CHILD WELFARE IN A MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT: DEFINITIONS, VALUES AND SERVICE ISSUES

By

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

Researchers have generally assumed that families from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds require differential assessment and intervention in the provision of child welfare services. Failure to recognize variations in child-rearing practices, definitions of maltreatment, cultural values and norms, help-seeking behaviours, and environmental contexts can result in inappropriate services to families from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds. The lack of empirically-based studies that provide understanding of the child-rearing practices of specific ethnic and racial groups and of the child welfare system's approaches to these groups further undermines the development of appropriate services. This study explores the parenting practices of 29 South Asian-Canadians and the experience of 14 child welfare professionals in providing services to this cultural group.

Questionnaire responses and focus group discussions reveal that South Asian-Canadian parents and child welfare professionals do not differ significantly in their definition of child maltreatment. However, differences in child-rearing norms and values, difficulties in cross-cultural communication, and the lack of resources for client referral adversely affects the quality of assessment and intervention that child welfare professionals can offer South Asian-Canadian families. The findings and results of this study are also relevant to the experience of families from other diverse ethnic and racial groups, particularly those who are more recent immigrants to Canada.
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Sarah Maiter
January 2001
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RESEARCH PROBLEM</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RESEARCH OBJECTIVE</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2</td>
<td>THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO CROSS-CULTURAL SOCIAL WORK</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FROM ASSIMILATION TO MULTICULTURALISM</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>THE CULTURAL LITERACY APPROACH</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MINORITY / ANTI-RACIST APPROACH</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE APPROACH</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ANTI-OFFENSIVE APPROACH</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A CONTEXTUALLY BASED PERSPECTIVE TO DIVERSITY</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Migration / Acculturation</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecological Context</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Organization</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Life Cycle</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ETHNOCENTRISM IN SOCIAL SCIENCE CONSTRUCTS</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3</td>
<td>EMPRICAL STUDIES OF CROSS-CULTURAL CHILD WELFARE</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DIFFERENTIAL REPORTED RATES OF MALTREATMENT</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DIFFERENTIAL RATES OF SUBSTANTIATION</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DIFFERENTIAL SERVICES</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DIFFERENTIAL DEFINITIONS OF MALTREATMENT AND PREFERRED INTERVENTION</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 4</td>
<td>SOUTH ASIAN-CANADIANS: AN OVERVIEW</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE TERM SOUTH ASIAN</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perception of Sameness</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Similarity of Experience</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Solidarity and Activism</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SUMMARY</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

vi
LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1  MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSES TO DIVERSITY .............................................. 23
TABLE 2  SOME MODELS OF CROSS-CULTURAL PRACTICE .......................................................... 26
TABLE 3  DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUE IN TABLE FORMAT ..................................................... 76
TABLE 4  CASE VIGNETTES AND RESPONSES REQUESTED ......................................................... 80
TABLE 5  DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF PARENT PARTICIPANTS ................................................... 90
TABLE 6  DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF CHILD WELFARE PROFESSIONALS ............................ 92
TABLE 7  INAPPROPRIATE ACTIONS OF PARENTS ...................................................................... 101
TABLE 8  ACCEPTABLE PARENTAL BEHAVIOUR AND APPROPRIATE METHODS OF DISCIPLINE ......................................................................................................................... 101
TABLE 9  PARENT PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED SECTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE - USE OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT .................................................................................................................. 115
TABLE 10 PARENT PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED SECTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE - USE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PUNISHMENT ............................................................................................................. 116
TABLE 11 PARENT PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED SECTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE - INAPPROPRIATE SUPERVISION .................................................................................................................. 116
TABLE 12 COMPARISON OF RESPONSE OF MOTHERS AND FATHERS TO CASE VIGNETTES 119
TABLE 13 HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF MOTHERS AND FATHERS ........................................... 120
TABLE 14 PROFESSIONALS' COMPOSITE OF RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED SECTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE - USE OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ........................................................................................................ 131
TABLE 15 PROFESSIONALS' COMPOSITE OF RESPONSES TO OPEN-ENDED SECTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE - USE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PUNISHMENT ........................................................................................................ 132
TABLE 16 PROFESSIONALS' COMPOSITE OF RESPONSE TO OPEN-ENDED SECTION OF QUESTIONNAIRE - INAPPROPRIATE SUPERVISION ......................................................................................... 132
TABLE 17 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN THE PROVISION OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT CHILD WELFARE SERVICES .......................................................................................................................... 166
LIST OF CHARTS

CHART 1  PARENTAL RESPONSES TO VIGNETTES ........................................ 112
CHART 2  PARENTAL RESPONSE HELP-SEEKING ........................................ 113
CHART 3  PARENTAL RESPONSE HELP-SEEKING ........................................ 114
CHART 4  PROFESSIONALS’ RESPONSE TO VIGNETTES .................................. 128
CHART 5  PROFESSIONALS’ RESPONSE HELP SEEKING .................................. 129
CHART 6  PROFESSIONALS’ RESPONSE HELP SEEKING .................................. 130

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: CONSENTS ............................................................................... 216
APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRES ................................................................. 220
APPENDIX C  EMPIRICAL STUDIES OF RACE, CULTURE, ETHNICITY AND CHILD WELFARE 234
Chapter 1

Introduction

Research Problem

Despite the increasing diversity of North America and other European nations, the field of social work continues to struggle to provide effective services to culturally and racially diverse groups. Sue and Sue (1990) found that 50% of persons of colour terminated counseling after one session as compared to 30% of white persons. The reasons cited for termination were a lack of non-white staff; a Eurocentric approach to service provision; poor responses to the educational and vocational needs of ethnically diverse clients; and an antagonistic response to culture, class, and language. Across Canada, a number of studies have raised doubt about the relevance of traditional social service approaches for diverse racial and ethnic groups. Studies (for examples see, Doyle & Visano, 1987; Sanga, 1987) have shown that linguistic, cultural, and racial barriers, and the absence of strategies to address them have resulted in inequitable and inaccessible services for diverse populations.

The concerns of social work researchers about the lack of relevance of traditional social work approaches for members of diverse ethnic and racial groups have resulted in considerable efforts to make social services culturally sensitive and culturally competent (Tsang & George, 1998; Herberg, 1993; Dominelli, 1998). Recognition that diverse racial and ethnic groups can have different values and norms, that social services have typically approached practice from a Eurocentric perspective,
and that these perspectives do not meet the needs of diverse groups have resulted in the 
development of a number of social work approaches to address diversity in practice. Some approaches recommend understanding the norms, values, and preferred 
behaviours of groups (for example, Hines, Garcia-Preto, McGoldrick, Almeida, & 
Weltman, 1992; McGoldrick, Pearce, & Giordano, 1996), while other approaches 
suggest that social workers need to understand historical issues of colonization and 
racism and ensure that their practice does not perpetuate oppression of groups (for 
example, Dominelli, 1988, 1998).

Concerned that more attention may be focused on the competence level of 
individual social service practitioner than on the organizational barriers to effective 
social service provision, some researchers highlight the need for entire organizations to 
change in order to provide optimal services to diverse racial and ethnic groups (Cross, 
Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989; Tator, 1996). More recently, anti-oppressive 
approaches to social work practice have been developed to emphasize the need for 
more sensitivity and competence in providing services for a greater number of 
oppressed groups and not just those from diverse racial and ethnic groups (Dominelli, 

An area of social work in which culturally competent services are essential is 
child welfare. Because child welfare services are mandated by the state, recipients of 
child welfare services are obliged to accept intervention from service providers. Cross-
cultural misunderstandings within such a context can result in increased conflict 
between parents and the child welfare system, resulting in inappropriate resolution of
cases. Children can remain in limbo if cases are unresolved because of cross-cultural conflicts; families can be unnecessarily disrupted if cultural values are misunderstood; and children can be left in dangerous situations if actions of parents are mistakenly considered to be cultural rather than dysfunctional.

Indeed, the need for effective cross-cultural child welfare service is becoming more important because of the rapidly increasing ethnic and racial diversity of Canada, particularly in its urban centres. The visible minority population of Toronto, reported to be 42% in 1997, is expected to rise to 50% by the year 2001 (Community at Risk, 1997). The Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto – one of the largest agencies in Canada providing child protection services – shows that approximately half the caregivers on their caseload are born outside Canada (CASMT, 1997). Across Canada, the number of persons with at least one parent or grandparent whose background is neither French nor British has increased significantly since the 1970s (Access and Equity Centre, 1991; Samuel, 1992).

Child welfare service trends, however, raise concerns about whether the child welfare system is meeting the needs of diverse populations. Differential representation of children of colour has been identified at all levels of the child welfare system, including abused and neglected children, children in family foster care, and children awaiting adoption (Courtney et al., 1996). Researchers note further that "concerns about the subjectivity of child welfare intervention decisions has arisen as a result of studies that have found that factors such as source of referral, geographic location, family income, and race appear to have more influence on case dispositions than do
severity of harm, nature of maltreatment and family functioning" (Trocmé, Tam, & McPhee, 1995, p.20), thereby raising questions about bias in the child welfare system. For example, Eckenrode, Powers, Doris, Munsch, and Bolger (1988) found that race was associated with the decision to substantiate a case. The Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect found that substantiation rates of reported cases of child maltreatment for all families of colour other than Hispanic surpass the substantiation rate for white families. The substantiation rate for white families was 27% while the substantiation rates for families of colour were as follows: Native Canadian 39%, East Asian 37%, South Asian 28%, Southeast Asian 55%, West Asian / North African 41% and Black 29% (Trocmé, McPhee, Tam, & Hay, 1994). The reasons for differential rates of substantiation are unclear. Differential rates of substantiation can arise from underreporting of cases of child maltreatment for specific groups or from differential responses to these groups from child welfare service providers.

Race has also been found to be an important factor in the decision to report cases of maltreatment (Hampton & Newberger, 1988). Differences in reported rates of maltreatment could arise for a number of reasons, including the social and economic conditions of a group, cultural differences in child-rearing practices, and / or labeling and definitional differences by the dominant culture. Finally, the minority status of the perpetrator has also been found to increase the chance of court involvement and application of child welfare orders (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1992).

The child welfare trends suggest the need to address culture in child welfare
services. As cultural differences influence individual and group behaviour, culture as a variable must be included in assessment and service provision (Abney, 1996; Cohen, 1992; Derezotes & Snowden, 1990; Maitra, 1996; McPhatter, 1997; Meleis, 1996). Because of its influence on the individual, cultural identification influences problem definition, identification, and resolution (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992). Given the recognition of the influence of culture, race, and ethnicity for individuals and groups, different sectors of social work have begun to respond to the call by incorporating culture in legislation, policy, and practice. The child welfare system in Ontario formally recognizes culture as a pertinent variable by incorporating it in the principles of the Child and Family Services Act (CFSA), the legislation that mandates child protection intervention. Section 1e states that the purposes of the act are:

... to recognize that, wherever possible, services to children and families should be provided in a manner that respects cultural, religious, and regional differences. (Sec. 1e).

also

To recognize that Indian and native people should be entitled to provide, wherever possible, their own child and family services, and that all services to Indian and native children and families should be provided in a manner that recognizes their culture heritage and traditions and the concept of the extended family (sec. 1f).

Because of the increasing awareness that child-rearing practices and help-seeking behaviours differ across cultures (Hong & Hong, 1991; Korbin, 1981, 1991;
Shor, 1998, 1999), a small number of studies (Hong & Hong, 1991; Shor, 1998, 1999) have been conducted to show differences between the parenting practices and help-seeking behaviours of diverse ethnic and racial groups. Although these studies have begun to raise questions about differences in definitions of child maltreatment among diverse groups, they have failed to provide broader understanding of additional factors that may be of relevance in cross-cultural child welfare service provision. The theoretical approaches recommended for culturally competent social work services to diverse groups also fail to provide understanding of contextual considerations for diverse groups. Many minority cultural and racial groups, especially those who are relatively recent immigrant groups, find they are now living their culture in a context that is different to the one of their home country, that their familiar approaches are not always functional in the new country, and that unique environmental factors pose challenges in the new country. Thus, effective cross-cultural services may need to focus not only on understanding the cultural practices of diverse ethnic and racial groups, or the structural barriers they confront, but also on the context in which a diverse culture is lived. Additionally, none of the social work approaches to address cultural / racial diversity in practice have emerged from research-based evidence of the parameters needed for culturally competent services, nor have they been tested for their effectiveness (Tsang & George, 1998).

**Research Objective**

The purpose of the current study is to gain an understanding of the cultural context that
minority racial / ethnic groups encounter when raising their children and whether such cultural and contextual variations are understood and responded to by child welfare social workers. A secondary aim of the study is to draw implications for child welfare service provision. In order to understand the cultural context of parenting, this study explores approaches to parenting of one diverse ethnic group – South Asian-Canadian (defined in Chapter 4).

South Asian-Canadians have been chosen for the study for a number of reasons. The South Asian culture has been identified as being different to mainstream culture (Almeida, 1996; Hines, Garcia-Preto, McGoldrick, Almeida & Weltman, 1992); the visible minority status of South Asian-Canadians exposes them to racism and bias; and problems have been noted in providing appropriate social services to South Asian-Canadian clients (Henry, Tator, Mattis, & Rees, 1995). Additionally, the South Asian population in Canada is rapidly increasing. The 1996 national census estimates that nearly 600,000 people of South Asian descent reside in Canada, representing over 2% of the national population. Most of the South Asians are concentrated in the provinces of Ontario, with nearly 400,000 people of South Asian descent, and British Columbia with almost 160,000 (Statistics Canada, 1996). These numbers will rise considerably by the next national census in 2001 as a result of the steady flow of immigration. My clinical experience also shows that the child welfare system has struggled to provide culturally appropriate services to South Asians while ethno-specific agencies providing services to South Asian-Canadian families have raised concerns that their clients experience excessive problems with the child welfare system.
A two-part mixed-method exploratory study was conducted utilizing questionnaires and focus group interviews with South Asian mothers, South Asian fathers, and child welfare social workers. The questionnaire helped to direct the attention of the participants to the issues that were to be discussed in the focus groups while also serving to triangulate the data gathered from the focus groups. The focus group interviews provided understanding of how South Asian Canadians as a group approach parenting and the contextual issues they confront in raising their children. The questionnaire was developed to gather demographic information from participants, responses about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of certain parenting behaviours described in short vignettes, questions about help-seeking options, and open-ended questions that asked participants to elaborate their reasons for their vignette ratings. Subsequent to administering the questionnaire, five focus group discussions were held with South Asian-Canadian parents (mothers and fathers separately) and two with child welfare workers. The data collected from the parents and the social workers and an examination of the convergence and divergence in the views of the two groups provide understanding of the essential elements necessary for cross-cultural child welfare services.

The strengths and weaknesses of various theoretical approaches to cultural diversity are examined for this study. The earlier cultural literacy approach to diversity, whereby practitioners are urged to understand the cultural practices of a group, has been replaced by the minority, organizational change, and anti-oppressive approaches. These approaches, however, like the cultural literacy approach, do not capture the full
reality of diverse ethnic and racial groups. Falicov's (1995) contextually-based approach to diversity provides a lens for this study as it approaches diversity from a multidimensional perspective that recognizes both the importance of culture and the influence of context when providing services to diverse groups.

Chapter 2 examines the historical and conceptual changes that have taken place in social work approaches to racial and cultural diversity and social work constructs that can contribute to Eurocentric practice in child welfare. Both these bodies of literature provide a framework for the current study. The empirical literature with respect to child welfare and racial and cultural diversity is examined in Chapter 3. The empirical studies provide further insight into the experiences of diverse ethnic and racial populations in the child welfare system, while also identifying the need for the current study. Chapter 4 defines the term South Asian-Canadian, provides a rationale for examining child welfare services for South Asian-Canadians, and examines the social construction of the group as South Asian. Chapter 5 explains the research questions of the study and the research method employed for the study. The results of the study follow in Chapters 6, 7, and 8. Chapter 6 is comprised of findings regarding definitions of child maltreatment from the focus group discussions as well as the questionnaires, while Chapter 7 reports findings from focus group discussions with parent participants and child welfare professionals as they relate to other issues of practice with diverse groups. The discussion of findings and implications for practice, the limitations of the study, and directions for future research are discussed in Chapter 8.
Chapter 2

Theoretical Approaches to Cross-Cultural Social Work

The ideas for this research began when I first started work in the child welfare system in 1972. I noticed that during case meetings and case discussions, families from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds were presented as experiencing problems due to their ethnicity. Racism often emerged in practice in the form of cultural denigration, stereotyping, and a lack of understanding of difference. Cultural differences were seen from a deficit perspective, and groups were judged from a middle-class European standpoint. Thus, it was common to hear statements such as "well that group (name of group being discussed)\(^1\) has a potential for violence, so we need to be extra careful"; or "in their culture, they demand obedience from children, therefore, they do not treat children as individuals with rights". The lack of consciousness on the part of professionals regarding the implications of such commonly held beliefs and judgments indicated the need to address cultural and racial diversity in child welfare services.

Since I first started work, considerable attention has been paid to diversity; still, this an emerging field where much more work is required as even in current child welfare training social workers are cautioned that diverse racial and ethnic groups may use excessive force when disciplining children (Crawford, 1998). This approach can contribute to stereotyping of particular groups by child welfare practitioners.

\(^1\) I have omitted mentioning the ethnic background of groups discussed in this derogatory manner in order to avoid perpetuating the negative stereotypes prevalent in society.
Contextual issues that diverse groups confront become matters of secondary consideration, while culture becomes the variable for intervention. Cultural diversity is viewed from an outsider perspective and is seen as problematic. The lack of research-based understanding of the context that members of diverse groups encounter in parenting their children and the dearth of studies that provide understanding directly from members of diverse groups themselves compels me to look at the experiences of diverse groups from their perspective. Within such a framework diversity can be approached as "normal" rather than as the problem.

The following literature review is divided into three sections. The first section examines the historical and conceptual approaches to ethnic and racial diversity taken by the social work profession generally as well as by child welfare researchers. The current study adopts a contextually-based approach that provides greater opportunity to examine diversity, while avoiding stereotyping and sweeping generalizations. The second section examines the prevalence of ethnocentrism in social service constructs and provides an example of how the application of constructs developed for a white middle-class population can result in assessments of diverse families as dysfunctional. For the current study, every effort has been made to avoid this pitfall. The empirical literature with regard to race, ethnicity, and child welfare services are discussed in chapter 3. These studies reveal differential findings relating to reported rates of maltreatment, rates of substantiation, services, definitions of maltreatment, and preferred intervention. Some researchers note that differences in definitions of maltreatment by diverse ethnic and racial groups can result in inappropriate
intervention by the child welfare system (Korbin, 1991). Other researchers (Hong & Hong, 1995, Rose & Meezan 1996), however, identify mixed results regarding the extent of diversity in definitions of child maltreatment by ethnic group. One of the aims of the current study, therefore, is to advance knowledge regarding differential definitions of child maltreatment by diverse ethnic and racial groups. Furthermore, the study will identify parameters essential for competent child welfare practice in a multicultural context.

**From Assimilation to Multiculturalism**

In the quarter century after the end of World War II, theoretical approaches to cross-cultural social work reflected the prevailing perception that Canada (outside of Quebec) was predominantly a homogeneous White Anglo Saxon Protestant society that tolerated a slowly growing population of cultural minorities. By 1941 the Canadian population was about 50% British, 30% French (confined mostly to Quebec) and 20% "other," most of whom were European (Palmer, 1975, pp. 206-07). Indeed, people of non-European and non-Native origin comprised scarcely 1% of the national population. The changing face of Canadian society was starting to become more evident by 1971 as the population was 45% British, 29% French, and 26% "other." Nevertheless, cultural and racial diversity was still limited as people of non-European and non-Native origin represented only 2.3% of the population (Palmer, 1975, p. 207). Within this cultural context, the assimilation perspective flourished throughout both society and the social work profession.
The assimilation perspective assumes that newcomers to a country would conform to and integrate into the way of life of the dominant population of the country. Members of diverse groups are expected to relinquish their ways and to adopt the customs and lifestyles of their new country. Wright, Saleeby, Watts and Lecca assert that "the least desirable ideal or value is the assimilative" (1983, p.4) and that a persistent goal of the dominant culture has been assimilation, which essentially demands that "foreign" cultures take on the values, morals, and lifestyles of the majority culture. Problems experienced by members of the group are often attributed to a failure to acculturate to the new country (Herberg, 1993). A variation on the assimilation perspective is the cultural deficit approach which assumes that certain cultures do not have the capacity to adjust to their new environment. Social workers have to help newcomers adjust and, in cases of those who have committed criminal offences or social indiscretions, to provide training and control to help newcomers achieve conformity (Abney, 1996; Cohen, 1992). The underlying assumption of the assimilation perspective is as follows:

... ethnic and racial minorities in North America are inferior, and therefore more pathological than their White counterparts, that ethnic and racial minorities occupy lower positions in the evolutionary scale and hence are genetically inferior to Whites, and that minority cultures are deficient in important values compared to the White culture and therefore ethnoracial minorities are culturally deprived (Tsang & George 1998, p.75).

The dominance of the ideology of assimilation even extends to the treatment of
First Nations children and families (Payne, 1997). The indigenous population is expected to emulate the culture and ways of the dominant group which are seen as normative. First Nations children are removed from their families, are placed in residential schools, are forbidden to speak their birth languages, are banned from participating in their cultural rituals and are taught western ways (Horejsi, Craig & Pablo, 1992; Palmer & Cooke, 1996). Clearly, cultural hegemony is determined in accordance with the power of the numerically dominant cultural group rather than by original settlement. Sue, Arrendondo, and McDavis (1992) identify the consequence of assimilation and the concomitant social work theory and practice that emerges from it:

... the underlying data and research base regarding racial and ethnic minorities have (a) perpetuated a view that minorities are inherently pathological, (b) perpetuated racist research and counseling practices, and (c) provided an excuse for counseling professionals not to take social action to rectify inequities in the system. (p. 75).

By the late 1960s, the profoundly negative effects of assimilation were becoming more recognized in the wake of (1) renewed pride in culture and heritage expressed most vigorously through the rising French-Canadian nationalism in Quebec and (2) the increasing diversity of Canada accompanied by demands by members of diverse racial and ethnic groups for the right to practice their culture.

Initially, the federal government introduced the concept of multiculturalism as a response to the diversity of the recent immigrants to Canada. In 1971 Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau spoke to Parliament about the contribution by other ethnic groups to
the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution:

For although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other. No citizen or group of citizens is other than Canadian, and all should be treated fairly....

A policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework commends itself to the government as the most suitable means of assuring cultural freedom in Canada ... (quoted in Palmer, 1975, pp. 135-36).

Henceforth, the concept of multiculturalism became a cornerstone of the institution of social work and sub-institutions of child welfare and child protection in Canada, with similar trends occurring in many Western nations. According to Henry et al., (1995),

Multiculturalism has different meanings. It is a description of the composition of Canada both historically and currently, referring to the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society. It is an ideology that holds that racial, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity is an integral, beneficial, and necessary part of Canadian society and identity. It is a policy operating in various social institutions and levels of government, including the federal government (p. 328).

