensing exam. This would be something the researcher would love to advocate for in the future. The researcher does not have plans to conduct any more research on this study focus.

Ongoing Relationship with Study Participants

The researcher does not have plans to have an ongoing relationship with the study participants. The researcher does plan to work with the population of children or adults in Mental Health. The researcher recognizes the value in this research assignment and hopes to advocate change for those who are not empowered enough to do so for themselves.

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
SAN BERNARDINO

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
School of Social Work

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to examine the perceptions of minorities who have had interactions with Child Protective Services in Riverside County. The study is being conducted by MSW Student Vernae E. Hicks, School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board ~~Board~~ Social Work Sub-committee, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study is to learn about the interactions that minorities have had with this agency and what their overall perceptions maybe.

DESCRIPTION: Participants will be asked questions regarding their experiences and perceptions with the agency, as well as some demographic questions, the interviews will be audio recorded for research purposes only and will remain in a secured area during the research process.

ANONYMITY: Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential and data will be reported in-group form only.

DURATION: It will take 30 to 40 minutes to complete the survey.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks to the participants.

BENEFITS: There will not be any direct benefits to the participants

CONTACT: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Janet Chang at 909-537-5183.

RESULTS: Please contact Dr. Janet Chang (email: jchang@csusb.edu), for the results of the study after December 2016.

This is to certify that I read the above and I am 18 years or older.

_____   _____

Place an X mark here   Date

909.537.5501, 909.537.7029
5500 UNIVERSITY PARKWAY, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92407-2393

APPENDIX B

DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions are being used to aid in the development of the type of perceptions that minorities may have toward the Child Protective Agency. Descriptive open-ended questions would be used to identify patterns and regularities, along with structural-inclusive-verification questions that may lead to substitution frame questions. Examples of the type of questions I planned to asked are as follows:

Demographics:

> What is your gender?

> What is your age?

> What is your ethnicity?

> How many children do you have?

Structural Questions:

> What was your experience like with Child Protective Services?

> What kind of impact did this agency have on your life?

> What is your view or opinions of Child Protective Services?

Inclusive Question:

> Since your contact with Child Protective Services, how has this agency helped you and your family?

Structural Question:

> How would you describe the experience with the process as a whole?

Verification Questions:

> When I think of having contact with Child Protective Services, I feel_____?

> How would you describe the level of cultural sensitivity of the case worker that you had interactions with?

> Are there any additional support or services you wish to receive from Child Protective Services?

> What were the positives or negatives from your interaction with this agency?

Developed by Vernae Hicks

APPENDIX C

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

This study you have just completed was designed to evaluate the relationship between minorities and Child Protective Services. This study is being done to assess why there is a disparity in the reporting of minorities to the agency and if perceptions of this agency play a part in why minorities may feel a particular way about the agency. In addition to this, cultural sensitivity is being evaluated as well.

The study should aide is bringing forth an effort to realize that the agency can be very helpful in parenting and dealing with issues dealing with behavior and the parent child interaction.

Thank you for your participation and for not discussing the contents of the questions with others. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Vernae E. Hicks or Professor Janet Chang 909 537-5184. If you would like to obtain a copy of the group results of this study, please contact Professor Janet Chang 909 537-5184 after December 2016.

APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN BERNARDINO
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
Institutional Review Board Sub-Committee

Researcher(s) _Vernus Hicks_

Proposal Title _Minorities Perceptions of_
CPS

_SW1556_

Your proposal has been reviewed by the School of Social Work Sub-Committee of the
Institutional Review Board. The decisions and advice of those faculty are given below.

- -

Proposal is:

___X___ approved

_____ to be resubmitted with revisions listed below

_____ to be forwarded to the campus IRB for review

Revisions that must be made before proposal can be approved:

_____ faculty signature missing

_____ missing informed consent _____ debriefing statement

_____ revisions needed in informed consent _____ debriefing

_____ data collection instruments missing

_____ agency approval letter missing

_____ CITI missing

_____ revisions in design needed (specified below)

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

_____ _5/26/15_
Committee Chair Signature   Date

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