In the spirit of multiculturalism, the acceptance and valuing of diverse cultures are now the standard response in the social services to the variety of racial and cultural groups. Within the multicultural perspective, the social work profession has developed
our major approaches for practice with diverse groups: cultural literacy approach (for example, Hines, Garcia-Preto, McGoldrick, Almeida, & Weltman, 1992; McGoldrick, Pearce, & Giordano, 1996), minority / anti-racist approach (for example, Abney, 1996; Devore & Schlesinger 1999, Dominelli, 1988; Gould, 1991), organizational change approach (for example, Cross et al., 1989; Tator, 1996), and anti-oppressive approach (for example, Dominelli, 1998a, 1998b; Thompson, 1993; Van Voorhis, 1998).

Although much effort has gone into conceptualizing cross-cultural social work practice, a major weakness of these practice approaches is that they tend to be based on personal experience and opinion, with little connection to established theoretical systems (Tsang & George, 1998). In addition, none of the approaches have been tested for their effectiveness (Ponterotto & Casas, 1991).

**The Cultural Literacy Approach**

Despite the rise of multiculturalism in the 1970s, the assimilation approach remained prevalent until the emergence of the cultural literacy approach in the early 1980s. Unlike the assimilation approach, which was concerned with diversity as a problem to be overcome, the cultural literacy approach recognizes diversity as a normative feature of modern society and which has to be accommodated to reflect the belief that it is necessary to understand different cultures in order to provide effective social services. The cultural literacy perspective suggests that social workers need to understand the norms, values, and practices of an ethnic group to provide social services to clients within the framework of their culture (Hines, Garcia-Preto, McGoldrick, Almeida, &
Practitioners compile profiles of ethnic groups in order to understand and respect their values and customs when providing services. Some social work researchers have focused on the culture of specific groups in their countries of origin (for example, Almeida, 1996), while others have focused on specific groups in their new country (Furoto, Biswas, Chung, Murase, & Ross-Sheriff, 1992).

**Minority / Anti-Racist Approach**

While the cultural literacy approach recognizes the pervasive influence of culture on human behaviour, its tendency to view culture in static terms leads to an underestimation of the effects of the surrounding environment on minority populations. By contrast, the minority / anti-racist approach asserts that, when providing services to diverse ethnic groups, it is important to consider their negative experiences in society in general and with the social service system in particular (Brown, 1990; Burgest, 1982; Chau, 1990; Devore & Schlesinger 1999; Green, 1999; Herberg, 1993; Ho, 1992; Jenkins, 1981; Pinderhughes, 1998; Proctor & Davis, 1994).

Devore and Schlesinger (1999) suggest that the need to relate traditional social work practice to ethnic content rests on two basic propositions: ethnicity and social class shape life's problems and influence problem resolution, and problem-solving social work must focus on micro and macro problems. Green (1999) distinguishes between "categorical" ethnicity – the overt cultural differences of individuals and groups – and "transactional" ethnicity – the ways in which people communicate to maintain their sense of cultural distinctiveness. Workers need to understand both types of ethnicity to
become effective in cross-cultural practice. Suggesting that social work has been insensitive to cultural differences and that clients are entitled to competent social services, Green designed his model to apply to cross-cultural encounters in order to gain ethnographic information about clients and to be useful in a variety of social service situations. In working with minority populations, he stresses the importance of both environmental factors that affect minority groups and culturally specific information about specific groups. His book contains chapters on African American, Latino American, Asian and Pacific American, and Native American.

Emphasizing the extent to which racism and poverty dominate the experiences of many families of colour, Ho (1992) identifies differences in dominant cultural values and minority cultural values that relate to family structure and extended family ties. He suggests that culturally relevant techniques and skills are needed for cross-cultural situations. Attaching more significance to power differentials and their dynamics, Pinderhughes (1988, 1989) identifies five competencies as essential for effective cross-cultural practice: to be comfortable with difference; to control and change false beliefs, assumptions, and stereotypes; to respect and appreciate the values, beliefs, and practices of persons who are culturally different; to think flexibly by recognizing that one's own way of thinking and behaving is not the only way; and to behave flexibly by learning about the specific ways in which knowledge applies or does not apply. These competencies focus on the interpersonal effects and consequences for behaviour arising from cultural and power differentials. Gibb and Huang (1989) consider the influence of ethnicity and race in the formation of minority youth identity from developmental,
ecological, and cross-cultural perspectives. The developmental perspective takes into account the influence of race and ethnicity on psychosocial tasks. The ecological perspective draws attention to a series of interlocking systems that pose risks to and opportunities for children of colour. The cross-cultural perspective examines attitudes, belief systems, differential expression of symptoms, coping strategies, and help-seeking behaviours.

Dominelli (1988) notes that racism includes three interacting elements: individual racism, or negative attitudes and behaviour toward groups; institutional racism, or routines that ration resources and power by excluding certain racial groups; and cultural racism, or beliefs and ideas that endorse white cultural superiority. She suggests that all of these elements of racism are both consciously and unconsciously prevalent in social work ideology and practice. According to Dominelli (1988) workers should explore their own racism and power differentials in situations; they should work with Black\(^2\) clients in ways that accept the families' social values and expectations of appropriate family behaviour; and they should focus on changing the racism of their own and other agencies.

Child welfare research primarily takes a minority perspective to racial and cultural diversity (for examples see Abney, 1996; Cohen, 1992; McPhatter, 1997; Gould, 1985; 1991; Chipungu, 1991). As with social work generally, child welfare practitioners have raised concerns about individual and institutional biases that "slant towards the worldview, well-being and desires of the majority culture" (Abney, 1996, 2

\(^2\) In many British texts such as Dominelli's the term "Black" has been adopted for all persons of colour.
Abney suggests that practitioners need to have appropriate value and knowledge bases and to use culturally sensitive methods. She contends that professionals must value the notion of empowerment because discrimination, decreased employment and educational opportunities, racial and ethnic stereotyping, and poverty, all make it difficult for individuals to feel empowered. Cultural competency also requires developing certain types of knowledge, such as the history of the racism a group has experienced, adaptations made by the group to this racism, culture-specific knowledge, and responses to settlement issues. She further recommends improving methods used in professional practice, research, and professional training.

McPhatter (1997) suggests that practitioners must not only reject the assumption that their culture, values, and beliefs are superior and accept the world views of others but also develop knowledge of other cultural perspectives on family life, community functioning, historical experiences, current experiences, and cultural strengths. She conceptualizes cultural competence in child protection as consisting of three interconnected circles: "an enlightened consciousness, a grounded knowledge base, and cumulative skill proficiency" (McPhatter, 1997, p.261). For McPhatter, "cultural competence denotes the ability to transform knowledge and cultural awareness into health and / or psychosocial interventions that support and sustain healthy client-system functioning within the appropriate cultural context" (p. 261).

While both Abney (1996) and McPhatter (1997) acknowledge that racism in society and bias in the child welfare system need to be included in a perspective on services to minorities, Gould (1991) makes a stronger call for recognizing how racism
in society is manifested in social work. She suggests a two-fold approach to services for minorities: a general minority perspective, and a perspective from the particular ethnic/racial group in question. For example, workers would approach services to African-American families from both a minority perspective and an Afrocentric perspective. Gould argues that social work knowledge is developed largely to meet the needs of the dominant population; minority groups are expected to fit into these dominant perspectives. In contrast, a minority perspective critiques society from the viewpoint of the underprivileged. It can apply to any minority in society. A specific group's perspective provides relevant information about that group. According to Gould, including a minority perspectives effects a "politicization of the dialogue" (1991, p. 65), a result which will not occur if only a specific group's perspective is considered.

**Organizational Change Approach**

Although the cultural literacy and minority/anti-racist social work approaches address inequitable social services received by individuals and families from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, researchers raise concerns that the approaches focus on the interpersonal relationship between the social worker and the client, while failing sufficiently to address institutional barriers to services. As a result, researchers have developed approaches that focus on changes required in social service organizations which identify not only barriers to services due to interpersonal relationships between the worker and the client but also on institutional factors that pose barriers for services
to minority individuals and families (Cross et al., 1989; Tator, 1996). Cross and his colleagues identify five essential elements that must be present in the institution, the agency, and the professional and that must function at all levels of the system. Levels are defined as the attitudes of those within the system, the policies of the institution, and the practice of the system. The essential elements for cross-cultural practice are valuing diversity, the capacity for cultural self-assessment, consciousness of the dynamics inherent when diverse cultures interact, institutionalized cultural knowledge, and the development of adaptations to diversity.

Tator (1996) notes that "despite evidence of barriers, human service organizations have been slow to change" (p. 153). Doyle and Visano (1987) echo this sentiment. They find that mainstream agencies across the human service delivery system have failed to provide accessible and equitable services in Metropolitan Toronto. Linguistic, cultural, and racial barriers, in addition to a lack of strategies to address them, are identified as problems. Other researchers have found similar barriers to accessing services (Bambrough, Bowden, & Wien, 1992; Chan, 1987; Sanga, 1987). After analyzing the literature, Tator identifies four organizational responses to racial and cultural diversity and the assumptions and practices of these responses (see Table 1).
Table 1 Model of Organizational Responses to Diversity their key Assumptions and Practices (Tator, 1996).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Monocultural / Assimilationist</strong></th>
<th><strong>Add-on Multicultural</strong></th>
<th><strong>Multicultural / Anti-racist</strong></th>
<th><strong>Ethno-Cultural Community-Based</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equality is achieved by treating everybody the same.</td>
<td>Hiring ethnic workers can help to meet the needs of minorities.</td>
<td>Change is needed at every level of the agency.</td>
<td>Cultural and racial diversity are defining characteristics of Canadian society. Equitable services must commit to maintaining diversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal is to adapt to mainstream norms.</td>
<td>Most communication is in English with some translation available depending on resources.</td>
<td>Racism is a social phenomenon and is reflected in institutional policies.</td>
<td>Barriers to equitable access to mainstream services are language, race, culture, gender, class, limited access to information about services, bureaucracy and administration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A group’s history is unimportant.</td>
<td>Racial implications of communication are ignored.</td>
<td>Advocacy, acting at various levels to promote equity, is an important aspect of the fight against racism.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A homogeneous staff is competent to provide services to everyone.</td>
<td>Cultural awareness training is considered necessary but no need is seen for a change in practice.</td>
<td>Staff must re-evaluate their values and practices to find out how they are inappropriate or ineffective.</td>
<td>Ethno-cultural community-based agencies provide critically needed services such as settlement and integration programs, culturally appropriate family counseling, advocacy and mediation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racism is rarely found in organizations.</td>
<td>Minorities are included on boards and committees but no changes in the operation of the organization.</td>
<td>The unequal power relationship between the client and the practitioner must be recognized and efforts must be made to empower the client.</td>
<td>Funding needs to be allocated more equitably to reflect the contribution ethno-specific agencies make in service delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values of the dominant culture are found in all aspects of the organization, including policies, programs, language, employment practice and delivery of service.</td>
<td>Racism is seen as an issue for the practitioner-client relationship only. No need for organizational change is seen.</td>
<td>Racial and cultural communities, other communities, ethno-specific agencies, clergy and extended family must all be seen as resources.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</table>
Although Tator (1996) classifies the types of agencies that exist, she also sees these classifications as models that agencies can use to achieve cultural and racial equity. The differences between the multicultural/anti-racist agency and the ethnocultural community-based agency is important to note. The former is a mainstream agency that operates from a multicultural/anti-racist perspective, while the latter is an agency specifically set up to serve a particular ethnic group.

**Anti-Oppressive Approach**

Some researchers have shifted from privileging race, culture, and ethnicity as markers of oppression suggesting that a framework needs to be developed for all forms of oppression. Stainton and Swift (1996) suggest that "difference," which they define as the exercise of power (often invisible) by a dominant group, should be viewed as a value-driven and socially constructed phenomenon. By encompassing race, culture, ethnicity, ability, gender, class and sexuality, this conception of difference provides a framework to understand oppression which results from intersecting diversities. Dei (1996), however, contends that this analytical approach does not take into account the central role of race in the process of oppression.

Van Voorhis (1998) notes that her framework for teaching the dynamics of oppression can be applied to various oppressed groups. She believes that a knowledge base about oppression should underpin services to oppressed populations. This knowledge base includes scholarship about oppression and alienation, identity formation, and coping responses. She suggests that "students learn interventions that
aid clients to free themselves from internalized stereotypes and value their blackness, femaleness, blindness, gayness, Jewishness, gray hairs, or well worn clothing" (p.127). Conflating all these oppressions together, however, can trivialize the particular experiences of each group. As well, much emphasis is placed on the client making changes, while the lack of appropriate services and structural barriers to services are less central.
Table 2 Some Models of Cross-Cultural Practice
their components and relevant theoretical approaches.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Approaches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pinderhughes (1986)</td>
<td>Understanding race, ethnicity and power: The key to efficacy in clinical practice</td>
<td>• Ability to be comfortable with difference &lt;br&gt; • Ability to control and change false beliefs, assumptions and stereotypes &lt;br&gt; • Ability to respect and appreciate values, beliefs and practices of persons who are culturally different &lt;br&gt; • Ability to think flexibly &lt;br&gt; • Ability to behave flexibly by making special efforts to learn about the specific way in which knowledge applies or does not</td>
<td>Cross-cultural &lt;br&gt; Interpersonal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devore &amp; Schlesinger (1999)</td>
<td>Social work with minorities (3rd ed.)</td>
<td>• Individual and collective history has a bearing on problem generation and solution &lt;br&gt; • the present is most important &lt;br&gt; • non conscious phenomena affect individual functioning &lt;br&gt; • ethnicity is a source of cohesion, identity and strength as well as a source of strain, discordance and strife &lt;br&gt; • attention must be paid to individual concerns and to the effects of racism, poverty and discrimination on the individual and the group</td>
<td>Cross-cultural &lt;br&gt; Sociopolitical &lt;br&gt; Ecological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abney (1996)</td>
<td>Cultural competency in the field of child maltreatment</td>
<td>• an appropriate value base &lt;br&gt; • a knowledge base &lt;br&gt; • the use of appropriate methods</td>
<td>Cross-cultural &lt;br&gt; Sociopolitical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McPhatter (1997)</td>
<td>Cultural competence in child welfare: What is it? How do we achieve it? What happens without it?</td>
<td>• the need to obtain a grounded knowledge base &lt;br&gt; • an enlightened consciousness &lt;br&gt; • development of cumulative skill proficiency</td>
<td>cross-cultural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cross, Bazron, Dennis, &amp; Isaacs (1989)</td>
<td>Towards a culturally competent system of care: A Monograph on effective service for minority children who are emotionally disturbed</td>
<td>• value diversity &lt;br&gt; • capacity for cultural self-assessment &lt;br&gt; • conscious of dynamics inherent when cultures interact &lt;br&gt; • institutionalized cultural knowledge &lt;br&gt; • develop adaptations to diversity</td>
<td>cross-cultural &lt;br&gt; Institutional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Contextually Based Perspective to Diversity

In highlighting the profile and specific needs of minority groups, social work research over the past three decades has encouraged practitioners to respect diversity in general; to recognize the extent to which culture can influence problem definition, identification, assessment, and resolution; to understand that families from diverse cultures function differently; to appreciate that retention of cultural identity is not problematic; and to consider the prevalence of power differentials in society and social service agencies. To a large extent, the research emphasizes the need to become literate in the cultures of clients in order to provide effective services.

Cultural literacy was instrumental in alerting social workers to the colour- and culture-blind nature of social work theories and practice, highlighting their Eurocentric and ethnocentric bias, while questioning the applicability and relevance of traditional social work approaches for culturally / racially diverse clients. More recently, however, the cultural literacy approach has been criticized for the "logistical" problem "with respect to exploding national diversity," "the potential for overgeneralization," and the emphasis on "the abstract over the experiential and phenomenological" (Dyche & Zayas, 1995, pp. 390-91). Likewise, Falicov (1995) points to "the tendency to oversystematize and stereotype the notion of shared meanings by assuming that ethnocultural groups are more homogeneous and stable than they actually are" (p. 375). She further notes that although a broad understanding of the specific values and customs of the client's culture is useful, attempts to gain culturally-specific understanding of groups can result in a number of critical errors in service assessment and provision:
Ethnic values and identity are strongly modified by a host of within-group variables: education, social class, religion, stage of acculturation, and so forth. Furthermore, many ethnic traits are in flux, stimulated by cultural evolution and by exposure to or imposition of the dominant culture. Another limitation is the assumption that the observer, the person making the social description, is completely objective and has no effect on the conclusions about the group being observed (Falicov, 1995, p.375).

Indeed, the hidden and not so hidden power of the dominant culture results in a pervasive, unacknowledged positive evaluation of itself, while diverse cultures are evaluated negatively. Van Dijk (1993) notes: "since Greek and Roman antiquity, and especially since the Renaissance up until today, European Scholars have been engaged in the study of other, non-European peoples" (p.158). Not only have European scholars engaged in the study of non-European groups but also they have "judged them and tried to change them" (Swift, 1995, 126). Problematic behaviours of members of the dominant group are viewed as dysfunctional behaviour, while such behaviours of members of diverse groups are seen as "cultural," resulting in the group being essentialized and culturalized (Maiter, Trocmé, & Shakir, 1999).

In studying and representing "other" groups, two major errors occur. First, generalizations are made about groups which are then portrayed as homogeneous; and second, Western constructs are used in analyses of groups, inevitably resulting in comparisons to a normative European center that is depicted as progressive. Mohanty (1994) has captured this proclivity among writers, even progressive liberal writers, on
such issues. As one example, she notes the writing of Maria Rosa Cutrufelli, who writes in her book, *Women of Africa: Roots of Oppression* (1983): "My analysis will start by stating that all African women are politically and economically dependent" and "Nevertheless, either overtly or covertly, prostitution is still the main if not the only source of work for African women" (cited in Mohanty, 1994, p. 202). Women of Africa are constituted as one homogeneous group and are characterized by common dependencies or powerlessness. The problem here is not the use of the term "Women of Africa" as a descriptive category for women from the continent of Africa but to the homogeneous sociological categorizing of the group (as powerless and dependent.

Mohanty further suggests:

... legal, economic, religious and familial structures are treated as phenomena to be judged by western standards. It is here that ethnocentric universality comes into play (p. 214).

For example, social science theorists often apply implicit western feminist analysis of "oppressed women" to third world women:

Third world women as a group or category are automatically and necessarily defined as: religious (read "not progressive"), family oriented (read "traditional") legal minors (read "they-are-still-not-conscious-of-their-rights"), illiterate (read "ignorant") domestic (read "backward") and sometimes revolutionary (read "their-country-is-in-a-state-of-war; they-must-fight")


Such comparison also serve to define the west as developed and progressive. Although
an element of homogenizing and even essentializing may be necessary in order to draw some overall conclusions, they do not have to be disempowering or hegemonic.

Additionally, when examining diverse cultures, it becomes all too easy to forget that the observer, in this case the social service practitioner, also has a culture that processes information. On the one hand, all social workers share a culture. The institutions in which they work, the theories that they learn, the laws that govern their work all come from the so-called "dominant culture." On the other hand, the information processed is also judged from the perspective of one's own cultural lens. Herberg (1993) explains the pervasive influence of culture and its role in assessing the practices of members of another culture:

One of the most important facets of the concept, culture, refers to the patterned nature of behaviour, beliefs, values, customs and institutions. Pattern, it should be pointed out, cannot be seen directly; there is an abstracting process that must be done before the pattern appears ... [and] the product of abstracting may be an observation, consciously or unconsciously done, that certain behaviours are different from one's own. Further, these differences will be negatively or positively evaluated (p.3). Therefore, social workers may not be able to understand the intricacies of another culture; culturally specific knowledge can easily be misapplied in service; and, most importantly, the focus on culture can prevent workers from assessing essential contextual issues that affect the lives of clients. Factors such as racism, structural inequities, and power differentials in both society and social services become all too
easily hidden and ignored.

In response to the concern that the cultural literacy approach does not address the structural inequities in both society and social services, researchers developed minority / anti-racist, organizational change, and anti-oppressive perspectives. By focusing on the barriers within social service organizations to providing equitable services and on the structural factors that contribute to minority groups requiring social services, these perspectives have broadened social work approaches to diversity. Like the cultural literacy approach, they have contributed much to our understanding of issues needing attention when providing services to diverse racial and ethnic groups. These approaches, however, place insufficient importance on the norms and values of diverse groups and the context within which these norms and values are being lived. Despite the diversity that exists within cultures regarding values, norms, preferred behaviour, and family relationships, such groups continue to have a common sense of identity, belonging, and approaches to life which differs from the mainstream and which must be considered when providing services to the group. Failure to understand inter-cultural and contextual diversities can be as much a barrier to the provision of appropriate services as failure to understand structural barriers to services.

Social work must, therefore, move beyond the generalized perception of culture to consider the context of culture. In her article, "Training to Think Culturally: A Multidimensional Comparative Framework" (1995), Celia Jaes Falicov offers an analytical perspective designed to assist family therapists in assessing the needs of and providing appropriate services to culturally diverse populations. She advocates a
multidimensional approach which recognizes the potential complexity of the cultural background or circumstances of both the family and the service provider and which encourages a more inquisitive and open-minded strategy rather than relying on pre-conceived or stereotypical ethnic-focused information. Her multidimensional position "goes beyond the one-dimensional definition of culture as ethnicity and aims at a more comprehensive definition of culture that encompasses other contextual variables" (p. 375). Falicov includes in her multidimensional definition of culture:

... those sets of shared world views, meanings and adaptive behaviors derived from simultaneous membership and participation in a multiplicity of contexts, such as rural, urban or suburban setting; language, age, gender cohort, family configuration, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, socioeconomic status, employment, education, occupation, sexual orientation, political ideology; migration and stage of acculturation (p. 375).

In further applying this perspective to "Mexican Families," Falicov (1996) outlines four parameters -- migration / acculturation, ecological context, family organization, and family life cycle -- which "become roadmaps to facilitate travel in the clients' culturally patterned interactions" (Falicov, 1995, p.378):

**Migration / Acculturation:**

According to Falicov, contextual factors arising from migration and acculturation of individuals and families form an important part of social work assessment when working with people from diverse backgrounds. The migration / acculturation
parameter acknowledges diversity in where the family members came from, when, how and why they came, how they live, and what are their future aspirations. Migration results in the disruption of both internal and external meaning systems. Internal meaning systems include separations and reunions, trauma and crisis, grief and mourning, disorienting anxieties, and cultural identity. External meaning systems include language, social networks, institutions, and values.

In moving to a new country, immigrants leave behind familiar social support networks which Williams (1998) calls "plausibility structures." According to Williams these structures "provide a foundation for knowledge, customs, morals, leadership styles and commitments, supporting civic order and personal health" (p. 186). In the process of migration, individuals and families suffer from a loss of meaning systems which are embedded in one's culture and which influence relationships with others (Falicov, 1996). Being uprooted from meaning systems can result in psychological distress, including culture shock; a sense of marginalization, isolation and alienation; psychosomatic symptoms such as palpitations, dizziness, insomnia; anxiety and depression; and post-traumatic stress (Doyle & Visano, 1987; Garza-Guerrero, 1974; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989; Herberg, 1993; Naidoo & Edwards, 1991; Steiner & Bansil, 1989).

**Ecological Context:**
Falicov (1995, 1996) further recommends that social workers providing therapeutic services to diverse families consider their ecological context, that is, where and how the
family lives and how it fits into its environment. The various factors that form the family's ecological context include: interaction with the community in terms of ethnicity, religion, race, and social networks; the living environment, including housing and neighbourhood and their safety; work, which includes income, schedule, stability, satisfaction, and discrimination; school, which includes achievement, discipline, parent involvement, race and ethnicity; and other institutions such as legal, medical, and mental health.

**Family Organization:**
Social work services to culturally diverse individuals and families, according to Falicov (1995, 1996), must also be provided within the context of family organization. Family organization can differ according to socioeconomic levels, urban and rural settings, and ethnicity. Falicov uses the "dominant dyad" or the dominant valued relationship to facilitate the understanding of family organization. Western family organization is based primarily on the husband-wife dyad, and the nuclear family is considered to be the ideal. In some diverse cultures, however, dyads such as the parent-child, the father-son, the mother-son within the context of an extended family system are given high status. Falicov notes that these dyads influence the boundaries that dictate who is included or excluded from the family, what is the power balance across gender and generations within families, what are the values relating to personal individuation and family connectedness, whether communication styles are direct or indirect, and whether emotional expressivity between family members and outsiders is high or low.
Family Life Cycle:

Finally, according to Falicov (1995, 1996), social workers providing services to culturally diverse families need to realize that developmental stages and transitions in the family life cycle are culturally patterned. Therapists use the concept of family life cycle to understand individual and family age-appropriate behaviour; transitional points in families such as birth, marriage, raising children, and death; and changes in rules occurring at such times.

Additionally, two perspectives inform Falicov's (1995, 1996) multidimensional framework for assessment and service provision: cultural diversity, which accepts that diversity exists and views Eurocentric practice as problematic; and social construction which moves beyond mere interpretative analysis to a critical perspective about existing theories and practices.

Unlike the cultural literacy approach which views culture as static and predetermined (Gelfand & Fandetti, 1986), Falicov (1995, 1996) defines culture as dynamic and changing, emerging from and influenced by context, and internalized by individuals in different ways. Yet unlike many of the anti-racist approaches, her approach recognizes the need to take culture as well as context into consideration in social work assessment and intervention. Falicov's framework though developed for Mexican-Americans, has applicability for South Asian Canadians and also for other diverse racial and ethnic groups because it provides broad categories within which to explore diversity issues for clients, rather than attempting to provide culturally-specific
information about a group. Other similarities are also present between Mexican Americans and South Asian-Canadians that contribute to the utility of Falicov's framework. Like Mexican Americans, South Asian Canadians also experience racism from various institutions because of skin colour. Additionally, many of the traits associated with Mexican Americans such as a high degree of connectedness with grown children and close family and kinship networks (Falicov, 1996) are also characteristics of South Asian-Canadian families (Assanand, Dias, Richardson, & Waxler-Morrison, 1990).

Conducting research on diverse communities in a Eurocentric context poses unique conceptual challenges for the researcher (Fontes, 1998). Depending on the framework adopted, studies can contribute to stereotyping and sweeping generalizations of groups. Western worldviews, values, and norms can be considered normative resulting in comparisons being made about behaviours and actions of groups from a Eurocentric perspective and can lead to ethnocentrism in practice. Functional behaviours of groups can be considered to be dysfunctional and recommendations made to practitioners to help members of diverse groups to adapt by adopting the behaviours and norms of the dominant group (Denby & Allard, 1996). Structural barriers in society and social services that members of diverse groups encounter can be ignored. Razack (1998) notes the importance of understanding the larger social context when working to eliminate barriers to services in her comment:

Encounters between dominant and subordinate groups cannot be "managed" simply as pedagogical moments requiring cultural, racial, or gender sensitivity. Without
an understanding of how responses to subordinate groups are socially organized to sustain existing power arrangements, we cannot hope either to communicate across social hierarchies or to work to eliminate them (p.8).

Falicov's (1995, 1996) multidimensional framework is adopted for this study as it recognizes the complex and dynamic nature of cultural diversity and places it in the context of structural barriers for members of diverse groups.

A limitation of Falicov's framework may be that in efforts to understand the needs of minority ethnic and racial groups in a Eurocentric context, it may become all too easy to view such groups as the problem. Analysis of how majority groups keep minority groups in the margins can become secondary or can be missed entirely. The personal strengths and agency of individuals and groups can go unrecognized. In order to overcome the limitations noted, researchers must remain aware of the two perspectives that inform Falicov's multidimensional framework for assessment and service provision – cultural diversity, which accepts that diversity exists and views Eurocentric practice as problematic; and social construction which moves beyond mere interpretative analysis to a critical perspective about existing theories and practices.

**Ethnocentrism in Social Science Constructs**

Just as researchers need to ensure that theoretical frameworks used for studies are not hegemonic, they also need to be mindful of the potential of Eurocentric bias in social science constructs. Ideal individual and family functioning and normative parental and
child behaviour have traditionally, in the social sciences, been premised on Western norms, values and needs. As researchers conduct their studies they need to question the use of traditional social science constructs with diverse populations. For example, in the child welfare system, families from minority racial and ethnic groups are vulnerable to the application of social science constructs that have been developed for white middle class populations. As a result, functional patterns of parenting within these groups may appear to be dysfunctional to outsiders (Fontes, 1998).

An example of the universal application of a construct to diverse group is Baumrind's (1968) conceptualization of parenting as authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Baumrind conceptualizes authoritarian parents as those who evaluate the behaviour and attitudes of a child from a certain set of standards, and attempt to control and shape the child's behaviour in accordance to these standards. Obedience is valued, while punitive and forceful measures are used to curb children's behaviours that conflict with the standard adopted by the parent. Authoritative parents encourage verbal give and take, and direct the child's activities in a rational issue-oriented, manner while permissive parents do not use external standards to regulate the child's behaviour, allowing children to regulate their own behaviour to a large extent. Since authoritarian parenting style is linked to a greater reliance on external sets of standards to evaluate behaviour, the style is often associated with collectivist cultures (Gorman, 1998). Collectivist cultures have been described as those that organize their subjective experiences, values and behavioural mores around one or more collectives (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998; Triandis, 1994). Collectives can be the family, the extended family, the
kinship network, the religious group or the country. Internalization of group values rather than individual independence is emphasized (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998), while identity is defined by group membership.

An authoritarian parenting style has been associated by researchers (Steinberg, Lamborn, Darling, Mounts, & Dornbusch, 1994) to have mixed consequences for child development and functioning in such areas as psychological health, and academic functioning and motivation for Euro-Americans. Authoritative parenting, in contrast, has been associated with positive outcomes for Euro-American children (Macooby & Martin, 1983; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992).

However, the applicability of findings from studies of Baumrind's (1968) conceptualizations of parenting, is being questioned for diverse ethnic groups and for different socio-economic groups. Gorman (1998) notes that in spite of the authoritarian parenting style identified by researchers for Chinese-American parents, a high level of successful academic functioning is found among Chinese students. Some have suggested that peer influences for these students moderate the negative effects of authoritarian parenting (Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992; Steinberg et al., 1994). Others theorize that immigrant parents use what may appear to be an authoritarian parenting style for the positive adjustment of their children. For example, Okagaki (1993) suggests that fostering conformity to external standards develops success among immigrant children. Darling and Steinburg's (1993) study raises further questions about the universal applicability of Baumrind's framework. From their study of non-white and non-middle class families they conclude that the social milieu largely
influences parenting styles.

Gorman (1998) goes on to suggest that the concept of authoritarian parenting may be ethnocentric and may not accurately reflect the parenting of diverse cultural groups. Gorman's conclusions appear to be supported by Chao's (1994) study. Chao's study appears to confirm that collectivist cultures such as South East Asian cultures use an authoritarian approach to parenting as she found that the Chinese mothers in her study emphasised their children's relationships with others rather than their children's psychological attributes. These parents appeared to be conforming to a pre-established set of values. This parenting approach differs from mainstream American culture where individuality is stressed and individuals are viewed in terms of personality traits. The Chinese parents also focused on parental respect and obedience again indicating a style linked with authoritarian parenting and with collectivist cultures. She concludes, however, that the Chinese concept of parenting as "training" (chiao shun, and guan) is more applicable in understanding Chinese parenting styles than are conventional constructs of Euro-American parenting styles. Traditionally, researchers use the concept "authoritarian" to describe strict codes of behaviour that emerge from a desire to subjugate the child and a need for parental control. The Chinese concepts of chiao shun, and guan, in contrast, assumes a parenting style that emerges from parental care and concern for children's well being and successful adjustment.

Gorman (1998), in her study of Chinese-American mothers' parenting styles, also found that the concepts of authoritarian and authoritative parenting styles did not apply strictly. Aspects of both concepts were found in their parenting styles. Of
significance is Gorman's (1998) finding that "these mothers' restrictions on their children's activities were due to their care and protection rather than their need for domination" (p. 78). Other researchers (for example, Denby & Allard, 1996; Jarret, 1999) suggest that what may appear to be restrictive parenting styles are the result of parental response to negative social environments rather than a desire to subjugate children.

South Asian-Canadian parenting style may also be culturally and contextually unique requiring a rethinking of the application of concepts such as authoritarianism to the group. South Asian culture, like Chinese culture, is identified as a collectivist culture (Triandis, 1994). Although the wide application of the construct to diverse groups has been questioned by some researchers who have identified antecedent conditions of the variables among diverse groups (Freeman, 1997), particular parenting approaches have also been noted for the group. Obedience to parental rules, respect and acceptance of the decisions of elders are a few values attributed to South Asian parenting styles (Hines et al., 1992).

Values such as obedience to parental rules, respect, and acceptance of the decisions of elders, together with a belief that South Asian parenting approaches require a rigid adherence to set standards because of their collectivist ideal, make the group vulnerable to assessments of being authoritarian. A number of studies have characterized Chinese parents as highly restrictive and controlling or what may appear as "authoritarian" where obedience to authority rather than two-way communication is valued (Chao, 1994; Chiu, 1987; Kelley & Tseng, 1992). These studies have led to
elaborations where alternative ways of viewing Chinese parenting styles are emerging. Despite much speculation about the parenting habits of South Asians, research on the topic is sparse.

For the current study a theoretical framework that does not perpetuate stereotyping, as well as a framework that does not utilize Eurocentric social science constructs is adopted. Thus, an exploratory study that focused on what South Asian-Canadian parents themselves perceive to be issues for them in raising their children was conducted. This approach provides opportunity to explore both cultural and contextual factors that influences the parenting of South Asian-Canadian parents and issues underlying their approaches to parenting.

**Summary**

Theoretical approaches to cultural and racial diversity in the social sciences include a cultural literacy approach whereby service providers are encouraged to learn about the cultures of various groups they encounter and to apply this knowledge in service provision. The minority / anti-racist, organizational change, and anti-oppressive approaches have focused on structural barriers in society and the social services confronting members of diverse groups. Although these approaches highlight the situation and needs of minority racial / ethnic groups in society, these approaches risk viewing culture as static and unchanging. Furthermore, the influences of one's own cultural lens in assessing another culture is unrecognized. The minority / anti-racist approach addresses structural barriers encountered by diverse racial / ethnic groups but
fails to recognize the multidimensional influences on members of minority groups, thereby failing to provide adequate direction for services. Falicov's (1995, 1996) multidimensional perspective provides a framework that captures the multiple influences on members of minority racial/ethnic group, while recognizing the unique internalization of these influences by members.
Chapter 3

Empirical Studies of Cross-Cultural Child Welfare

In an effort to provide a cultural perspective to child maltreatment, researchers have primarily focused on differential definitions of child maltreatment among diverse ethnic and racial groups. Korbin (1981, 1987a, 1987b, 1991) has written extensively on the need to understand culturally appropriate definitions of child maltreatment, for parental actions sanctioned by one group may be considered abusive by another. Learning what is considered appropriate and inappropriate by specific group members can help social workers to intervene in a more culturally sensitive manner. Korbin provides information about parenting practices that are acceptable among some ethnic and racial groups but unacceptable among other groups, and thus she cautions service providers not to mistake such practices for maltreatment. Nevertheless, the value of this information in providing culturally competent services in a Euro-American context is limited.

The focus on cross-cultural definitions of child maltreatment alone can result in negative evaluations of diverse groups. For example, a widely-used child welfare training video and the accompanying workbook states: "some ethnic or cultural backgrounds may be more likely to condone severe spankings or beatings as a form of discipline" (Crawford, 1998, p. 11). The lack of empirical evidence to support such a one-dimensional approach to cross-cultural child welfare raises concerns about appropriate services to diverse ethnic and racial groups. A review of the empirical studies suggests that child welfare research and service provision requires a
multidimensional approach. Empirical studies of the general experiences of ethnic and racial minority families have found that, although they may need increased child welfare services because of higher levels of poverty, they receive fewer services at various levels in the child welfare system. These studies reveal differential findings relating to reported rates of maltreatment, rates of substantiation, services, definitions of maltreatment, and preferred intervention.

Differential treatment in and of itself may not indicate a problem. Services for clients from diverse backgrounds should be tailored to suit their needs. If social and environmental conditions are particularly harsh for one group, increased services should be targeted to the group to ameliorate this problem (Courtney et al., 1996). In addition, diverse cultural factors may also require differential services. If services lead to harsher treatment of a group, however, attention must be paid to why certain ethnic and racial groups are receiving differential treatment. The pertinent empirical studies are discussed below while details of the studies are also in Appendix A.

**Differential Reported Rates of Maltreatment**

Lauderdale, Valiunas and Anderson (1980) computed rates of abuse for different ethnic groups based on central registry data of validated cases of abuse and neglect (n = 36,945 cases) in Texas. They found higher reported rates of overall maltreatment (abuse and neglect) among Blacks and Mexican-Americans when compared with
"Anglos." When they differentiated types of maltreatment, however, they found higher reported rates of neglect among Mexican-Americans and Blacks but higher reported rates of abuse among Anglos. It is unclear, however, whether the variation in reported rates of maltreatment by ethnicity and race was attributable to cultural differences in child-rearing practices, labeling and definitional differences by the dominant culture, or socio-economic factors. Clearly, the factors that contribute to differences in the reported rates of maltreatment warrant further research, so that services can be tailored to the needs of a specific group.

Spearly and Lauderdale (1983) further studied central registry data of reported rates of maltreatment for 246 Texas counties to examine whether community characteristics predicted maltreatment for different ethnic groups. They found that low-income communities that tend to have a higher proportion of single, working mothers have higher rates of maltreatment compared to higher-income communities. In differentiating types of maltreatment, they found that higher income levels were correlated with lower rates of neglect but not of abuse. Higher rates of neglect were also associated with a greater proportion of mothers who are absent from the home because of employment. Spearly and Lauderdale (1983) conclude that, even after controlling for poverty, single parenting, and working mothers, race is a predictor of higher reported rates of total maltreatment. Socio-economic status is a predictor of

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3 Terms used for certain ethnic and racial groups have varied over time. When referring to specific studies, I have used the terms they use. When I am not referring to specific studies, I use terms currently used, for example, African-American and African-Canadian to refer to all people of African descent. Groups are also distinguished further, for example, West Indian-Canadian when referring to Canadians who originate in the Caribbean Islands.
abuse for Anglos, while greater urbanization is a predictor of abuse for Blacks and Mexican-Americans.

Spearly and Lauderdale's (1983) findings raise questions about the stressors on Black families that the study may not have captured and which may result in increased contact with the child welfare system. That urbanization is a predictor of higher rates of abuse for Blacks and Mexican-Americans raises questions about the stressors relating to urbanization that contribute to abuse. For example, urbanization can lead to the breakdown of supportive kinship networks while also exposing families and individuals to new experiences that may create additional stresses. Furthermore, families of colour may experience different forms of racism in cities along with increased scrutiny by dominant structures.

The large sample sizes of Lauderdale, Valiunas and Anderson (1980) and Spearly and Lauderdale (1983) lend credibility to the finding of differential reported rates of maltreatment for different ethnic groups and contributes to generalizability of findings. Both studies are able to identify some community and demographic factors that can contribute to predicting maltreatment. But because they examined only central registry data, they were unable to identify other stressors that may have contributed to the higher reported rates of maltreatment for different groups; nor could they distinguish bias in reporting or differential judgements of various ethnic and racial groups on the part of the dominant group.

Hampton (1987) confirmed the findings of the two aforementioned studies. Using a large sample (N = 4,170) of substantiated cases of maltreatment from the first
National Incidence Study, Hampton (1987) found higher reported rates of neglect among Blacks and Mexican-Americans and of abuse among Blacks. In addition, he found that maltreated Black and Hispanic children were younger than their White counterparts. Moreover, Black and Hispanic mothers had fewer years of formal education, were more likely to be unemployed, and were younger than their White counterparts. Black families were also much poorer than Hispanic and White families. This study again points to the poorer social conditions and stressors that can increase the potential of maltreatment for families of colour.

With a smaller but substantial sample size (N = 2,814), Jones and McCurdy (1992) also found higher reported rates of neglect for Blacks. However, female-headed households and poverty were more predictive of neglect than was race, thereby confirming the link between neglect and other stressors such as poverty and absence of supports.

**Differential Rates of Substantiation**

Other factors besides the social conditions of groups may contribute to the disproportionate representation of families from diverse ethnic and racial groups in child welfare caseloads. Hampton and Newberger (1988) found that 60% of White families compared to 74% of Black families and 91% of Hispanic families were reported to child protective services for cases of maltreatment coming to the attention of a hospital. Race and class appeared to contribute to the decision to report. Zellman (1992) also found that race increased the chance of Blacks being reported for abuse,
while Eckenrode et al. (1988) concluded that ethnicity had an impact on whether cases are substantiated. These studies suggest that race is a factor in the decision to report and to substantiate cases of child maltreatment. Thus, ethnically and racially diverse families can be subjected to several layers of bias. Because the decision to report is the first contact that these families have with child protection agencies, bias in the decision to report can be the first unfair treatment that they experience. This unfairness is subsequently compounded by bias in the decision to substantiate the abuse.

Trocmé, McPhee and Hay (1994) also found higher rates of substantiation of maltreatment for all ethnically and racially diverse families except for Hispanics. While the reason for the higher rates of substantiation are unknown, these rates do point to a need for further investigation. It is difficult to untangle whether bias is a factor in the higher rates of substantiation for some families of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds or whether only more severe cases are reported for these families, which could account for the higher rate of substantiation.

**Differential Services**

Some studies indicate that ethnically and racially diverse families and their children receive differential services once in the child welfare system. In examining the files of 424 children admitted to short-term residential care, Segal and Schwartz (1985) found that age and race were predictors of children being returned home from short-term emergency care. They suggest that the finding that younger children and Black children are more likely than older children and white children to be returned home from short-
term emergency care may be attributable to few substitute care alternatives being available for Black children. Since younger children are more vulnerable and at greater risk for physical abuse and emotional harm, a quick return home may not be the best intervention strategy to meet their needs (Segal & Schwartz, 1985). Furthermore, a relatively short period of removal from an abusive home may not provide parents with sufficient time to make any significant changes. Although the sample size is smaller than the previous studies and only a limited number of variables could be explored because of the nature of case records, the study does provide unique and interesting findings.

Barth et al. (1986) found that older Black children were more likely to receive court orders for residence outside of their birth homes. Case characteristics that predicted child welfare outcomes were severity of harm, children with school problems, and families with the fewest socio-economic resources. These findings draw more attention to differential outcomes for families of colour in the child welfare system. The findings of Barth et al. (1986) when combined with those of Segal and Schwartz (1985) raise the question: Are previously inadequate services provided by the child welfare system, among other factors in society, predictive of later in-care orders for children of colour?

Tjaden and Thoennes (1992) examined 833 child protection and criminal cases and found that the perpetrator being from an ethnic minority group was predictive of child welfare court hearings and prosecution of the offender. These findings showed either harsher treatment of minority families or a lack of an ability by child welfare
professional to mediate with these families. Since court involvement can increase the adversarial nature of child protection services and can hamper case resolutions (Wildgoose & Maresca, 1994), concerns arise about whether child welfare matters are dealt with more antagonistically when members of minority groups are involved.

Folaron and Hess (1993) and Courtney (1995) provide evidence that the needs of families of colour are not being met once they are in the child welfare system. According to Folaron and Hess (1993), because the needs of children from mixed-race parentage are not recognized by social workers, no attempt is made to address these needs. Courtney (1995) found that race is a factor in re-entry to foster care, raising questions about the adequacy of support services to families when children are returned home.

**Differential Definitions of Maltreatment and Preferred Intervention**

Researchers have conducted studies to explore differences in definitions of child maltreatment among diverse ethnic and racial groups. Some researchers have also gone further to explore the types of interventions preferred by diverse groups when unacceptable parental behaviour occurs. The need for these studies emerged from a desire not only to reduce bias in child welfare services by providing culturally sensitive services but also to meet the service needs of minority ethnic and racial groups. Hong and Hong (1991) used case vignettes to elicit responses from Chinese, Hispanics, and Whites about their definitions of and preferred interventions for particular forms of maltreatment. The Chinese rated physical discipline as "less severe" than did the
Hispanics and Whites. All groups showed similar responses when asked about neglect. Similarities were also found for neglect of a child's physical health, uncommon sleeping habits, and encouragement of children to commit crimes. The Chinese respondents preferred less intrusive forms of intervention, often choosing no intervention. It is unclear whether intervention by extended family members was preferred to state intervention. Information on intervention by family members and the community in situations of maltreatment would be useful in revealing how different communities deal with parental behaviour that they deem unacceptable and in assessing the community's needs if such sources of support are unavailable.

Rose and Meezan (1996) explored how mothers from three cultural groups – Latino, Caucasian, and African-America – and how child welfare workers in two different roles perceived the seriousness of specific components of neglect. Their findings suggest "that members of minority groups perceive some types of child neglect as more serious than do their Caucasian counterparts" (p.139). In addition to finding a high degree of similarity in the rankings of dimensions of neglect for the mothers, the study found some notable differences. African-American and Latino mothers were in close agreement about which dimensions of neglect were of the greatest concern in terms of their potential harm to children. In rank ordering the dimensions of neglect, they rated exploitation of children, inadequate supervision of children, and raising children in unwholesome circumstances as potentially the most harmful. They considered circumstances in which food, clothing, and shelter were inadequate to place children in the least amount of jeopardy. In contrast, Caucasian mothers thought that
the lack of adequate food placed children in potentially greater harm and that raising children in unwholesome circumstances and with inadequate education placed them in less jeopardy.

Although Rose and Meezan's (1996) study suggests that different ethnic groups may define neglect differently, the source of these differences are unclear. Cultural differences may lead to these variations, but other socio-political explanations may also account for them. For instance, greater concern about lack of school attendance may not be a true indicator of cultural norms as much as it may indicate that ethnic minority families emphasize education as a way to overcome societal racism. It is difficult to distinguish between responses resulting from cultural norms and those resulting from the situation of minority groups in the larger society.

To understand differences in definitions of maltreatment, Rose and Meezan (1996) replicated an earlier study by Giovannoni and Becerra (1979) and reached similar conclusions. Rose and Meezan note that "more than ten years later, the present study confirms that minority group mothers, contrary to popular belief, continue to hold members of their communities to somewhat more stringent child-rearing standards than mothers in the dominant Caucasian culture" (p. 157). Interestingly, workers rated most types of neglect as less serious than did mothers, and ongoing service providers rated most types of neglect as less serious than did investigating workers.

One group of children that may be neglected in child welfare research and service provision are children of mixed race parentage. Folaren and Hess (1993) found that children of mixed African-American and Caucasian parentage enter the system at
the youngest age when compared to children of either Caucasian or African-American parentage. They also experienced the greatest number of out-of-home placements and had more disrupted reunifications. Concerned that the unique needs of these children are not recognized by the child welfare system, Folaren and Hess (1993) urge the development of culturally specific knowledge for mixed-race families.

Although the studies of differences in definitions of child maltreatment by various ethnic groups provide some insights, the limitations of these studies prevent generalizations from them. Use of case vignettes of inappropriate parental behaviour provides little understanding of the contribution of context within which parents are raising their children. For example, Jarrett (1999) identified strategies used by African-American parents to help their children succeed in impoverished inner-city neighbourhoods in the United States. Parents' restrictions on their children emerged from the need to protect their children from a dangerous neighbourhood environment. Thus, variations in definitions can exist because of diversity of context rather than cultural norms of behaviour. Use of case vignettes also limits insights into diversity in the values of groups that may contribute to particular actions on the part of parents. Thus, ongoing service needs of members of groups who come to the attention of child welfare services are not understood. Furthermore, although findings from the studies provide some information on differences in definitions of maltreatment, they must be viewed cautiously because the sample size of the studies limits generalization to the population.

The current study explores definitions of child maltreatment for one ethnic
group in comparison to child welfare workers. Focus group interviews with parents provide contextual information about their values, issues in the environment that influence their parenting, and family support needs. Focus group interviews with child welfare professionals provide further insights into their responses to a diverse ethnic group and the potential for conflict arising from differences in definitions and values of the group.

**Summary**

Four areas requiring consideration have emerged from a review of the empirical studies on race/ethnicity and child welfare:

1. differences in the reported rates of maltreatment among different racial groups;
2. bias in reporting and substantiating maltreatment;
3. differential services to families from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds;
4. differences among diverse ethnic and racial groups regarding definitions of maltreatment.

The literature reveals that families from diverse ethnic and racial groups are vulnerable in the child welfare system at various levels. Some ethnic and racial groups are at higher risk of referral because of their social and economic position in society. They are also vulnerable because of reporting bias, substantiation bias, inadequate services, and disparity in definitions of child maltreatment and interventions preferred.

The empirical studies contribute to our theoretical understanding of diversity and the child welfare system. What emerges from the literature review is that culturally
specific approaches to parenting may be present for diverse ethnic and racial groups, yet these must not be considered in isolation from other factors that impinge on minority groups. These other factors include social and environmental factors that put minority groups at risk because of their inequitable position in society and biased practice, whether intentional or unintentional.

Figure 1 captures the areas elicited from the studies that must be considered when conceptualizing research and services to minority populations. Although gaining understanding of the cultural practices of diverse ethnic and racial groups is important and essential, on its own it is insufficient for providing culturally competent services. As the figure points out, social/environmental factors and differential treatment/bias overlay cultural diversity and these must not be excluded in assessment when addressing services to diverse ethnic and racial groups.

Figure 1
Conceptualization of Racial and Cultural Diversity and Child Welfare

- Social/Environmental Factors
- Cultural Diversity
- Differential Treatment/Bias
The studies noted focus largely on outcomes for minority ethnic and racial groups in the child welfare system. They supply valuable information about the disproportionate rates of such groups in the system and the biases that they encounter. The studies provide insights into the association between factors such as ethnicity, poverty, and reported rates of child maltreatment; ethnicity and substantiation of maltreatment; and ethnicity and child welfare outcomes. The studies on differences in definitions of maltreatment and types of interventions preferred begin to provide some insights into cultural differences among ethnic groups, yet the source of these differences remain unclear. Clearly, studies that explore contextual issues that arise for minority ethnic and racial groups are needed. Without an understanding of how families from diverse ethnic backgrounds negotiate the social environment, social workers will run the risk of assessing culture as some authentic, unchanging variable. Services to diverse families can be compromised because of a lack of understanding of their context.

Examining the theoretical literature also identifies the need to ensure that social work approaches to research and services do not contribute to stereotyping of groups by focusing on culture as an authentic, static variable. Adopting a contextually based approach to racial and cultural diversity provides a lens that explores services to diverse ethnic and racial groups from a multidimensional perspective and recognizes the many contextual implications in the lives of minority populations. Additionally, researchers who conduct studies of diverse ethnic and racial groups must be careful that Eurocentric constructs are not blindly applied to these groups.
Chapter 4
South Asian-Canadians: An Overview

Although South Asian-Canadians first came to Canada at the turn of the twentieth century, changes in immigration policy in the 1960s resulted in greater numbers and more diverse immigrants arriving from the South Asian region. Because of the relatively new immigrant status and the cultural and racial diversity of South Asians, social service agencies are challenged to provide culturally appropriate services to the group. This chapter examines the diversity within the South Asian group and provides a rationale for use of the socially constructed term "South Asian." Struggles confronting South Asian immigrants to Canada are discussed in order to provide a richer contextual understanding of the group.

The term South Asian-Canadian has been generally adopted in Canada and other western nations to refer to people who have immigrated to Canada or are descendants of immigrants from the region. According to the Canadian Census, South Asians comprise persons from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. South Asian also refers to individuals from Africa, Mauritius, Fiji, the Caribbean, Guyana, Great Britain, and European countries who trace their origins to the Indian subcontinent (George & Ramkisson, 1998). Some South Asians may prefer, however, to be known by their country of origin; for example, those from Sri Lanka may prefer to be known as Sri Lankan, those from Bangladesh as Bangladeshi, rather than by the generic term South Asian. Others from the Indian Diaspora may feel little
connection with the Indian subcontinent and prefer to identify with their more recent country of origin.

Because of the geographic vastness captured by the term South Asian, considerable differences exist within it that is further increased by language and religion (George & Ramkisson, 1998). The region has almost a billion people who speak a wide variety of languages and dialects. In India alone, besides Hindi, the national language, 14 major languages and approximately 400 dialects are spoken (Israel, 1999a). Although Hinduism is the dominant religion practised, the world's other major religions – Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Sikhism, Judaism, and Christianity – are also substantially represented (Israel, 1999a). The population of Pakistan and Bangladesh is primarily Muslim, while there is a large contingency of Buddhists in Sri Lanka.

Although the Indian sub-continent is the source of much immigration to Canada and to other countries, in previous times it was the destination for many immigrants. As much as 3,500 years ago, Aryan migration took place from central Asia, followed by populations of Greeks, Turks, Persians, Afghans, Zoroastrians, Jews, Muslims, and Christians (Israel, 1999a). The traditions of these migrants were incorporated into those of the region, resulting in a unique mosaic of traditions that further contributed to the diversity of the region. The European traders and colonizers who subsequently arrived also brought new languages, religions, and cultures. These influences further combined with those of the region; and in many instances, the unique influence of the migrants, for example, the Portuguese influence on the Goans as well as the Dutch and
Portuguese influence on the Burghers of Sri Lanka, can be seen in the South Asians who have immigrated to Canada (Abrahams, 1999; Israel, 1999a, 1999b; Johnston, 1999). British influence on South Asians is also evident in various ways. Despite the vast differences, South Asians can be considered to be a common community for a number of reasons.

Social Construction of the Term South Asian

Perception of Sameness:
Canadian society tends to categorize South Asians as a distinct group because of their identifiable skin colour and ethnic characteristics. Although the South Asian experience in Canadian society may differ according to class and gender (Henry et al., 1995), "skin color is an overwhelming reality for South Asians in their interactions with White Canadians" (Agnew 1998, p. 154). Based on concerns about skin colour and ethnicity, Canadian immigration policies initially endeavoured to limit South Asian immigration. When the first South Asian immigrants arrived in British Columbia from the Punjab region of India in 1903, the Canadian government initially welcomed them as a source of cheap labour (Johnson, 1999). However, irrational fears that the increasing number of South Asians would "contaminate" white Anglo-Saxon purity prompted the government of British Columbia to introduce legislation that deprived South Asians of basic civil rights in 1907 and halted South Asian immigration by 1919. For the next thirty years the South Asians who remained in British Columbia struggled to gain the rights that were afforded to immigrants from Europe and Britain. South Asians
remained disenfranchised until 1947 when the Canadian government partially lifted restrictions on South Asian immigration by imposing quotas (Assanand et al., 1990).

Since the earliest South Asian immigrants to Canada had been mostly unskilled labourers, the federal government's preference for sponsoring the immediate family members of those who were already residing in Canada had the effect of limiting professional and skilled persons to immigrate. By the 1960s, Canada's increased need for professional and skilled labour resulted in the adoption of an immigration policy based on a point system that emphasized education, training and job qualifications (Johnson, 1999). By 1967 the sponsorship system was extended to the more distant relatives of existing immigrants (Johnson, 1999), thus encouraging South Asians from all socio-economic backgrounds to migrate to Canada.

**Similarity of Experience:**
Since the 1960s South Asian immigrants have come to Canada from diverse backgrounds based on their state of origin, age, gender, education and occupational background, their stage in their family life cycle, and the social climate both in the home country as well as in Canada at the time of immigration. While the first wave of South Asians settled in British Columbia and worked mostly in agriculture and forestry, subsequent arrivals were largely professionals and skilled labourers who settled in the cities, primarily Vancouver and Toronto (Johnson, 1999). Today, South Asian immigrants to Canada represent the linguistic, religious, and regional differences evident in their homeland. Despite their diversity, South Asians can find some sense of
commonality by virtue of originating from the same region of Asia (George & Ramkissoon, 1998).

South Asian-Canadians also have common experiences as a result of the process of migration to and settlement in a new country. Although these experiences will naturally vary according to personal backgrounds, gender, and region of origin and settlement, some common experiences can enhance the efforts of researchers and social workers to understand group dynamics. Migrating to a new place means that families have had to leave behind "plausibility structures that undergird individual and social knowledge and support civic order and personal health" (Williams, 1998, p. 189).

Initially, the only familiar landscape to newcomers may be religious structures in their new country. Immigrants from South Asia, whether they are from Kerala, the Punjab, Sri Lanka, or even if they represent minorities in India or Pakistan, experience the absence of these familiar structures that provided platforms for knowledge, morals, customs, community leadership, and social commitments. According to Williams, immigrants gravitate to familiar religious and social organizations, not so much to separate themselves from settled society, but to give themselves breathing space in familiar settings and to develop new plausibility structures for themselves and their children.

In Canada, South Asians have historically set up structures to provide themselves with a familiar space and to develop networks that are feasible for themselves and their children in a new place. In the early days of South Asian settlement, small numbers produced cohesion among people who differed substantially
in terms of factors such as religion or region of origin but shared a broad South Asian background. Larger numbers of South Asians and a larger variety of immigrants from the region have made it possible for South Asians to form distinctive organizations. Hundreds of South Asian community organizations now exist across Canada, some broad-based, representing South Asians generally, and others representing specific groups by language, region, religion, or national homeland.

South Asians in their home countries generally have large extended kinship networks within which much of their social, cultural, recreational, and economic transactions are conducted. Celebrating festivals, enjoying leisure time, finding a spouse, obtaining financial advice, support, and sympathy during crisis, and support to socialize children can readily be experienced without seeking help from strangers (Israel, 1999b). While some South Asians have such kinship links in Canada, others have left these links behind in the old country. For many, community organizations and establishing new networks have filled the gap; however, the ability or inability to establish links can determine the ease of the settlement process.

Although immigration policies no longer overtly discriminate against them, South Asians are conscious of race-based barriers in many aspects of Canadian life. South Asians sense that bias in the workplace has denied them access to jobs and opportunities for advancement. Professional and skilled-trades qualifications are frequently not recognized; educational credits are not always granted equivalent status; and Canadian experience is often a requirement. These factors create barriers to smoothing the transition to their new country. South Asians as a group are also
conscious of incidences of violent attacks in schoolyards, subways, community halls, mosques, temples, and gurdwaras, particularly in the mid 1970s (Israel, 1999a, 199b). Racist slurs are also a common experience for South Asians.

**Solidarity and Activism:**

Many organizations providing services to a diverse group of people originating from the South Asian region take the position that they serve the "South Asian community." Despite the regional, linguistic, religious, and cultural differences among the recipient of services, "the assumption of shared values and norms increases their legitimacy in the eyes of funding agencies" (Agnew, 1998, p. 154). In addition, provision of services under the generic term South Asian is valuable because service providers will have a closer affiliation with the group than will mainstream service providers, greater knowledge and understanding of the group because of proximity with the group, and the ability to access other informal services if services pertinent to the subgroup in question are not readily available.

Although South Asians are aware of their differences and have established networks that are pertinent to each subgroup, primarily by religion and for religious and cultural activities, the term South Asian continues to be useful to them in obtaining political movement and in lobbying for issues of concern for them. Thus, across Canada, especially in the major cities, agencies have been formed because of the lobbying efforts of a mixed group of South Asians to address their unique needs. Such agencies provide a range of services that include settlement services for new
immigrants, English as a second language services, counseling services for individual, marital, and family issues, and advocacy services. As new needs emerge, greater efforts are being made by South Asian groups to lobby for services.

Language:
Even though great diversity exists among South Asians who immigrate to Canada, the use of common languages among South Asians from certain areas also provides a sense of commonality. For instance, those from the Punjab, whether they are Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, or Christian, speak the common language Punjabi providing a bond for the group in their new country despite the difference in religion. Many Indians also speak Hindi, the official national language of India; while other South Asians have an understanding of Hindi because of the similarity of Hindi with Urdu, the language commonly spoken in Pakistan.

Summary
Like other immigrants, most South Asians come to Canada for a more stable life, a better education for their children, and the prospect that hard work will produce economic benefits. Once in Canada, the immigrant generation is faced with a number of problems. The transitional challenges include: difficulty in finding employment, bias in securing employment, problems in having credentials recognized, underemployment, lack of advancement in jobs, in addition to the loss of supportive networks and unfamiliarity with social support systems. Furthermore, the need for two incomes to maintain a family's standard of living has required many women to seek work outside
the home. Those families operating within traditional gender roles have to renegotiate these roles within the new context. South Asian parents also have to negotiate new sets of rules that attempt to preserve aspects of their values and perspectives, while accommodating the demands of their children to assimilate into Canadian society. South Asian values such as respect for elders, acceptance of their wisdom and decisions, and restrictions on casual dating and relationships are among some of the values that are being renegotiated (Assanand et al., 1990). In addition, the inevitable loss of language, customs, and traditions by South Asian youth is also a source of stress for many parents and elders. Still, South Asians generally would not agree with being isolated from mainstream society. They value integration that affords them citizenship rights, opportunities, and responsibilities, while allowing them to preserve important customs. Many South Asians use adaptation techniques shared by other immigrants. At home, they retain aspects of their original values, while in the workplace they prefer to integrate into the Canadian environment. The extent to which individuals are able to accomplish this bicultural adaptation rests on factors such as the passage of time since immigration, linguistic fluency, and region of immigration and settlement. In any event, migration is a traumatic experience for all of its inevitable losses and gains.
Chapter 5
Research Design and Methods

Research Design

The purpose of the current study is to provide greater understanding of the cultural context that South Asian-Canadians encounter in raising their children, and whether child welfare professionals appreciate and are responsive to such cultural and contextual variations. A secondary aim of the study is to draw implications for practice from the findings. Previous research is largely comprised of analysis of service statistics that have helped to identify trends in the child welfare system relating to diversity (for example, Eckenrode et al., 1988; Hampton & Newberger, 1988; Lauderdale, Valiunas, & Anderson, 1980; Spearly & Lauderdale, 1983; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1992; Trocmé, McPhee, & Hay, 1994). Other studies (for example, Giovannoni & Becerra, 1979; Hong & Hong, 1991; Rose & Meezan, 1996) have used vignettes to elicit differences and similarities from diverse racial and ethnic groups about what they consider to be inappropriate parental behaviour toward children. Very few studies provide the perspective of parents from a culturally or racially diverse group on the norms and values important to them in parenting children and the issues they confront in raising their children. In addition, although considerable progress has been made in outlining social work approaches to diversity (for example see, Abney, 1996; Chipungu, 1991; Cohen, 1992; Cross et al., 1989; McPhatter, 1997; Devore & Schlesinger, 1999; Dominelli, 1988, 1998; Gould, 1985, 1991; Green, 1999; Herberg, 1993), research
about social work responses to families from diverse backgrounds is minimal.

The current study addresses the research gap regarding definitions of appropriate and inappropriate parental action for South Asian-Canadians, while also exploring the approaches of child welfare professionals to diverse populations through an exploratory, mixed-method study. South Asian-Canadian parents who were still caring for children twelve years of age or less completed questionnaires and were interviewed in (parental) focus groups to derive an understanding of their culturally grounded approaches to parenting. Child welfare professionals completed the same questionnaires and participated in (professional) focus group discussions. A semi-structured focus group interview guide was developed to elicit the factors which child welfare professionals take into consideration when providing services to South Asian-Canadian families.

Data gathered from South Asian-Canadian parents were compared and contrasted with data obtained from child welfare workers. Interviewing South Asian parents generally, rather than only South Asian clients of the system, helped to establish what the ethnic group as a whole considers to be appropriate and inappropriate parenting approaches. Initial consultation with social service providers to South Asian-Canadians and child welfare service providers in general helped to set the parameters for the study by identifying particular needs of the groups as well as concerns relating to research and diversity.
**Research Questions**

The literature review identifies a need to understand the child-rearing perspectives of parents from diverse racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, the theoretical literature identifies the need to ensure that such exploration does not lead to stereotyping of groups or does not subject the groups to the blind application of Eurocentric constructs. During the initial phase of the study, the key informants also identified similar concerns that were considered when designing the study and in formulating the research questions. The overall research questions for this project were: *What are the culturally-grounded parenting approaches of South Asian-Canadians? How does the child welfare system interpret and respond to these parenting approaches?* The following subset of questions operationalized the research question:

- What do South Asian-Canadian parents consider to be appropriate and inappropriate child-rearing approaches?
- What influences parenting practices for South Asian-Canadians in Canada?
- What forms of help do South Asian-Canadian parents identify and use for parenting problems?
- How do child welfare workers perceive South Asian-Canadian parents?
- In what ways do child welfare workers respond to South Asian-Canadian parents who are referred to the child welfare system?

The research sought to understand the following issues:

- Do South Asian-Canadians have a distinct parenting style?
- Does this parenting style bring them into contact or conflict with the child welfare
system?

- How do child welfare workers incorporate these parenting styles into service provision?
- Do child welfare workers have preconceived notions about South Asian-Canadians that lead to difficulties in service delivery?

**Participant Selection**

Careful consideration was given to the selection of participants for the study so that a wide variety of South Asians would be represented in the sample. It was also important that each focus group include only those who spoke a common language so that participants could engage in discussions with each other. Yet care needed to be taken that each group comprised of South Asians from various backgrounds in order to obtain information that was South Asian rather than, for instance, Pakistani or Sri Lankan. The length of residence in Canada was set at twelve years or less. Individuals who had immigrated directly from the South Asian region and who identified themselves as South Asian were included. South Asians from other parts of the world were not included, as these groups would have additional influences from their countries of origin. Many factors influence the changes individuals and families experience as they settle in a new country; however, a decision was made to set the limit of immigration to Canada at twelve years because it provides a greater opportunity of eliciting responses that are uniquely South Asian. This time frame can also highlight the contextual issues that may be prevalent due to the resettlement
process. Finally, it was important for the study that all of the parents were still caring for children twelve years of age or under. Whether they had older children or not was considered immaterial.

Purposive sampling was employed for the study. Flyers were distributed through religious and community organizations frequented by South Asians while other participants were recruited by word of mouth. Participants were chosen to represent gender, religion, education, and socioeconomic status. As was the case in selecting the mix for the focus groups, efforts were made to ensure that all participants in a specific group spoke a common language. Since the researcher and the research assistant spoke English and four South Asian languages (Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, and Gujerati), the focus group interviews were conducted in one or a combination of these languages.

Child welfare workers from a large urban child protection agency were asked to volunteer for the study. Participants were recruited from both intake and ongoing service teams to provide a greater depth of understanding of how the child welfare system responded to South Asians. Intake workers perform an immediate, investigative function and may approach families differently from ongoing service providers who have a longer-term relationship with families. The study included workers from any ethnic background since the purpose was to understand generally how child welfare workers perceived and responded to their South Asian clients, not whether the responses demonstrated ethnic differences. Workers who did not have South Asian families as part of their caseloads were also included for the same reason. Even if participants had not worked with South Asian families, both their experience with other
diverse groups and their general perceptions of South Asians were valuable for the study.

**Data Collection**

A two-part data collection technique was employed for the study. South Asian parents as well as child welfare practitioners individually completed a questionnaire and then participated in focus group discussions.

The questionnaire for parents included a demographic section and a section that requested ratings on case vignettes developed to elicit what parental behaviours are considered to be appropriate and inappropriate. Culture-specific expectations of children were included in the vignettes to understand how South Asian parents in Canada negotiate these expectations. The development of vignettes is explained below. Information on the group's help-seeking behaviour when encountering child rearing problems was sought, and an open-ended section asked participants for their reasons for rating their vignettes as they did. This section provided parents with the opportunity to distinguish the importance of culture-specific expectations of children while also assessing the responses of parents to non-compliance by children to these expectations. Vignettes included issues of parental behaviour regarding discipline of children as well as inappropriate parental supervision. The questionnaires were used both to direct the attention of participants to issues of child maltreatment prior to the focus group interviews and as a means of triangulating the data with the data from the focus group interviews.
Subsequent to completing the questionnaire, parents were interviewed in focus groups. The purpose of the focus group discussions was to gain understanding from participants about their parenting approaches, cultural and contextual influences on their parenting approaches, and the issues they negotiate with respect to parenting their children in the Canadian context. A semi-structured interview guide was used to direct the discussions, which were audio-taped and later transcribed. Participants were asked: What do you consider to be appropriate and inappropriate discipline? What community sanctions exist for behaviour that is considered inappropriate? Whom do you contact in situations in which you are encountering problems? Do you feel that your parenting approaches are different from those of mainstream parenting? What issues do you encounter in raising children in Canada?

Child welfare workers completed the same vignette questionnaires as did the parents, except for the demographic section, and they participated in focus group discussions that were conducted using the semi-structured interview guide developed for the study. Social workers were asked: What training do you have in working with families from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds? What types of cases do you generally encounter when working with South Asian-Canadian families? Are the cases that comprise of South Asian-Canadian families more or less difficult to work with? Do you feel that South Asian-Canadian parenting approaches are different and do these approaches increase contact with the child welfare system? What are some of the structural issues that South Asian-Canadian parents encounter in raising their children in Canada?
Focus group interviewing was the preferred method of collecting data since the aim of the study was not to gain insight from each specific individual about their thoughts on parenting but rather to ascertain how participants as a group thought about the subject matter being discussed. Within-group differences as well as similarities were of interest as were areas that raised discussions and understanding of how these areas were addressed in a group. Focus group interviews provide certain advantages that other qualitative data gathering techniques do not: "Through discussion about conscious, semiconscious and unconscious psychological and socio-cultural characteristics and processes" (Berg, 1995, p. 68), researchers can learn about specific topics. Interactions between members can lead to the introduction of and elaboration of different aspects of a topic. Unlike other qualitative methods of gathering data, the researcher can both engage in discussions and observe the interactions between and among group members about specific aspects of the topic, providing an added dimension to the data collected (Berg, 1995).

It is important to remember that the purpose of the focus group was not to arrive at a consensus but rather to trigger discussion, to understand how the topic was discussed, and to gather rich data about the range of responses in the group regarding the topic. Moderators were careful to engage in discussions about the similarities as well as the differences among South Asians on the topic being discussed. The option of individual interviews with participants was also built into the design of the study in the event that participants were not comfortable in sharing information in a group. However, there was no need to conduct individual interviews as parents welcomed the
opportunity to discuss a topic that was important to them, with the result that much rich data was gathered.

Focus groups were comprised of from four to eight members. Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) consider that a group of up to eight participants provides opportunity for interesting discussion, allows all members to participate actively in the discussion, and is still small enough for the moderator to manage. Too few members in a group can also prevent enough variance for discussion. Although the first group was comprised of eight participants, subsequent groups had no more than six participants each, with one group having only four participants. After the first focus group of eight participants a decision was made to have a smaller number of participants as the numbers in the first group made it difficult to manage the group. In addition, participants tended to communicate in several different languages, switching back and forth between languages to emphasize certain points. This tendency sometimes required the moderators to translate on the spot certain aspects of the discussion for other participants.

Focus groups with mothers and fathers were conducted separately to facilitate discussion, while controlling for the influence of gender dynamics. Differences in personality due to biological, social, and cultural factors can influence interpersonal interactions (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Research suggests that gender differences in personality and in interpersonal interaction influence the quality of the data obtained. Aries (1976) found that in mixed-gender groups, men had a greater tendency to address individual group members rather than the whole group and spoke about themselves
more often than in same gender groups. In contrast, women in mixed-gender groups tended to be less dominant than in all-female groups. However, same-gender groups also have unique problems that the focus group moderator had to keep in mind. For example, Aries found that men in same-gender groups were more concerned with status and competition than in mixed-gender groups.

Since the purpose of the study was to understand parental behaviour toward children that is considered unacceptable, a questionnaire with vignettes of parental behaviour was administered to participants before the focus group discussions in order to direct participants toward the focus group discussion topic. The data obtained from the questionnaire also provided a way to compare these responses to the discussions in the focus group, resulting in a crude method of triangulating the data. However, the findings from the vignettes should not be generalized to all South Asian-Canadians. The small sample size prevents generalization, and the primary purpose of the questionnaires is to direct the discussion and to compare the findings with the focus group discussions. Table 3 contains the data collection technique used for the study.

Table 3 Data Collection Technique in Table Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>South Asian-Canadian Parents</th>
<th>Child Welfare Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Administer vignettes</td>
<td>• Administer vignettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Five focus groups</td>
<td>• two focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Three groups of mothers</td>
<td>• one of intake workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• two groups of fathers</td>
<td>• one of ongoing service providers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• n = 21 (questionnaire)</td>
<td>• n = 14 (questionnaire)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• focus groups n = 4 (21 participants)</td>
<td>• focus groups n = 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 1 pilot focus group (8 participants)</td>
<td>Do practitioners have an understanding of the cultural and structural issues for South Asian-Canadians?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What are the cultural and contextual issues confronting South Asian-Canadian families and how are these negotiated?

Compare and contrast findings
**Vignette Construction**

Case vignettes have been used in the child welfare literature to understand differences and similarities among ethnic groups in what they consider to be appropriate and inappropriate parenting behaviour. A group of researchers have used generic case examples to understand the level of tolerance in a group for certain forms of parental behaviour (Giovannoni & Becerra, 1979; Hong & Hong, 1991; Rose & Meezan, 1996).

While these have been helpful in providing some insights about behaviours that a group may consider to be inappropriate, they have not provided understanding of the culturally-grounded values of a group that may contribute to certain practices. Culturally-grounded values of a group and practices that may emerge from these values can lead a group into greater contact with the child welfare system if such practices differ from those of the mainstream. Understanding particular values and practices can contribute to service providers' knowledge of a group, increasing the potential for case resolution if the values and expectations of the group are included in case planning.

Shor (1998, 1999) developed case vignettes comprised of cultural values for his two studies of Jewish families. His study captured the values of the group with respect to children and families, while attempting to elicit what forms of parenting behaviour would be problematic for the group. Shor's studies help to provide greater understanding of the values of the groups for child welfare service providers and to suggest intervention strategies that would be more relevant while still providing protection services.
For the pilot focus group, vignettes from previous studies (Hong & Hong, 1991; Shor, 1998) were used. However, it was clear that parents had a difficult time relating to these vignettes as they did not have a cultural component. Subsequently, new vignettes were developed for the other four focus groups, and the first set of vignettes are not included in the analyses of findings in Chapter 6. Like the vignettes developed by Shor, the vignettes developed for the current study are about values of importance to South Asian families and about responses that may emerge from parents when attempting to transfer these values to their children. Two social workers providing services to the South Asian community and the writer — all of South Asian descent — developed the vignettes. Vignettes from Shor's (1998) study were used when the community consultants perceived relevance between the vignettes in his study and the cases that they encounter in their practice with South Asian-Canadian families. The vignettes capture values that we, through our experience as service providers for the South Asian-Canadian community as well as by virtue of being members of the community, perceive to be of importance to the group. In order to assess the clarity and cultural relevance of the vignettes, they were pilot tested with three other South Asians, a social service provider, a parent of South Asian descent, and a lawyer of South Asian descent. Except for minor changes, the vignettes were approved by all three reviewers and were used in the study subsequent to the changes. The case vignettes and scales are contained in Table 4. The case vignettes were presented on separate pages during data collection and more space was provided for the open-ended section of the questionnaire. The vignettes are presented here as they were presented
in the study. Vignette 7 was omitted from analysis as participants experienced difficulty responding to it because of its complexity.
Table 4  Case Vignettes and Responses Requested

For each of the case scenarios below can you tell us whether the action of the parent is appropriate or inappropriate?

1. A mother of a 10 year old girl slaps her on her face because she refuses to help out when the family has company visiting.
2. A father of a 10 year old boy often slaps him across the face because he refuses to go to the temple/mosque/gurudwara/church for religious occasions.
3. The parents of a 10 year old girl go out shopping, visiting and to work leaving their 10 year old daughter to take care of the two younger children ages 5 and 3.
4. A 12 year old girl is seen by her parents at the mall holding hands with a boy. The father grounds the girl except for going to school. He takes her to school and picks her up. She is not allowed to use the phone or to see any friends from school.
5. The father of a 12 year old boy spanks him with a belt leaving welts on his back, arms and legs because the boy does not listen to him, refuses to do his school work and is rude to both the father and the mother.
6. The parents of a six year old girl and a four year old boy often leave their children outside the apartment block till well after it is dark as the father works late and the mother is on medication that makes her drowsy.
7. A 7 year old boy is brought to the hospital by his father. The father states that the boy was hurt but he is not sure how it happened. Upon examination the doctors find that the boy has fractures of the leg and arm as well as two fractured ribs. The doctor’s exam shows these fractures were caused by someone hitting the child. The father states that he had hit the boy because he was being disobedient but he had not hit him very hard. He refuses any help saying that the family can manage their problems. (Vignette not used in analysis).
8. The father of a 12 year old girl hits her across the face causing a swollen and cut lip and bruising on the face as she sneaked out to go to a dance at school.

Appropriate to a
Large extent = 1
Moderate extent = 2
Little extent = 3
Inappropriate to a
Large extent = 4
Moderate extent = 5
Little extent = 6

- Do you think this family should get help from someone?
  □ Yes    □ No
- If you think the family needs help, who should be contacted?
  Select all that apply.
□ Relatives/friends, □ religious/community leader, □ other social service agency.
□ Children’s Aid Society, □ Police, □ Other, Please explain

Why did you think the action of the parent was appropriate or inappropriate?
Design Limitations

The use of both case vignettes and focus groups present a number of limitations. In order to capture a scenario in a brief sentence, case vignettes are inevitably stripped of context. Even if additional information is included, they fail to capture an entire scenario. Research participants may wonder about associated factors that contributed to the action in the case scenario but do not have such information available. Still, the current study did not rely entirely on case vignettes for its data but used the vignettes to focus parents on the types of cases that are referred for child welfare services. As such, the case vignettes were useful. Case vignettes, because they are stripped of context, can also assist in quickly identifying which actions are considered to be appropriate or inappropriate regardless of context. Obtaining this information is particularly useful in the initial stages of child welfare interventions when the safety of a child is in question. The focus group discussion provided additional contextual information that is essential for ongoing services for families.

Social desirability can be an issue when gathering data from research participants using focus groups. Participants' responses may be aimed to please the moderator or other participants in the group. Despite these limitations, focus group interviewing was the preferred method of data collection for the current study as the intent of the study was to obtain a broad understanding of parenting approaches of the group rather than on how each individual parented children.
**Data Analysis Techniques**

All interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Although the software program NUD*IST (non-numerical unstructured data indexing and theorizing); (QSR NUD*IST, 1997) was used in the later stage of analysis to further organize the data. Data were initially analyzed as suggested by a number of authors writing about the subject. Content analysis is widely suggested for the analyses of focus group data. Millward (1995) suggests qualitative content analysis, quantitative content analysis, and structural content analysis as well as other forms of analysis for focus group data. As the intent of the research was to conduct a qualitative study that focuses on meaning rather than on quantification, qualitative content analysis was used to analyze data. Initially, the system of classification was derived from the research question and the discussion guidelines. Additional conceptual codes were developed as they arose from closer examination of the data. Coded segments included long exchanges, phrases, and sentences. Since the purpose of a focus group is to gain insight into how respondents represent the issue as a whole rather than as individuals (Millward, 1995), the unit of analysis for focus group data is a group rather than individuals within groups (Hughes, 1993).

The following guidelines for code mapping noted by Knodel (1993) as useful for developing codes for the analysis of focus group data were used:

1. Develop an initial set of codes corresponding to each item in the focus group discussion guidelines. Major topics as well as subtopics as included in the guidelines were analyzed for initial codes. Topics not included in the guidelines and that emerged
spontaneously were noted. Spontaneous topics that fell into other topics were coded in both places.

2. Create additional codes for topics that arise and are of special interest. While going through the transcripts and mapping codes according to the scheme developed in correspondence to the guidelines, additional codes were assigned for topics that arose and were of interest.

3. Develop non-substantive codes that will be of particular help in the analysis and write-up phase. Knodel (1993) suggests that noting these non-substantive codes can be helpful in interpretation and write-up. Following his suggestion, statements were flagged for quotes, difficulties with topics were noted, and issues that raised much discussion were highlighted. For example, participants had difficulty discussing whom they would contact if problems arose in families. The difficulty that they had around this provided further insights into the ethnic group's help-seeking pattern in Canada and its implications for practice.

4. Develop subsequent detailed codes to use for analyses of specific topics. After the initial code mapping was completed, the researcher analyzed specific topics covered by the transcripts and more detailed sets of codes for the topics on which the analysis was concentrating were developed.

While the focus group transcripts were being read, codes were noted in the margins. In addition, quotations that signified the codes were highlighted. A grid that tabulated the code on one axis and quotations from the focus group on the other was developed, providing a descriptive overview of the data. The intent was to find
quotations to illustrate particular themes or strands of meaning within the transcript. The grid provided a descriptive overview of the data and was used when writing up the analyses. The transcripts were then imported into NUD*IST and were coded according to the coding conducted by the researcher. NUD*IST was used to organize the data, to further validate the themes across focus groups. New themes that were previously missed were also included.

Analysis of the questionnaire data was aided with the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 8.00 for Windows 95). SPSS was used for descriptive analysis of the demographic data and to run frequencies for the questionnaire data. Since the responses for the vignettes are scaled and are at the ordinal level, the Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to test for difference between the responses of parents and child welfare workers. Utilizing content analysis techniques, themes were elicited from the open-ended section of the questionnaire.

**Validity and Reliability**

The case vignettes presented to the parent participants and the child welfare workers certainly do not completely capture cases that come to the attention of child protection services. Case vignettes are comprised of very limited information, providing few facts about the frame of mind of a parent, the intention of the parent, the precise duration of the problem, and other contributing or mitigating factors. Nevertheless, the case vignettes do begin to capture the action of a parent that is assessed by child welfare workers for harm to the child regardless of intent. Rossi, Schuerman, and Budde
(1996), who used case vignettes for their study, suggest that the main argument that can be made for the procedures they employed was that they did the best that they could do to produce case summaries that were as close as possible to actual cases. Likewise, the case vignettes used for the current study aimed to capture as closely as possible cases encountered by professionals and were further tested with experts from the South Asian and child welfare community. The vignettes were adjusted after the first pilot test and further additional testing of the new vignettes for clarity. Further testing of these vignettes is needed to assess reliability.

**Trustworthiness**

Lincoln (1995), and Lincoln and Guba, (1985) identify "credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability" as trustworthiness issues for qualitative studies. Prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, and member checking were used in this study to attain trustworthiness.

Prolonged engagement was achieved in several ways. The researcher became familiar with the population by interviewing key informants from the community who were knowledgeable about the issues being researched. Ongoing discussions were held with community members to continue the process of prolonged engagement.

Persistent observation was built into the framework of the design. When recruiting participants, the researcher held information meetings with members of the community to explain the study and to solicit participants. Participants were provided with additional information when they volunteered for the study. In addition, prior to
beginning the questionnaire and participating in the focus group, considerable time was spent with participants to build rapport and explain the research. The researcher and an assistant were available to the participants for help to interpret the questionnaire and to explain aspects of the research.

Persistent observation and prolonged engagement were also enhanced by the small size of the focus groups (a maximum of eight for the first and no more than six for subsequent groups). This number was small enough for the researcher and research assistant to engage with the participants.

Peer debriefing is a key component of trustworthiness. The researcher chose key experts to review methods of data analysis and to provide alternative interpretations of the data. The key experts were social service providers and researchers of South Asian background. Emerging issues were explored and alternative explanations thoroughly examined. Key experts were chosen for their knowledge of and expertise with the subject matter. Peer review, after the first round of data collection, also by members of the South Asian community in related social service fields, contributed to adjustments of the research design, further enhancing trustworthiness. Member checking, a procedure in which the researcher receives feedback from participants to ensure that descriptions are accurate, was used to confirm the researcher's interpretations and to enhance the overall credibility of the study. Subsequent to the pilot focus group discussion, initial coding was conducted and reviewed with a number of participants, and the initial themes and codes discussed with participants. Changes were made to the vignettes based on the feedback received, but
little change was suggested regarding analysis of the focus group data.

Considerable "thick description" is provided in the finding sections of the study which, according to Lincoln and Guba, (1985) can enable other researchers to make informed judgement about the transferability of knowledge emerging from the study. Description of the research sample can also assist in further assessing the transferability of conclusions from the study.

**Summary**

A mixed-method research design was developed for the current in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the parenting approaches of South Asian-Canadians and to explore the responsiveness of child welfare professionals to their South Asian clients. Providing the opportunity to give voice to a diverse racial and ethnic group, the qualitative data gathering technique also provides a rich contextual perspective of the research topic and participants. The quantitative data gathered enhances the trustworthiness of the study because they provide opportunity to triangulate with data from the focus groups. The quantitative data also allow for testing for significance in the responses of parent participants and child welfare professionals, further strengthening the study.
Chapter 6

Defining Child Maltreatment

The findings of the study are presented in the current chapter and the next chapter. The current chapter offers a descriptive analysis of participants, as well as findings from the focus group discussions with parents and from the questionnaires filled out by both parent participants and child welfare workers as they relate to defining child maltreatment. Chapter 7 presents findings from focus group discussions with parent participants as well as child welfare workers as they relate to cultural and contextual issues that have emerged from the study. Discussions of findings and implications for social work practice and research, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research are presented in Chapter 8.

Description of Participants

Demographic Profile of Parents:

The study sample captures the diversity within the South Asian population with respect to age, marital status, number of children per family, region of migration, languages spoken, religion, number of years in Canada, education level, employment status, income status, profession, and type of household (extended or nuclear). Table 5 captures the key demographics of the parent participants: 62% of the participants are female; the mean age of the parents is 41.2 years; and most have three or fewer children. Most participants originate in India (37.9%), followed by Sri Lanka (27.6%),
and Pakistan (24.1%). English, Hindi, Urdu, and Tamil are the most common languages spoken, while participants are primarily of the Muslim (41.4%), Hindu (34.5%), and Christian faiths (10.3%). The participants are relatively well-educated largely because of the requirements for entry into Canada as an immigrant. The occupation of the participants include: accounting clerk, babysitter, retail clerk, settlement counselor, daycare worker, engineer, ink technician, adult education instructor, manager, medical doctor, social worker, and speech language assistant. Over half of the participants are unemployed which could reflect their more recent immigrant status, an effect of snowball sampling, and a result of recruitment of participants from specific social service agencies. Five focus groups of parent participants – 3 of mothers and 2 of fathers – were conducted, comprising a total of 29 participants.
Table 5  Demographic Profile of Parent Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent Participants</th>
<th>N = 29</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>41.2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>25 to 59 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>82.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children in Family</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or Less</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>1 to 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Region of Migration</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri-Lanka</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Religion</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>41.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sikh/Buddist/</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoroastrian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of years in Canada</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than two</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two to twelve</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment Status</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>51.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Reported</td>
<td>34.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>$900 to $47,000 per annum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Household</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographic Profile of Child Welfare Workers:

For this study, 14 social workers were interviewed, the majority of whom are female (85.7%). The social workers range from 24 to 52 years of age. Although most social workers are born in Canada (64.3%), others are born in Bulgaria, Finland, India, United Kingdom, and Vietnam. Participants identify themselves as Jewish (35.7%), followed by Canadian (21.4%), and South Asian (14.3%). Half the participants have a Bachelor of Social Work degree, while the other half have Master of Social Work degrees. The sample is comprised of children's service workers, family service workers, intake social workers, supervisors, and team support workers. Slightly more than one-third of the child welfare workers interviewed are intake workers. One social worker did not have any multicultural/anti-racist training; the majority received minimal training (78.6%); and the rest received moderate training (14.3%). When asked if this training included content on South Asian families, 64.3% said no, and 28.6% said yes. Table 6 contains the demographic details of the 14 professional participants.
Table 6  Demographic Profile of Child Welfare Professionals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Welfare Professionals N = 14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>range</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Place of birth</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Bulgaria, Finland, India, United Kingdom, Vietnam.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity/culture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish / Canadian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canadian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian / Canadian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment History</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years in current position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4 years in child welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more years in social work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multicultural / antiracist training</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South Asian content in training</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings from Focus Group Interviews with Parent Participants

Focus group interviews (discussions) were held with 5 groups of parents, 3 of mothers, and 2 of fathers. The findings from both mother and father groups are similar. Four distinct themes relating to child rearing for South Asian-Canadians emerge. Parents identify a range of cultural issues – actions, norms and values – relating to parenting, which are mediated by contextual considerations, and ways in which they negotiate both cultural and contextual issues in the Canadian environment. Issues relating to parental actions that are considered by participants as appropriate / inappropriate are discussed below.

Definition of Appropriate / Inappropriate Parenting

Child welfare researchers, for example Korbin (1981, 1991), note that when providing cross-cultural child welfare services it is essential to understand whether the actions of parents are appropriate or inappropriate within their culture. Korbin's framework has resulted in researchers focusing on certain cultural practices and folk remedies that have harmful consequences for children (Hansen, 1997) in an effort to develop an understanding of cross-cultural issues. Although findings from such studies are valuable, they do not provide a broad enough view of cultural approaches to parenting. Findings from the current study help to provide a broader view of what is considered inappropriate / appropriate parenting, and cultural norms and values relating to parent and child behaviour. The findings are helpful for both assessment of child maltreatment
Participants in the study held parents to a high standard when it came to their expectations of inappropriate and appropriate behaviour. With regard to inappropriate parental actions, they note issues such as lack of appropriate supervision, inappropriate psychological responses to children, and inappropriate forms of corporal discipline. Themes regarding inappropriate behaviour relate not just to actions of parents but to their general approach to parenting. Parents being very busy and both parents working and therefore not spending enough time with their children are generally considered to be inappropriate behaviour. Participants also comment that it is inappropriate if parents do not set any rules for children. They state that they have observed that some parents do not have any rules; children therefore do not have a routine, which is inappropriate for their well-being. For example, a participant notes the following:

Sometimes the parents keep the children with them all the time. If they go out even late at night, they take their children; if they watch the TV late at night, they let the children stay up with them. That is not good for the children.

Not teaching about culture and cultural norms and values is considered to be problematic. Participants state that children suffer if they are not taught about culture, as they will not have a sense of identity and security about themselves in such cases. The theme of identity emerges again when parents discuss appropriate behaviours. For example, participants agree that it is important to teach children about culture in order to provide them with both a life-long sense of belonging and a buffer to the overwhelming influence of mainstream cultural norms. The impact on children of
conflict between parents is also recognized. Participants note that it is inappropriate for parents to fight in the presence of their children:

Quarrelling and bickering in front of the children, shouting at the children, speaking in raised voice to them. All these things children do observe.

The theme of inappropriate supervision or neglect of children is also noted. With regards to neglect, several themes are prevalent: lack of supervision, inappropriate dress, lack of responding to a dangerous environment and the importance of parental involvement in assessing the safety of situations for children. Some descriptions that capture these themes are listed below:

I had my son's and my daughter's birthday last week, and I saw this boy who came to the house; he plays down the street, but I don't know where he lives; I don't know his parents; he took our phone number from my daughter and said "I'm coming to your party." He comes to the party which lasts until late in the night. I don't know where his mother is. When I said you have to go home, he said, "no, my mother knows about it." By 11 o'clock, I start getting worried, even angry, because this is a 6- or 7-year-old child, and I don't know where the parents are. When the parent finally comes at 11:15, I felt like telling them off: I couldn't believe it could happen to an Asian family; we think that we are very protective.

Commenting on another incident of lack of supervision, two participants note:

Yesterday I was taking my child for a walk and I saw a child running around all over the place, hardly clothed, not because of poverty, for I saw their huge
house and flashy cars in the driveway.

I have seen kids on my street, 3- and 4-year-olds on their tricycles, all over the road, and the parents are nowhere to be found. There are cars zooming all over; it's so scary for me, but where are the parents?

A mother talks about the importance of checking out her child's environment and making sure there is supervision when her child makes a request to play with a friend:

My daughter is friendly with this boy, so she wants to go to his house. I said okay, but first I want to see his family's house. So, I walked down and talked to the mother. I didn't want to leave my daughter there unless someone responsible was watching her.

Behaviours of parents that may have negative emotional consequences for children are also recognized. Not embarrassing a child when disciplining and disciplining children in the presence of others, whether the child's friends or neighbours is considered to be inappropriate parental behaviour.

The participants of all five focus groups generally agree that consistent and excessive use of physical discipline is not an appropriate method to handle misbehaviour of children. However, if physical discipline is used sparingly and occasionally it is accepted by some. Participants comment that an occasional slap for a younger child and not on vulnerable places is acceptable; however, causing bruises, hitting on the face, hitting older children, using an instrument, and more than an occasional slap are considered to be inappropriate.
I don't agree with hitting or beating. A little spank here or there is okay. There can be other ways of disciplining like removing privileges, grounding, or sending them to their room; and stick by it!

Another exchange along this theme is as follows:

In no way should you hurt the child. A spank here or there is okay. But physical violence, beating the child, that's going too far.

Extreme imposition of rules upon children is also considered to be unacceptable:

They won't allow the child out even at the weekend; they just keep pushing the child, not allowing the child to have any choices; children have desires as well.

This starts the children thinking negatively.

Participants note that parents can utilize a number of approaches to regulate the behaviour of children without resorting to inappropriate behaviour. Several themes are evident relating to ways to respond to and discipline inappropriate child behaviour.

Even though rules are considered important and routine is essential, the need to be flexible around rules is also noted. For example, participants note that parents should be flexible around routines such as bedtimes if special occasions necessitate a change in the routine. The theme of flexibility is also evident around religion. Parents comment that they tell their children about such religious concerns as prayer and times for worship, but they allow them flexibility to fit these rituals into their own timeframe:

I tell my children to try to pray and worship, to make an effort, spend time on it. Try to fit it into your routine; you have to do all your homework and go to bed at times that suit you best. But you must respect your elders and heed your
religion and sunnat (teachings of the Prophet Mohammed).

Parents also feel that it is important to take cues from the child with regard to disciplining. Several participants give examples of how they accommodate their children's wishes and desires when trying to have them follow rules. With respect to a younger child, a participant states:

I like to limit the TV time, but my son watches that. I like to teach some writing or reading, but he only wants to watch TV. I try to play with him and switch off the TV for a little while and I teach a little bit before I switch on the TV.

He's okay with that.

Along the same theme, parents understand their children's developmental needs and unique personalities. One parent shares how she copes with her child:

There was a time when my son dropped anything which he picked up, even a pencil. I used to be very upset with him, no hitting, no beating, only shouting. But when my husband and I decided to ignore the problem and just keep quiet, he seems to be changing. You have to build up the self esteem of the child.

There are children who have butterfingers, but they will grow out of it. I think it's working.

Comments are also made to the effect that children have feelings, desires, and wishes, which are the parents' responsibility to accommodate. If children continue to disobey despite parents' best efforts, participants note that they have to continue to try and not to give up on the child. Some methods suggested include: talks with the child, asking father to become involved, telling the child stories that capture good behaviour.
in children, taking away privileges, ignoring the action of the child, being emotionally unresponsive to the child, and removing themselves from the situation if they found that they were becoming too angry. Below are several quotations from various parents capturing these themes:

We will show them our displeasure; we will be cross, maybe not speak to them for some time; so the child feels that the parents are upset.

In another way we can tell them more stories, good stories, of discipline.

We also tell them through our religion and that way bring them on the right path.

I'd say if you behave like this I won't take you to the mall or McDonald's.

We will be careful not to take them to children who behave badly and who they copy.

Give time to the child, try to find out what the problem is; why are you not obeying: are you cross or are we being neglectful of you or what?

Parents accept the reality that a child may indulge in behaviour that is unacceptable to them, and despite their best efforts the child continues the behaviour. They state that parents have to accept the inevitability of such situations because of the
uniqueness of each child. Yet this does not mean that the parent is giving up on the child. The parent still has a responsibility toward the child. Participants discuss the difficulty of getting some children to accept certain rules, and one parent comments:

I have bought her shorts which are longer than the shorts she bought herself. She hides these shorts from me, and it is a constant tug of war. I know what lengths the young people in high schools wear; in fact, my older daughter is the other extreme: she doesn't care about fashions, and I want her to keep pace with her peers. So I had to insist that she puts her kilt up a little, because it was too long, and I was telling her you need to wear it shorter. There was a tug of war every morning with her too.

Findings of appropriate and inappropriate parenting are consistent across the five focus groups. Parents had lengthy discussions around the use of physical discipline; two parents have little objection to the use of physical discipline, while a couple oppose its use categorically. The majority of the parents do not condone the use of physical discipline and are clear about the parameters that constitute it as inappropriate. Tables 7 and 8 show the actions of parents that are considered inappropriate and appropriate respectively.
Table 7  Inappropriate Actions of Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical discipline concerns</th>
<th>Psychological concerns</th>
<th>Neglect concerns</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consistent use of physical discipline</td>
<td>Both parents being very busy</td>
<td>Lack of supervision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of physical discipline to the exclusion of other methods</td>
<td>Not having rules for children</td>
<td>Inappropriate dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using an instrument</td>
<td>Not teaching culture and cultural ways</td>
<td>Lack of responding to a dangerous environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaving bruises</td>
<td>Fighting in the presence of children</td>
<td>Lack of parental involvement in assessing the safety of situations for children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitting in vulnerable areas especially the face and head</td>
<td>Reprimanding children in the presence of others in a way that causes them embarrassment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using physical discipline with older children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8  Acceptable Parental Behaviour and Appropriate Methods of Discipline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceptable Parental Behaviour</th>
<th>Appropriate Methods of Discipline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be flexible</td>
<td>Psychological methods of discipline acceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take cues from children</td>
<td>Talk to child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand child’s Developmental needs</td>
<td>Ask father to become involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand child’s limitations</td>
<td>Tell the child stories that capture good behaviour in children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand unique personality of different children</td>
<td>Take away privileges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore the inappropriate action of the child</td>
<td>Occasionnally be emotionally unresponsive to the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave situation if anger is overwhelming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell child of the shame they are bringing to the family.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For this sample, participants' consideration of inappropriate / appropriate actions of parents appears to meet community standards for appropriate child rearing practices. Parents are flexible in their approach to child rearing; they recognize that certain parental behaviour, such as fighting in the presence of children, is unacceptable; they seek alternatives to physical discipline; and recognize that all behaviours of children cannot be controlled. These findings support the findings of Giovannoni and Becerra (1979) who surveyed lawyers, social workers, pediatricians, police officers, and a large representative sample from the greater Los Angeles area who were asked to rank a series of vignettes, about a variety of parental acts, to reflect child maltreatment. Their results suggest a consensus regarding what is considered to be appropriate basic care of children. An ongoing concern has been that diverse ethnic groups may differ in their definitions of actions that constitute maltreatment. However, Giovannoni and Becerra, who also gathered data to ascertain definitions of child maltreatment for ethnic differences (African-American and Hispanic), conclude:

The major difference between white and "nonwhite" respondents in this study was the perception of lesser seriousness among the whites. The speculation that "minority groups" are more tolerant is not borne out by these date. What seems to be the more accurate view is that both Blacks and Hispanics are very concerned about child mistreatment. The cultural variations between them are reflected in an even greater concern about particular kinds of mistreatment, a concern embedded in a more generalized one about all mistreatment (emphasis
Data from the focus group discussions suggest that defining particular parental actions as inappropriate may not be the central issue for consideration in the provision of cross-cultural child welfare services. The findings from the focus group, however, highlight cultural norms and values that are important to South Asian-Canadian families in this sample and which will need to be understood in the context of provision of child welfare services.

**Findings From Questionnaires**

Parent participants' responses to vignettes provide a useful method for triangulating findings from the focus group. Since data were gathered in small focus group discussion, there was the potential that participant responses would be influenced and swayed by discussions in the group and by the opinions of others in the group. The questionnaires gathered data in a manner that overcame the group influence that may exist in focus group discussions; participants completed these questionnaires individually and privately, with no input from other group members. The findings from the vignettes corroborate the findings from the focus groups.

The responses to the vignettes are described first in terms of the parent participants together, then mothers and fathers separately, and finally for child welfare workers. Systematic content analysis of the rationale given in the responses to the open-ended question was conducted, and themes from these were elicited. Since the vignettes sought responses in the areas of use of corporal punishment, psychological
forms of discipline, and inappropriate supervision these are discussed under each of these subheadings. During data gathering, the vignettes were presented randomly in order to prevent bias in responses.

Parent Participants' Responses to Case Vignettes

Use of Corporal Punishment:

Four vignettes were developed to elicit responses regarding the use of corporal punishment by mothers as well as by fathers, and for male and female children. The actions of the parents in the vignettes range from the use of corporal punishment where no bruises are left to the use of corporal punishment that left bruises. Vignettes with use of corporal punishment are as follows:

Vignette #1: A mother of a 10-year-old girl slaps her on the face because she refuses to help out when the family has company visiting.

Vignette #2: A father of a 10-year-old boy often slaps him across the face because he refuses to go to the temple / mosque / gurudwara / church for religious occasions.

Vignette #3: The father of a 12-year-old boy spanks him with a belt leaving welts on this back, arm and legs because the boy does not listen to him, refuses to do his school work and is rude to both the father and the mother.

Vignette #4: The father of a 12-year-old girl hits her across the face causing a swollen and cut lip and bruising on the face as she sneaked out to go to a dance at school.
Consistent use of corporal punishment is neither accepted nor condoned by the parent participants in this sample (see chart 1). Whereas 90.5% of the parents perceive the mother's actions in Vignette #1 to be inappropriate to some degree, only 9.5% view the mother's action as appropriate to some degree. Disapproval increases with the severity of corporal punishment, particularly if an instrument is used in the process. For Vignette #3, the father uses a belt to discipline the child and leaves a bruise; 14.4% of parents view the action to be inappropriate to some extent, while 76.2% view the action to be inappropriate to a large extent. Disapproval is highest for Vignette #4 which describes a father hitting a 12-year-old daughter across the face leaving a cut lip. For this vignette, 95.2% view the action as inappropriate. The parents in this sample clearly disapprove of the use of physical force to discipline children and are concerned about the use of an instrument for disciplining children.

Parent participants largely respond that the families in the vignettes should obtain help for the difficulties that they are encountering. As the severity of the corporal punishment increases, parents are more likely to suggest that the family obtain help, for example, for Vignette #1, 57% of the participants respond that the family should seek help, while for Vignettes #2, #3, and #4, 76%, 81%, and 67% of parent participants respectively note that families in the vignettes should seek help. Parents mostly suggest that the help should be obtained from relatives or family friends (see Chart 2). Interestingly, few parents note that help should be obtained from religious leaders or community leaders, raising questions about the notion that many diverse ethnic groups in North America rely on religious or community leaders for support and
help for family problems. A small percentage of parents prefer to obtain help from professionals in the field. Parents tend to agree that the use of corporal punishment is harmful to a child's self esteem, provides inappropriate role modeling for the child, can escalate aggression on the part of the parents, and can result in aggression on the part of children. Parent participants are understanding of parents in the vignettes wanting to transmit cultural values, but they suggest alternatives to the use of corporal punishment, such as talking to the child to understand why the child is misbehaving.

The findings from the case vignette do not support for this sample of South Asian parent participants the statement made in the training video and the accompanying workbook (referred to in Chapter 3) regarding certain ethnic groups' disposition toward condoning corporal punishment (Crawford, 1998, p. 11). Indeed, parent participants in the study point out that spanking seems to be used when parents are having difficulty disciplining their children and that these parents need to be helped to find alternative ways to discipline their children. Participants often note that parents in the vignettes should talk to their children to find out what is wrong and why they are behaving as they are (see Table 9). Responses to the open-ended section of the questionnaire raise questions about the generally accepted notion that parents from collectivist cultures, such as South Asian, adhere to outside standards rather than responding to the needs of the child. In this sample, parent participants are cognizant of the feelings of children and raise concerns that the actions of parents can be humiliating to children.
**Psychological Discipline:**

One case vignette of the use of psychological approach to discipline was included in the study.

**Vignette #5:** A 12-year-old girl is seen by her parents at the mall holding hands with a boy. The father grounds the girl except for going to school. He takes her to school and picks her up. She is not allowed to use the phone or to see any friends from school.

The response to this vignette by parents was mixed suggesting that excessive psychological control of children is recognized (see Chart 1). Most parents perceive the father's behaviour in this vignette as appropriate to a large extent (28.6%); however, a very close second response is that the father's behaviour is inappropriate to a moderate extent (23.8%). In total, 48.0% of all parents consider the father's action to be appropriate to some degree, and 52.0% of all parents consider the father's action to be inappropriate to some degree. The majority of parents (61.9%) interviewed believe that the family should get help from someone. Of the 13 parents who feel that the family should seek help, the breakdown of who should be contacted is as follows: relatives / friends (84.6%), religious / community leader (30.8%), other social service agencies (30.8%), other (23.1%), Children's Aid Society (7.7%), police (0.0%) (see Chart 3).

When parents are asked to provide at least one reason why they consider the action as appropriate or inappropriate, the majority of parents (33.3%) feel that the father's actions are appropriate because in their opinion the daughter is too young to date, while some note that the daughter's behaviour is inappropriate. One parent
indicates that the action is considered appropriate based on cultural norms. In other words, the father's method of discipline involves a strict parenting style that is acceptable in many cultures. However, a group of participants (28.6%) consider the action to be inappropriate behaviour. They feel that the father overreacted under the circumstances and that his form of discipline is considered stringent and too harsh. Some participants (28.6%) believe that it is important for the parents to sit down and have a discussion with their daughter. One participant recommended that the parents seek outside help in order to prevent or reduce the potential for family conflict in the future. Participants also note that an excessive approach to discipline can lead to rebellion in the future on the part of the child and that the parent in this vignette could have employed other effective methods of discipline (see Table 10).

As with physical discipline, the wide range of responses to this vignette suggest that caution should be used when assessing particular behaviour as uniquely South Asian. The South Asian-Canadian parent participants in this sample vary considerably in whether they thought that the action of the parent in this vignette is appropriate or inappropriate. Of significance, though, is that parent participants can relate to the parent in the vignette because of similarity of values.

**Inappropriate Supervision:**

Two case vignettes of inappropriate supervision are included in the study:

Vignette #6: The parents of a 10-year-old girl go out shopping, visiting and to work leaving their 10-year-old daughter to take care of the two younger children 5 and
3 years of age.

Vignette #7: The parents of a 6-year-old girl and a 4-year-old boy often leave their children outside the apartment block till well after it is dark as the father works late and the mother is on medication that makes her drowsy.

For Vignette #6, most parent participants perceive the behaviour of the parents as inappropriate to a large extent (71.4%). In total, 9.5% of participants feel that the action of the parents is appropriate to some degree, while 81% believe that the family should get help from someone (see Chart 1). Of the 17 parents who feel that the family should get help, the breakdown of who should be contacted is ranked as: relatives / friends (82.4%), other social service agency (23.5%), other (23.5%), religious / community leader (11.8%), Children's Aid Society (11.8%), police (0.0%) (see Chart 3).

When parents were asked to provide at least one reason why they consider the mother's and father's actions to be appropriate or inappropriate, the majority of parents (28.6%) agree that a 10-year-old is too young and not capable of looking after two small children. A group of parents (23.8%) believe that it is too much responsibility for a ten-year-old child to look after a 5-year-old and a 3-year-old. Others feel that lack of supervision places the children at risk. A small percentage of parents (9.5%) do not see anything wrong with leaving a 10-year-old child to watch two small children. They feel that the action is appropriate because the parents may not have any choice because they cannot afford to pay someone to look after the children. In other words, money may be an issue (see Table 11).
The majority of participants feel that the parents' behaviour in Vignette #7 is inappropriate to a large extent (85.7%). In total, 4.8% of all participants consider the behaviour to be appropriate to some degree (see Chart 1). The majority of participants (85.7%) believe the family should get help from someone. Of the 18 parents who think the family should get help, the breakdown of whom they should receive help from is as follows: relatives/friends (88.9%), other social service agency (27.8%), religious/community leader (16.7%), other (16.7%), Children's Aid Society (11.1%), and police (5.6%) (see Chart 3). When parents are asked to provide at least one reason why they consider the action to be appropriate or inappropriate, the majority of participants (47.6%) feel that the action is inappropriate because the children are inadequately supervised. One-third of all participants state that the children are in a high-risk situation. Other participants think that the parents should make the necessary and appropriate arrangements (9.5%). One parent (4.8%) believes that regardless of the mother's condition, the children should be kept in the home with their mother. Another parent (4.8%) states that the parents need counseling to learn about other options available to care for the children (see Table 11).

As with physical discipline and psychological approaches to discipline, the South Asian-Canadian parents in this sample express concern about the lack of proper supervision of children. Participants evaluate the risk of harm to the children for each of the case vignettes of inappropriate supervision and respond accordingly. A ten-year-old left to take care of two younger siblings is viewed as slightly less severe than two young children being left alone outside after dark. Nevertheless, the former is still
considered to be generally unacceptable. Lack of support and finances are offered as some reasons for parents leaving the 10-year-old to take care of her younger siblings, suggesting that, rather than being a culturally sanctioned norm, financial stress can contribute to older children being left to care for younger children.
Chart 1  Parental ratings N=21

4 & 6 yr olds left alone until dark

10 yr old left to supervise 3 & 5 yr old

Dad grounds 12 yr old girl

Dad slaps & bruises 12 yr old girl on face

Dad hits 12 yr old boy with belt

Dad slaps 10 yr old boy on face

Mom slaps 10 yr old girl on face

Legend:
■ Very Appropriate
□ Somewhat Inappropriate
■ Moderately Appropriate
□ Moderately Inappropriate
■ Somewhat Appropriate
■ Very Inappropriate
Chart 3 Parental Response - Help Seeking

4 & 6 yr olds left alone until dark

10 yr old left to supervise 3 & 5 yr old

Dad grounds 12 yr old girl

Responses in Percent

- Police
- Other
- CAS
- Soc Serv
- Religious/
- Relatives/
- No Response
Table 9  Parent Participants’ Responses to Open-ended section of Questionnaire
-use of Corporal Punishment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Why do you think the action of the parent was appropriate or inappropriate?”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vignette # 1 Mother slaps 10 yr old girl on face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/ Mother’s behaviour is an inappropriate use of physical discipline (52.4%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/ Children need to be respected (14.3%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/ Mother’s action towards the daughter is humiliating for the child (14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/ Mother should talk to her daughter to find out the reason for the daughter’s behaviour (4.8%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/ One parent could relate to the mother’s behaviour. She notes that mother may feel disrespected, hurt, and/or frustrated by her daughter’s behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/ Child’s behaviour is inappropriate but parents should not force their children to do anything they do not want to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/ Mother’s action is appropriate because she has to teach her daughter about cultural ways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/ There are other effective methods of discipline that the mother can incorporate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/ Physical discipline is a form of modeling and it is inappropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vignette # 2 Father slaps 10 yr. Old boy face</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/ Father’s action involves an inappropriate use of physical discipline (52.4%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/ Father must talk to his son and find out the reason for the child’s behaviour (28.6%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/ Father’s action requires some form of intervention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/ Three parents believe that the father’s action is appropriate because religion is important and children have to attend the temple/mosque/gurudwara/church for religious occasions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/ The father’s behaviour is inappropriate because there is the potential for the situation to escalate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/ It is okay to reprimand a child by spanking or yelling at them, however, it is not acceptable to physically abuse the child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vignette # 3 Father spans 12 yr old boy with belt leaving bruises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/ The action is an inappropriate use of physical discipline (52.4%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/ It is necessary and important for the parents to talk to the child about his behaviour (14.3%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/ There are other effective ways of disciplining a child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/ It is inappropriate to use an object, for example a belt, when disciplining a child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/ Of those parents that considered the father’s actions acceptable, some feel that it is appropriate to discipline the son.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/ The son needs to learn how to respect his parents and his culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/ The parents require some form of counseling to teach them appropriate parenting skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8/ The father’s action may lead to aggression and a form of modeling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vignette # 4 Father slaps 12 yr daughter across face causing bruising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/ Father displayed an inappropriate use of physical discipline (52.4%).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/ Although the daughter’s actions are inappropriate and she daughter should have asked her parents for permission to attend the school dance, it does not justify the father’s behaviour towards his daughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/ Intervention is necessary to prevent further incidents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/ The incident requires further investigation, the father needs to sit down and talk to his daughter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/ The father needs to talk to another person in order to get a better understanding of his daughter’s behaviour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/ The father is responsible and should supervise his daughter more closely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/ Only one parent in this sample believes that the father’s actions towards his daughter is appropriate because it is important for parents to pass their culture to their children and the future generation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 10  Parent Participants’ Responses to Open-ended section of Questionnaire –use of Psychological Punishment

“Why do you think the action of the parent was appropriate or inappropriate?”
Father grounds 12 year old daughter
1/ The father's actions are appropriate because the daughter is too young to date (33.3%).
2/ The daughter's behaviour is inappropriate (28.6%).
3/ One parent indicated that the action is considered appropriate based on cultural norms. In other words, the father’s method of discipline involves a strict parenting style that is acceptable in many cultures.
4/ However, a group of parents (28.6%) consider the action to be inappropriate behaviour.
5/ The father over-reacted under the circumstances and this form of discipline is too stringent and too harsh.
6/ The parents should sit down and have a discussion with their daughter (28.6%).
7/ The parents should seek outside help in order to prevent or reduce the potential for family conflict in the future (one parent’s response)
8/ This type of discipline may lead to rebellion in the future.
9/ There are other effective methods of discipline that the parents can use to discipline their children.
10/ The daughter can still go to the mall but with her siblings and/or relatives.

Table 11  Parent Participants’ Responses to Open-ended section of Questionnaire – Inappropriate Supervision

“Why do you think the action of the parent was appropriate or inappropriate?”
Ten yr. Old girl left with 3 & 5 year old siblings.
1/ A 10-year old is too young and not capable of looking after two small children (28.6%).
2/ It is too much responsibility for a ten-year old child to look after a 5-year old and a 3-year old (23.8%).
3/ Others feel that lack of supervision places the children at risk, the safety of these children is an important issue (23.8%)
4/ A small percentage of parents (9.5%) who do not see anything wrong with leaving a 10-year old child to watch two small children. They feel that the action is appropriate because the parents may not have any choice because they cannot afford to pay someone to look after the children. In other words, money may be an issue.
5/ Mother and father should make the appropriate arrangements and not leave their children unsupervised.

Ill Mother leaves 6 yr. old and 5 yr. old unsupervised till after dark
1/ The action is inappropriate because the children are inadequately supervised (47.6%).
2/ The children are in a high-risk situation (33.3%).
3/ The parents should make other necessary and appropriate arrangements.
4/ Regardless of the mother’s condition, the children should be kept in the home with their mother.
5/ The parents need counseling to learn about what options are available.
6/ The parents need to be held accountable for their negligence.
7/ This type of behaviour can lead to modeling behaviour in the future.
8/ This type of behaviour is okay occasionally.
Comparative Analysis between Responses of Mother and Father Participants

This interview sample is comprised of 21 parents, 10 mothers (48%) and 11 fathers (52%). Table 12 captures the highest responses of mothers and fathers with respect to whether they think that the action of the parent in the vignette is appropriate or inappropriate, while Table 13 captures their highest response with respect to whether the family needs help, and who the helper should be. Both mother and father participants provided very similar responses as to why they considered the actions of the parents in the vignette to be either appropriate or inappropriate.

Little difference is evident in the responses of the mother and father participants with respect to the use of corporal punishment, why this form of discipline is inappropriate and where the family should obtain help. Mothers note that in Vignette #1 the child was likely to be humiliated by the mothers action of spanking her, leading one to speculate that mothers may be more likely to take a nurturing approach to parenting. However, this is not borne out in the other open-ended parental responses to the same vignette; more fathers state that the mother should talk to the child rather than use corporal punishment. In Vignette #4, all of the fathers and 80% of mothers think that the action of the father (hitting a 12-year-old girl and leaving bruises) is inappropriate to a large extent. In Vignette #3 (hitting a 12-year-old boy leaving bruises), 90% of the mothers think that the action of the father was inappropriate to a large extent, while 63.6% of the fathers thought that the action of the father in the vignette was inappropriate to a large extent. The differences between the responses of the mothers and fathers to the two vignettes may be the result of the gender of the
child. In Vignette #4, fathers may have been more likely to view the behaviour of the father in the vignette as inappropriate to a large extent due to the concern of use of physical force on a young girl; however, they may have been more tolerant of it with a young boy. Higher expectations of a boy to carry family responsibilities can also contribute to acceptance of greater discipline for him.

For Vignette #5, both mothers and fathers provided similar reasons as to why they thought the action of the parent was appropriate or inappropriate. However, mothers (40.0%) were more likely than fathers (18.2%) to state that the father in Vignette #4 over-reacted. Fathers (36.4%), on the other hand, were more likely than mothers (20.0%) to state that the parents should talk to the child. Understandably, the responses to this vignette vary widely, with some parents thinking that the action of the parent in the vignette is appropriate and others thinking it is inappropriate.

Significantly, parent participants are cognizant of emotional maltreatment and its consequences as is evident from their responses to the open-ended section of the questionnaire. The response of participants is mixed regarding the extent of psychological pressure parents should put on children. The concern that parents can overreact is noted.

Both mothers and fathers generally had a strong negative response to parents not supervising their children adequately; however, more fathers than mothers rated the action as inappropriate to a large extent. The reason for the fathers' higher rating is unclear, but it may be due to their perception of their role protectors of the family.
### Table 12  Comparison of Response of Mothers and Fathers to Case Vignettes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vignette</th>
<th>Inappropriate to moderate extent</th>
<th>Inappropriate to large extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother slaps 10 yr old girl on face</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father slaps 10 yr. Old boy on face</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father spanks 12 yr old boy with belt leaving bruises</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father slaps 12 yr daughter across face causing bruising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father grounds 12 year old daughter</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten yr. Old girl left with 3 &amp; 5 year old siblings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ill Mother leaves 6 yr. old and 5 yr. Old unsupervised till after dark</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vignette</td>
<td>Family needs help</td>
<td>Relatives/ Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/Mother slaps 10 yr old girl on face</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/Father slaps 10 yr. Old boy face</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/Father spanks 12yr old boy with belt leaving bruises</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/Father slaps 12 yr. Daughter across face causing bruising</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td>72.75%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/ Father grounds 12 year old daughter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/Ten yr. Old girl left with 3 &amp; 5 year old siblings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
<td>70.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/Ill Mother leaves 6 yr. old and 5 yr. Old unsupervised till after dark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers</td>
<td>90.0%</td>
<td>80.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fathers</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responses of Child Welfare Professionals

Use of Physical Discipline:
Social workers consistently viewed the use of corporal punishment to be inappropriate, while the extent to which the action was inappropriate depended on the severity of the action of the parent in the vignette. As would be expected, the use of an instrument (a belt in this case vignette) is considered to be the most inappropriate; leaving a bruise, although without an instrument, is considered the next most severe. Indeed, their response is consistent with child welfare training that highlights the problems associated with the use of instruments in corporal punishment. Responses for the vignettes regarding use of physical discipline are discussed below:

Vignette #1: A mother of a 10-year-old girl slaps her on the face because she refuses to help out when the family has company visiting.

Vignette #2: A father of a 10-year old boy often slaps him across the face because he refuses to go to the temple / mosque / gurudwara / church for religious occasions.

Vignette #3: The father of a 12-year old boy spanks him with a belt leaving welts on this back, arm and legs because the boy does not listen to him, refuses to do his school work and is rude to both the father and the mother.

Vignette #4: The father of a 12-year old girl hits her across the face causing a swollen and cut lip and bruising on the face as she sneaked out to go to a dance at school.

Social workers were evenly divided in their feeling that the mother's action in
Vignette #1 is inappropriate to little extent (35.7%) or inappropriate to a moderate extent (35.8%). In total, none of the social workers in this sample feel that the behaviour displayed by the mother is appropriate to some degree. The majority of social workers (85.7%) interviewed believe that the family in Vignette 1 should get help from someone. Of the 12 social workers who think the family should get help, the breakdown of whom they should receive help from is as follows: religious/community leader (75.0%), other social service agency (58.3%), Children's Aid Society (50.0%), relatives/friends (50.0%), police (16.7%), other (0.0%).

When social workers were asked to provide at least one reason why the action is considered appropriate or inappropriate, the majority of the social workers (57.1%) feel that the action involves an inappropriate use of physical discipline. Some social workers feel that children need to be respected and that this particular action can be humiliating to a child. This incident is not good for the daughter's self-esteem, and it is unfortunate that the daughter is not in a position to make her own choices (28.6%). Other social workers (14.3%) feel that the reason that the action is considered inappropriate is that there are other effective ways to discipline a child.

The majority of social workers feel that the father's action in Vignette #2 is inappropriate to a large extent (57.1%). Altogether, none of the social workers in this sample believe the father's behaviour to be appropriate. The majority of social workers (85.7%) think that the family should get help. Of the 12 social workers who believe the family should get help, the majority feel that the family should receive help from religious / community leader (75.0%), followed by the Children's Aid Society (66.7%),
other social service agency (66.7%), relatives/friends (41.7%), police (16.7%), other (0.0%).

When social workers are asked to provide at least one reason why they consider the action to be inappropriate, the majority of social workers (71.4%) state that the action is an inappropriate use of physical discipline. Some social workers (14.3%) feel that the father in Vignette #2 needs to talk to his son and to find out the reason for his son's behaviour. One social worker (7.1%) states that the action of the father is considered inappropriate because of the potential for the situation to escalate. Another social worker indicates that the action displayed in Vignette #2 is inappropriate because the son is not given a choice and is not allowed to express himself.

The majority of social workers feel that the father's behaviour towards his son in Vignette #3 is inappropriate to a large extent (92.9%). Of all the social workers interviewed, none consider the actions in Vignette #5 as appropriate to some degree. Every social worker in this sample believes the family should get help from someone. Of the 14 social workers who feel that the family should get help, the breakdown of whom they should receive help from is as follows: Children's Aid Society (100.0%), police (78.6%), other social service agency (35.7%), religious/community leader (28.6%), relatives/friends (14.3%), other (7.1%).

When social workers were asked to provide at least one reason why they consider the action to be inappropriate, the majority of social workers (92.9%) state that the action is an inappropriate use of physical discipline. One social worker (7.1%) believes that there are other more effective ways to discipline children.
The majority of social workers feel that the father's behaviour in Vignette #4 is inappropriate to a large extent (71.4%). No social worker in this sample finds the actions of the father to be appropriate to some extent. The total sample of social workers interviewed believes that the family in Vignette #4 should get help from someone. Of the 14 social workers who indicate that the family should get help, the breakdown of whom they should receive help from is as follows: Children's Aid Society (92.9%), police (71.4%), other social service agency (64.3%), religious / community leader (28.6%), relatives / friends (21.4%), other (7.1%).

When social workers were asked to provide at least one reason why they considered the father's behaviour to be inappropriate, the majority of social workers (78.6%) indicated that the father's behaviour is an inappropriate use of physical discipline. One social worker (7.1%) believes that the father needs to talk to the child. Another social worker (7.1%) feels that the child's action is inappropriate, and the child should have sought out permission (Chart 4, and 5; and Table 14).

**Psychological Discipline:**

One vignette regarding the use of psychological forms of discipline is included in the questionnaire.

Vignette #5: A 12-year-old girl is seen by her parents at the mall holding hands with a boy. The father grounds the girl except for going to school. He takes her to school and picks her up. She is not allowed to use the phone or to see any friends from school.
The range of responses to the use of psychological discipline is much more varied. While some workers feel the action of the father is appropriate, most of the workers state that the action of the parent in the vignette is inappropriate to a little extent. However, none of the workers suggest intervention from the Children's Aid Society. The majority of social workers (57.1%) feel that the father's actions in Vignette #5 is inappropriate to a little extent, followed by appropriate to a little extent (28.6%). In total, 42.8% of all social workers think the action is appropriate to some degree. The majority of social workers (57.1%) interviewed believe that the family in Vignette #5 should get help from someone. Of the 8 social workers who feel that the family should get help, the breakdown of whom they should receive help from is as follows: religious / community leader (75.0%), other social service agency (75.0%), relatives / friends (62.5%), other (12.5%), Children's Aid Society (0.0%), police (0.0%).

When social workers are asked to provide at least one reason for why they consider the action to be appropriate or inappropriate, the majority of social workers (50.0%) feel that the action is appropriate because of the parent's cultural norms which calls for a strict parenting style. Other social workers (28.6%) feel that the discipline is unacceptable because the father over-reacted and used stringent and harsh actions against his daughter. The same percentage of social workers believe: (1) the parents need to talk to their daughter (7.1%) and (2) the parents have the right to ground and discipline their children (7.1%) (See Chart 4 and 6; and Table 15).
**Inappropriate Supervision:**

The two vignettes of inappropriate supervision are listed below:

**Vignette #6:** The parents of a 10-year-old girl go out shopping, visiting and to work leaving their 10-year-old daughter to take care of the two younger children 5 and 3 years of age.

**Vignette #7:** The parents of a 6-year-old girl and a 4-year-old boy often leave their children outside the apartment block till well after it is dark as the father works late and the mother is on medication that makes her drowsy.

The majority of social workers feel that the parents' behaviour in Vignette #6 is inappropriate to a large extent (57.1%). No social worker in this sample considers the parents' actions to be appropriate at all. Every social worker (100%) interviewed believes that the family in Vignette #6 should get help from someone. Of the 14 social workers who think that the family should get help, the breakdown of whom they should receive help from is as follows: Children's Aid Society (64.3%), relatives/friends (57.1%), other social service agency (42.9%), religious/community leader (28.6%), police (14.3%), other (0.0%).

When social workers were asked to provide at least one reason why they consider the action to be appropriate or inappropriate, the majority of social workers (50.0%) feel that it is too much responsibility for a ten-year old child to look after other young children. Other social workers (21.4%) interviewed think that the parents should use their judgement when deciding if a child is mature enough to look after other young children. Social workers equally believe (1) that the child is too young and not mature
enough to protect the other young children (14.3%) and (2) that the children are in a high-risk situation because they are not supervised (14.3%).

The majority of social workers (64.3%) feel that the parents' behaviour in Vignette #7 is inappropriate to a large extent. Of all the social workers interviewed for this study, not one feels that the parents' action is appropriate to some degree. Every social worker in this sample believes that the family in Vignette #7 should get help from someone. Of the 14 social workers who felt that the family should get help, the breakdown of whom they should receive help from is as follows: Children's Aid Society (85.7%), relatives / friends (35.7%), other social service agency (35.7%), police (21.4%), religious / community leader (7.1%), and other (7.1%).

When asked to provide at least one reason why they consider the action to be inappropriate, half of the social workers state the children are being neglected and inadequately supervised; 28.6% believe that it is a high-risk situation for the children and that the children are too young to be left unsupervised; 14.3% feel that the parents should have made the appropriate arrangements; 14.3% feel that the mother should keep the children in the home rather than be left unattended outside the house. Some social workers gave more than one response to this question. (See Chart 4 and 6; and Table 16)
Chart 4 Professionals' ratings N=14

- 4 & 6 yr olds left alone until dark
- 10 yr old left to supervise 3 & 5 yr old
- Dad grounds 12 yr old girl
- Dad slaps & bruises 12 yr old girl on face
- Dad hits 12 yr old boy with belt
- Dad slaps 10 yr old boy on face
- Mom slaps 10 yr old girl on face

Legend:
- Very Appropriate
- Somewhat Inappropriate
- Moderately Appropriate
- Moderately Inappropriate
- Somewhat Inappropriate
- Very Inappropriate
**Table 14  Professionals’ Composite of Responses to Open-ended section of Questionnaire - use of Corporal Punishment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vignette #</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| 1          | Mother slaps 10 yr old girl on face | 1/ Children need to be respected and this particular action can be humiliating to a child (57.1%)  
2/ This incident is not good for the daughter’s self-esteem (28.6%).  
3/ It is unfortunate that the daughter is not in a position to make her own choices (14.3%).  
4/ There are other effective ways to discipline a child.  
5/ Physical discipline is a form of modeling and is inappropriate.  
6/ The child will feel very resentful.  
7/ One worker stated that although the punishment is inappropriate, the child needs to respect and to help her mother. |
| 2          | Father slaps 10 yr. Old boy face | 1/ The action is an inappropriate use of physical discipline (71.4%).  
2/ The father needs to talk to his son and find out the reason for his son’s behaviour (14.3%).  
3/ The action of the father is considered inappropriate because there is the potential for the situation to escalate (7.1%).  
4/ The son is not given a choice and is not allowed to express himself (7.1%).  
5/ The action is inappropriate because there are other effective methods of discipline (21.4%).  
6/ The action is inappropriate and requires some form of intervention (14.3%). |
| 3          | Father spanks 10 yr old boy with belt leaving bruises | 1/ The action is an inappropriate use of physical discipline (92.9%).  
2/ There are other more effective ways to discipline children (7.1%).  
3/ The father should be reported, his action constitutes a criminal offence (35.7%).  
4/ Using an object is inappropriate (14.3%).  
5/ The father’s actions may lead to aggression or worse behaviour - a form of modeling (14.3%).  
6/ The punishment is not consistent with the child’s behaviour (7.1%).  
7/ The parents need counseling on how to deal with their child (7.1%).  
8/ The child may learn to fear his parents and will result in no progress or resolution (7.1%). |
| 4          | Father slaps 12 yr daughter across face causing bruising | 1/ The father’s behaviour is an inappropriate use of physical discipline (78.6%).  
2/ The father needs to talk to the child (7.1%).  
3/ The child’s action is inappropriate and the child should have sought out permission (7.1%).  
4/ It is appropriate to shout and physically hit a child however, it is not appropriate to abuse a child (7.1%).  
5/ The father’s actions are inappropriate but understandable.  
6/ There are other effective ways to discipline children.  
7/ The father’s punishment is not consistent with the daughter’s behaviour.  
8/ The family should seek the advice of another person in order to help the father understand his daughter’s behaviour.  
9/ Intervention is necessary to prevent any further incidents in the future. |
**Table 15  Professionals’ Composite of Responses to Open-ended Section of Questionnaire - use of Psychological Punishment**

"Why do you think the action of the parent was appropriate or inappropriate?"

1/ The action is appropriate because of the parent’s cultural norms. As a result of their cultural norms, their strict parenting style is considered acceptable (50.0%).
2/ The discipline is unacceptable because the father over-reacted and used stringent and harsh actions against his daughter (28.6%).
3/ The parents need to talk to their daughter (7.1%).
4/ The parents have the right to ground and discipline their children (7.1%).
5/ The family should seek outside help to reduce family conflict or fears (28.6%).
6/ The behaviour is acceptable because the parents did not use physical abuse or verbal abuse on their daughter.
7/ This type of harsh discipline may lead to rebellion.

**Table 16  Professionals’ Composite of Response to Open-ended section of Questionnaire - Inappropriate Supervision**

Ten yr. Old girl left with 3 & 5 year old siblings.

1/ It is too much responsibility for a ten-year old child to look after other young children (50.0%).
2/ Parents should use their judgement when deciding if a child is mature enough to look after other young children (21.4%).
3/ The child is too young and not mature enough to protect the other young children (14.3%).
4/ The children are in a high-risk situation because they are not supervised (14.3%).
5/ Although the action is inappropriate because it is against the law, it is important to help parents understand the laws (21.4%).

Ill Mother leaves 6 yr. old and 5 yr. Old unsupervised till after dark

1/ The children are being neglected and inadequately supervised (50.0%)
2/ It is a high-risk situation for the children as they are too young to be left unsupervised (28.6%).
3/ The parents should make the appropriate arrangements (14.3%).
4/ The mother should keep the children in the home to help rather than be left unattended outside the house.
5/ The parents in this situation need to be held accountable for their negligence.
**Comparison Between Child Welfare Professionals and Parents**

Since the data gathered are at the ordinal level, the Mann-Whitney U non-parametric test is used to test for significance in the differences in response between parent participants and child welfare professionals to the case vignettes. No significant differences are found for any of the vignette questions regarding appropriateness / inappropriateness of parental behaviour. No significance is found even when the response categories are recoded for appropriate and inappropriate as opposed to the 6 responses asked in the questionnaire that ranged from least appropriate to most inappropriate. The findings raise doubt about the ongoing discussion that diverse racial and ethnic groups have differential definitions of appropriate behaviour toward children. A closer examination of the data suggest that there are minor differences between the responses of parents and that of social workers; however, these are not statistically significant. The findings from the questionnaire data support the findings from the focus group discussions with parent participants regarding what they consider to be appropriate / inappropriate parenting behaviour.

The finding is consistent with previous research by Rose and Meezan (1996) who found that the parent participants in their comparative study of the perceptions of African American, Latino American, and child welfare professionals did not favour a lower standard of child care. Indeed, they found that members of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds held parents to a higher standard when compared to child welfare professional. As early as 1979 Giovannoni and Becerra had similar findings in their renowned study of definitions of child maltreatment. The answer for child welfare
professionals may lie not so much in definitions of child maltreatment as much as in the ongoing services needed, the ability to develop a constructive relationship with members of diverse groups, and knowledge of what help to provide. Furthermore, members of many diverse cultural groups, especially those who are relatively recent immigrant groups, have relied on extended family and kinship networks in their home countries for help with family matters, and they have in many instances lost this support, while they are also unlikely to seek help from outside agencies. State mandated intervention is even more unfamiliar to many.

Although parent participants generally note that families in the case vignettes need help, and as the severity of the problem increases, a greater percentage recommend that the families need help. The source of help was primarily identified as family members / relatives. Great variation is evident in the rest of the response regarding who should be contacted for help. Religious / community leaders are favoured second as a source of help, although the percentage in favour is far less than for family members / relatives. Other social service agencies, the Children's Aid Society, and the police are also identified as sources of help but to a far lesser degree.

The percentage of parent participants and social workers who respond that families in the vignettes needed help is very similar; however, more social workers recommend help from community / religious leaders than did parents. Social workers may believe that community / religious leaders have greater influence over parents in helping to regulate their unacceptable behaviour than do family members / relatives. Alternatively, they may fall into the trap of thinking that members of diverse ethnic
groups are generally more religious and more likely to rely on religious leaders for help. However, the research did not bear this out. Still, if social workers hold such a belief then members of diverse ethnic groups are at risk of not having appropriate services offered to them. Resources may also not be developed if the thinking prevails that members of diverse ethnic groups rely on their religious leaders for therapeutic help.

Social workers and parent participants are generally in agreement regarding the reasons why actions of the parents' in the vignettes are inappropriate. For example, in Vignette #2, both groups believe the father's action is an inappropriate use of physical discipline and that the father needs to talk to the child and find out the reason why the child refuses to go to the temple / mosque / gurudwara / church for religious occasions. Some parent participants, as opposed to social workers, feel that the father's action towards his son is appropriate because religion is very important and the son needs to participate. Social workers have strong views about the father's action because they feel that the situation can potentially escalate.

According to some social workers, it is important for the child to be given a choice whether to go to church or not. The fact that some child welfare workers feel that a 10-year-old child should have the freedom to choose whether to participate in religious activities or not can undermine the client-worker relationship if the worker appears to side with the child. Parents can easily feel undermined in trying to provide the needed boundaries for their children if social workers advocate for the child in opposition to the parent. It may be more useful to help both parent and child to meet halfway, honor the parents value system, but question the action being used to transmit
the values. As the large majority of the parent participants in the study did not agree with the use of corporal punishment to discipline children and to transmit preferred values, those South Asian-Canadian parents who are using physical discipline to transmit accepted values can be counseled to use alternative methods as used by other South Asian-Canadian parents.

In cases of corporal punishment where bruising occurred, more social workers than parents recommend reporting to the police. Social workers are required to report such cases to the police, while parents may not be aware that leaving a bruise can constitute assault. In these extreme cases, social workers and parents are also in agreement with the reasons for considering the punishment as inappropriate. Both groups believe that the father's actions involve an inappropriate use of physical discipline and that other effective methods of discipline are available. The small number of parents who feel that the actions in the cases of use of corporal punishment leaving bruises is appropriate note the reasons for their responses as follows: (1) it is appropriate to discipline children; and (2) children need to respect their parents and their culture. Social workers may encounter such entrenched ideas in a small number of parents, but they would be wise to remember that the large majority of parent participants in this study did not agree with the sentiment. However, parents generally understood the value being transmitted and its importance, suggesting that social workers need to accept the parent's value but not the action of the parent. Social workers should be wary of falling into the trap of accepting and perpetuating the stereotype that use of physical discipline is widely accepted among South Asian families.
and that therefore families who come to their attention are behaving in a culturally acceptable manner.

In both vignettes of inappropriate supervision, more parent participants than social workers rated the action of the parent as inappropriate to a large extent. Social workers in comparison to parents do not rate the parent’s behaviour as appropriate at any level. Both groups agree that the children are too young and the oldest child is not old enough to protect the two young children. Social workers and parent participants feel that unsupervised children are in high-risk situations if left unattended or unsupervised.

Summary

Findings from the study raise questions about contentions that diverse cultural groups not only have differential definitions of child maltreatment but that they also use more abusive behaviour to discipline children. The focus group discussions confirm the findings from the questionnaire with respect to the parent participants’ responses to the appropriateness/inappropriateness of parental actions toward children, while shedding light on key issues impacting child-rearing for South Asian parents in the Canadian context.

Statistical analyses did not show a significant difference between parent participants and child welfare professionals for any of the vignettes in the study. Although the small sample size prevents generalization from the study, some general observations can be made. Social workers are more likely than parents to feel that the
actions of the parents in each of the vignettes are inappropriate as opposed to appropriate. In general, social workers do not feel that the parents display appropriate actions towards their children in all seven vignettes. A greater range of responses was evident for the parent participants, but most generally felt that the actions of parents in the vignettes was inappropriate. Parent participants are more likely to feel that relatives/friends should be contacted for help, while social workers were more likely to feel that the Children Aid Society and the police should be contacted when families are experiencing problems. Social workers and parent participants are largely in agreement that the behaviour of the parents in the vignettes is inappropriate because (1) it represents an inappropriate use of physical discipline; (2) other effective methods of discipline are available; (3) children are too young and are in a high-risk situation to be left unsupervised. Parent participants tend to believe the actions employed in each of the vignettes are appropriate because it is important for parents to discipline children, for children to respect parents, and for children to respect cultural values and norms. These reasons provide insights into the cultural norms and values of the group.
Chapter 7

Cultural and Contextual Issues

This chapter discusses additional findings, beyond those of defining appropriate and inappropriate parenting, from the focus group interviews with parent participants and child welfare professionals. Findings from the focus group interviews with parents suggest that particular cultural values and norms are important to this sample of South Asian-Canadian parents, that contextual factors influence parenting, and that South Asian-Canadian parents have personal agency in managing their environment. The overriding theme emerging from the focus group interviews of child welfare professionals relate to the complexity of providing cross-cultural services. Not knowing what constitutes appropriate cross-cultural services, the difficulty of knowing what are culture specific behaviours, lack of relevant resources, and issues relating to cross-cultural interactions complicates the provision of services to diverse racial and ethnic groups. Comparing and contrasting the findings from the focus group discussions with parent participants and child welfare professionals suggest that differences in values between the groups relating to expectations of children and appropriate parenting, as well as a lack of understanding of issues important to South Asians families, can result in conflicts between parents and professionals. Despite the ongoing discourse on cultural diversity, practice continues to be contingent on Eurocentric values.
**Additional Findings from Focus Groups with Parents**

**Cultural Values and Norms:**

Parents in the sample express values/norms that can be classified as responsibilities of parents and expectations of children. Parents in this sample identify a strong sense of responsibility toward child rearing which permeates all aspects of their lives. They emphasize having routines for children and being organized as parents. Having a routine for children is considered to be an important element of parenting and essential for the well-being of children. Parents note that having routines for children can help to deter unacceptable behaviour among children and reduce the need to discipline them. Parents speak to a large extent about setting examples of good behaviour for their children and hope that their own good behaviour would lead to similar behaviour in children.

Included in parental responsibility is the importance of teaching ones culture to children. Concerns are noted that if children do not have knowledge of their culture they will not have a sense of belonging, without which life would be meaningless. Thus, imparting of cultural values is considered essential for the healthy development of identity. This sense of belonging for children is also important to help them to keep connected with other people of similar backgrounds if they are away from home. The concern that their children may develop a sense of isolation because of a lack of acceptance by mainstream society contributes to the need to help children develop a sense of identity.
Religion is considered a means of developing a sense of identity and belonging as a parent describes:

Following a religion helps them in the outside world, because they can identify with their peers who follow the same religion. They might feel that the parents are pressuring them in discipline, but they would see other children of their age following the religious practices and feel one with the other children. So they have a sense of belonging outside too.

Even though being connected to religion emerges as an important theme for many in the focus groups, the extent to which individuals and families adhere to religion varies considerably. Religion is important to some while for others it is used as a way to help their children develop a sense of identity. The need to help children have a sense of identity emerges from the fact that South Asians are a minority group which experiences the consequences of not having their values and norms validated in Canadian society.

One aspect of religion / culture includes helping children to develop a sense of modesty, humility, responsibility, and the acceptance of the wisdom of adults and elders. Matters of sex education are considered to be private affairs to be discussed in the home rather than at school. Dating, especially at a younger age, or public displays of sexual behaviour are not condoned. Parents also see helping their children to choose the appropriate marriage partner as their responsibility.

Even at school they tell children how babies are born, even show it on TV and videos.
We don't like to teach the small kids about sex in the school. Every Asian parent doesn't like it.

We want education, but we were not taught about sex or about how babies are born at school. We just learned gradually, and after marriage; but here it's different.

A few parents were open to sex education in the school:

On Friday, my daughter brought the form to allow her to learn about family planning from grade 5. She says I don't know what's going to happen; this is going to be very gross. I said, no darling it's not going to be gross; I'm going to sign it, and you're going to learn a lot of things.... You know, about periods; this is exactly what you're going to learn, about sexual life, and that's not gross; that's part of life. At the end, the form says parents and guardians are welcome. When my daughter realized I was thinking of coming, she said you don't have to come, I'll come and tell you everything about it. So, you know, I'm just encouraging my children to be open.

Comments about public display of sexuality, how it can make parenting difficult, and its influence on children.

In our country, if you take your child somewhere --like on a bus-- you'll never see a boy and girl kissing. Over here it seems the norm.

The theme of parental responsibility is linked with the theme of expectations of
children. Parental responsibility is important and necessary in order to inculcate certain values which include respect for elders, learning about culture, and adhering to religion. Although these values are necessary to have a fulfilling life, they are also important for helping children to be good citizens; for example, respect for elders is so much a South Asian tradition because it results in good behaviour outside the home:

We have to teach them our discipline, our culture, and respect for the elders.

To respect the elders is good behaviour. That is the polite way. If they respect the elders at home, they will also respect people outside the home. My son behaved a little bit rudely with his aunt; also in the day care, he was a little bit rude.

While for some parents religion is important because it can help children to remain connected with their families and their cultural group, for others religion is an important organizing and guiding principle in everyday life and something that children have to be taught:

You must get up early in the morning, and you must have a bath and pray; only then can you do your normal work.

Religion should be practiced everyday because it is seen as a transmitter of culture and a guideline for moral behaviour. The acceptance of religion as a guiding principle does not mean that all South Asians practice the rituals of their faith to the same extent. Some parents feel the need to increase the extent to which they adhere to religious ritual in their adopted country as compared to their country of origin, largely
because they sense that otherwise their children will not have sufficient knowledge of their religion. Other parents feel that they need to be flexible about the extent to which religion should be imposed on their children, and they are critical of those who are not flexible regarding religious rules.

In setting rules and having expectations for children, participants emphasized that parents have to set examples for their children:

From a very young age we try to show our children by example, by our own behaviour.

If I cover my head, then I can ask my daughter to do the same thing; if I don't, then how can I demand that of her?

In discussing the responsibility of parents, the study sample perceive cultural differences in expectations of parental responsibility between Euro-Americans and South Asian parents exist:

Our children are everything, they are our life. But Americans want their own lives, their own enjoyment, their own vacations. They have their own personal life. We don't have any personal life. Our life is our children.

For Asian parents, children are their life; that way they take more responsibility for the child's future. Even after our children are married, we continue to suffer if they suffer.

In contrast to Western culture, the parent-child dyad tends to be more dominant
than the spousal dyad in South Asian culture. Falicov (1995) has noted the same
tendency for Mexican Americans as well as many eastern cultures. Certainly, the South
Asian parents in this study insist that their sense of responsibility to children is different
than that of western families. Furthermore, Triandis (1994) notes that South Asians
tend to come from a collectivist culture which tend to organize its subjective
experiences around one or more collectives such as the family, religious group, or
kinship network. A collectivist culture defines identity by group membership (Pettys &
Balgopal, 1998) and emphasizes the internalization of group values, norms, and roles
(Shor, 1998). South Asian participants in my study exhibited their collectivism by
emphasizing the importance of religion / culture, of group values such as respect for
elders and their authority, and of transmitting to children a sense of belonging to a
cultural group. Even though these cultural considerations are evident in the study,
participants further clarify contextual issues that influence preferred cultural values and
norms.

**Contextual Considerations:**

Participants identified three major contextual issues that have a consequence for
parenting: the consequences of migration; raising children in an environment that is
different to the one in which they were raised, and lack of validation and acceptance of
South Asian values and norms. Because migration has resulted in families being
transported to an unfamiliar environment, many have lost the support of extended
family, kinship, and neighbourhood networks. Living in an environment where diverse
values and norms are present challenges parenting and transmitting of preferred values. The following focus group excerpt shows the difficulty parents experience in not having informal support networks to help in the transmission of cultural values:

Here it's very difficult, because we are alone, the mother and father who have to take care of the children, just two of us. Back home, they have a whole family and they learn themselves and with them there are aunts, uncles, everywhere, neighbours and all. Here they have to just confine themselves in the house, just two of us, and if we are working they are neglected. It's difficult here, lots of work for the parents.

Additionally, despite the great diversity among South Asians, particularly regarding religion, parents have a sense of comfort in the home country because families have similar values for children:

In our country, our neighbours also are very close and they are helpful. They are like our family members. But in Canada we don't have neighbours like that.

And here is the very big problem.

Participants also comment about the need to be more vigilant with their children because of the diversity of values present in settings such as schools and daycare centres:

Here, all the time we have to keep an eye on what they are learning, what they are learning from the day-care, school, from the friends. Who are their friends? There, we know all the neighbours and friends, but here, different people, different kids, in the day-care, all the time changing.
There, religion is different, but culture is same; we all are from the same background.

Over there, we have so much interaction with relatives; even in school, children will be from similar backgrounds. The family influence is much stronger.

In all five focus groups, participants note the loss of support networks and a familiar environment that is further exacerbated by cultural differences in parenting and preferred norms and values:

I have no extended family here; I came here when my oldest son was six months old; I was pregnant with the other one and had a bedridden father-in-law to look after, just feeding him and everything. I had tremendous help where my husband was concerned, but it was just between him and me, and by the time the day was ending, we were both exhausted. We definitely needed some kind of help because I was just changing diapers, feeding mouths, and so was my husband. We didn't want to put his father in a nursing home because it's just not our culture to do something like that, and if he did live longer, it is because he was with us. We knew that once we moved him into a nursing home or a hospital he would not live long.

Some who have had extended family in Canada have found the transition to their new country to be much easier:

For us, the move to Canada has worked out well mainly because I have a
brother here and his family; and my sister-in-law especially has been very
supportive, and that's how it's helped me settle down so well. I think it is partly
our Indian tradition, that has helped here, sharing, helping, and protecting the
family are very much part of our Indian culture.

Parents are generally more isolated in their responsibility for transmitting their values
and norms and are doing so in an environment that is not supportive of these values.
Parents note that, in the new context, children are encouraged to a greater extent to
make their own choices, resulting in more questioning of parental authority. Within this
context, parents are challenged to find new ways of parenting that do not result in
giving up their responsibility, while still responding to the child's questioning of
authority.

Another consequence of migration is that many parents are finding that both
parents need to work in order to get established, resulting in guilt that their children are
not getting the necessary attention. The physical environment also adds stress to
parenting inasmuch as the weather limits children from spending more time outside. As
children spend more time watching television, they are indoctrinated into Western
cultural and consumer values. Confronted by their children's demands for the products
advertised on television, parents often comment about the greater emphasis on material
possessions in North America. Some parents choose not to put their children in
community activities or summer camps not only because the costs are prohibitive but
also because they fear the loss of social and cultural influence in their children's lives.
Imparting preferred values and norms becomes increasingly difficult as they appear to
be ignored or denigrated in the course of their children's steady exposure to the dominant culture.

Raising children in an environment that they are more familiar with can also leave parents feeling disempowered:

There is too much freedom here, parents cannot say anything to the kids. We can't control our kids nowadays. Nowadays, even 7-year-old children know, if we punish them, they can call the police, but after that they don't know we might be separated, they don't understand.

Despite cultural differences in parenting and problems arising from migration, South Asian families are cognizant of the need to negotiate the environment in which they are living.

Migration has a major impact on their help-seeking behaviour. The extended family, kinship, and neighbourhood support network on which families customarily rely in their country of origin can disintegrate in their adopted country. While some immigrants arrive as part of nuclear families, others who have relatives in their adopted country decide that they do not want to impose on them for help, reasoning that all families have much to cope with and do not need the added burden. Physical distance also contributes to the reluctance to call upon family members for help. The feeling of shame for experiencing problems in the new country can cause normally self-reliant people to be reluctant to ask for help. Finally, many parents simply do not have extended family in their adopted country on whom they can call for help:

Now that our family members are far away, the relationship is not close. The
problem here is that we do not live together here. We don't have grandparents living with us here. It is just the parents and the children. With the parents both working, you often cannot be a help to others.

We have some relatives here. But still everybody is very busy, so we have to take care of things on our own.

If support from the extended family is not available, South Asian families often seek help from friends of a similar cultural background. Those who rely on help from close friends rather than from their family emphasize that close proximity tends to foster closeness of feeling within the relationship. Often lost for South Asian families in Canada is a source of support from neighbours of a similar cultural background. Neighbourhoods with greater numbers of people from similar cultural backgrounds can readily be a source of support for families as the following participant notes:

I feel good because I can help out some people in my apartment block. There was a problem, for this child about doing homework, because the mother was only educated in Urdu, and the children came from an Urdu medium school, so in those cases I have helped. I have helped the children with their homework, and sometimes I have to help them with English. I also help the mother if she is having problems because of language problems. Living in an apartment, I have helped a lot of neighbours who are new immigrants.

Moving to a new country has also contributed to a change in help-seeking dynamics. Even though it is quite acceptable for extended family members to help with
family problems in the country of origin, they tend to be more reluctant to become involved in the lives of other family members in the adopted country. Their reluctance to intervene may be the result of the general erosion of the collectivist values in favour of the more individualistic values of the adopted country.

**Results from Focus Groups with Child Welfare Professionals**

The overriding theme emerging from the focus group of child welfare professionals relate to the complexity of providing cross-cultural services. Not knowing what constitutes appropriate cross-cultural services, the difficulty of knowing what are culture specific behaviours, lack of relevant resources, and issues relating to cross-cultural interactions complicates the provision of services to diverse racial and ethnic groups.

**Difficulty of Understanding What Constitutes Appropriate Cross-Cultural Services:**

Professional participants note that even though many of them had multicultural / anti-racist training at university, they feel ill-prepared for working with diverse clients, partly because of the nature of the training they had received. A few had been in full courses that covered issues of diversity, while most had very limited coverage included with other social work courses. A few of the workers had also received limited training in multicultural / anti-racist issues included into the general core in-service training that they received through the child welfare system. Participants note a lack of current in-
service training focusing just on cross-cultural issues.

My training has been minimal to be honest. I had some at the University of Toronto, but two days out of a course of a year and minimal training here at the agency is not enough background.

Mine has been fairly minimal as well. I found that in social work courses they'd usually devote a day or two to that.

Nothing specific to South Asian families, and I haven't taken a course strictly with regards to cross cultural practices, a little bit was touched upon throughout different social work courses.

A handful of participants had more training at the university level than others, but a similar amount of training within the child welfare system. Although the majority of social workers had some training, for many, this training seemed to be inadequate, since much of it was very general, focusing on the importance of working within the framework of the values of diverse clients, and understanding issues relating to oppression and racism. Although the training provided understanding of some general issues to consider in cross-cultural service provision, workers felt that this training was generally inadequate as the training did not provide specific information about the values of specific groups creating the dilemma for workers about how to be respectful of diverse values when they did not even have training on knowing what these diverse values were. While identifying the need to understand values of importance to diverse
ethnic groups, workers were aware that providing training about such values could lead to stereotyping about groups as captured by the comments of participants who had received training about specific groups:

I did some training at this agency but I don't think it was very good because the instructor had a lot of prejudice against East Indians. She was East Indian herself, and it seemed to me that she had a very caste-oriented perspective. She said basically that the Indian people who came to Canada were people whom their families didn't want.

Most of my university courses in multicultural social practice were the standard sort training about each group. I had a few courses that had a more anti-oppressive or anti-racist approach which I found much more helpful.

Participants also noted the need for comprehensive training rather than training for cultural issues being included in other training:

I did some training in Alberta. We did a five-day course on multiculturalism, but it mainly concentrated on native population, native issues because we had a large percentage, a lot of cases with native kids. And I found that very helpful. This participant went on to say that she found that she was able to generalize the training to situations with clients from other diverse backgrounds. Others agreed with the comment above noting that some focused cross-cultural training rather than short spurts intermingled with the general training is more useful.
Training on issues of oppression and racism provided workers with knowledge of its general effect on clients, but it did not give them direction on service provision for child welfare purposes. Workers coped with this deficiency by trying to learn from individual situations:

You pick things up too. I feel just working with each family, that's where the training comes because as you work with different families, they explain to you what their discipline method is like and how they see things. And you work with more and more families, that's how you pick up the multiculturalism issue.

The general complexity of what is appropriate cross-cultural training and what workers identify as their needs, given their experience in the field, is captured in the following comment:

I think our team talked about needing specific information about groups, and so we asked for training for specific information on groups and that should have addressed cultural issues; but we were told "You can't do that." They generally refer to cross-cultural training and want you to manage. Every time I've asked for specific training when I have gone for training I have not received it.

The findings from the study suggest the need for training that provides a clearer conceptual framework for what constitutes appropriate cross-cultural services. The desire on the part of workers to obtain culturally specific information about groups also needs to be addressed. On the one hand, providing culturally specific information about groups can contribute to stereotyping and vast generalizations. On the other hand, not providing such information may leave workers with little knowledge about cultural
values and norms that are important to specific groups. Maitra (1996), drawing on her research suggests that "attempts to universalise Western definitions of 'child abuse' fail to take into account the cultural and social realities of 'non-Western' children and families" (p. 287). Without this understanding, workers can easily become judgmental of the values and norms of groups. Additionally, certain behaviours of clients may be seen as cultural but may be the result of other stress that the family is experiencing. Indeed, Hansen (1997) reviewed a number of folk remedies amongst diverse ethnic groups that might be mistaken for child abuse. Her research of the Hispanic folk remedy of caida de mollera, which has been identified in the literature as having the potential to cause injuries as seen in shaken baby syndrome, leads her to conclude that "the child abuse community would benefit from realizing that treatment for caida de mollera is an improbable cause of shaken baby syndrome injuries" (1997, p. 117).

Treatments for caida de mollera, she notes, "consist of a number of gentle, nonviolent maneuvers quite different from the violent shaking believed to cause shaken baby syndrome" (p. 117). She urges

... healthcare and child protection professionals to be hesitant to accept treatment for caida de mollera as explanations for shaken baby syndrome injuries even when all other avenues have been explored and no other explanations found. More likely the baby has been shaken (1997, p. 125).

Interventions then are misdirected when inaccurate assessments occur, leaving children at risk, over or under involvement in the lives of families, and failure to provide the necessary help to families.
**Difficulty of Knowing what are Culture Specific Behaviours:**

Participants note that, when providing services to diverse groups including South Asians, defining what the group considers appropriate and inappropriate parental actions, understanding what values and norms are important to the group, and knowing what the help-seeking behaviours of groups are makes the provision of services to diverse groups complex. They note that a range of maltreatment forms are prevalent for South Asians on their caseloads. However, excessive use of physical discipline followed by parent-teen conflict appear to be the dominant maltreatment forms that they generally encounter for the group. A supervisor notes:

> Physical discipline would be the primary reason for involvement. And there'll be other reasons that we'll get involved; poverty is an issue within those families, lack of resources, lack of social supports, but usually what brings them to us would be physical discipline.

Others in both focus groups of child welfare professionals also note that South Asian families on their caseloads often initially come to the attention of child welfare because of excessive use of physical discipline. Workers note that physical discipline appears to be used often with both genders, and not as a last resort. Older children come to the attention of the Children's Aid Society more for cultural conflicts around parental expectations of children. Workers also note that such conflicts appear to be greater for female than for male children:

> When the children are older, there is a lot of cultural conflict around
expectations for the children like going out with friends and receiving too many phone calls.

With South Asian families, the issue would be more predominantly physical abuse than the other issues. Does that make sense?

Also there would be more of an issue around the role with young girls and women.

Although social workers try to consider some of the contextual issues in the lives of South Asian clients, they tend to view parental actions, particularly if it is inappropriate, in "cultural" terms, as in the following observation:

The cases where the feeling is so culturally entrenched that they have a right to physically abuse their children are much harder to deal with. It's much harder to help make a mind shift there than it is with the families where authority is respected a little more.

Because social workers are unfamiliar with patterns of behaviours of diverse groups, they are uncertain whether the physical discipline used by parents is considered to be abusive in their culture. Social workers are willing to accept that the use of physical discipline is very much a cultural norm when working with South Asian parents, but that does not prevent them from trying to attribute certain forms of physical discipline as abusive:
It depends on the type of physical discipline used. If they are going to use spanking and you can see that spanking is very much a part of the culture, then you have to negotiate with them what is reasonable. But the child got punched squarely in the face, I don't know how many cultures really condone that kind of thing. So those are things that you have to work out for yourself.

To decide whether the action of the parent is appropriate or inappropriate, it really depends on where they're spanking or slapping the child. If it's a slap on the hand or on their body over their clothes it's different.

The focus group interviews with South Asian parents, however, show that use of physical discipline is not the preferred method of disciplining children. In order to conduct a comprehensive assessment of risk to children and the service needs of children and families, workers need to move beyond viewing the action of parents as cultural and to assess other factors, such as whether the family is experiencing stress due to isolation, loss of support networks, lack of employment, housing issues, abuse in the parents life, substance abuse, and changes in family situation.

Participants in the study also indicate that they struggle with understanding the norms and values of South Asian families, which makes service provision more difficult, and which is exacerbated by not knowing the preferred helping networks of South Asian families:

I find working with men and women in a family that I have difficulty understanding the power relationship between them. I'm not understanding the
difference between what that means in a Hindu family, and what that means in a Muslim family.

The Indian family that I work with gives me real difficulty with my philosophical beliefs around raising girls and what their opportunities should be. The woman wanted to raise her children very traditionally, very subservient. The father who was physically abusive wanted to raise the children the way I would want their girls to be raised, although without the physical abuse. But it was a real dilemma for me in terms of what's my role and how far is my intervention supposed to go.

I think there's certain things they don't talk about and that makes it difficult with the cultural differences. And things that their children may be going through, they don't ever know because they just see the actions and they don't understand the feelings behind it. In the scenario where the child snuck out to go to a dance and the father hit her, in that sense he's not going to the length of understanding why it's so important for her to go to that dance and to be accepted and what it's like to be living in this culture. It's merely the communication that needs to be opened and a different way of thinking.

Indeed, Proctor and Davis (1994) have noted the problem identified by the participants in the study: "knowledge of the cultural nuances of a people depends on meaningful personal interactions" (1994, p. 315). Since diverse ethnic and racial groups live
relatively separate lives, they have limited understanding of each other. In addition, as practitioners are generally white, "they know very little about the social realities of nonwhite cultures" (Proctor & Davis, 1994, p. 315).

Providing cross-cultural services also raises the question of what are the typical help-seeking behaviours of an ethnic group. Workers struggle to make sense of how to be most helpful to their clients:

I always thought that it was the responsibility of the family to help out. If they had problems, it became a family issue, with respected members of the family being called in. And the family tried to solve their own problem, and the family did not want any help from the outside, or maybe they wanted help from community members.

Our experience has been too with some families, not a large percentage, they don't want sources within their own community. They don't want their community to know. They're ashamed of their involvement and what happened. And so they want to be sort of outside their community.

Social workers use a number of tactics to try to understand their South Asian clients. They seek out information about diverse groups from the interpreters that they use and from other resources that have familiarity with diverse cultural groups:

And I think sometimes because you work with them so much you have a good relationship with some of the interpreters you go out with and that's where their cultural background is helpful with the families that we're working with. And
you can get information from the Women's Network too.

**Lack of Relevant Resources:**
A source of great frustration for child welfare professionals is the lack of resources for their South Asian clients. Whereas the lack of resources is a common problem in child welfare service provision, it is even greater problem in serving South Asian clients, according to many of the professional participants in this study. Language barriers limit the referral of South Asian clients to mainstream agencies whose approach to counseling may be inappropriate because of differences in cultural norms and values. For example, social workers who rely on resources such as pamphlets and videos on parenting and parental support groups to help clients with issues such as discipline, toilet training, and responding to a child with colic, cannot relate well to people who will have difficulty utilizing their resources. Even when South Asian clients speak English, social workers are uncertain whether these resources are useful to them.

Because of their inability to provide culturally-specific resources, mainstream social workers tend to assume that they have no option but to demand that South Asian parents change their behaviour patterns, thereby hindering the development of a rapport and a productive ongoing relationship with the client.

Although, many clients accept help from ethno-specific agencies, social workers note the importance of mainstream support agencies being culturally competent, since some clients prefer help from mainstream agencies out of a desire for privacy: Maybe its privacy and maybe there's persecution in their home country, its hard to know, and
so they don't want their own because of information getting out, maybe for different reasons.

**Issues Relating to Cross-Cultural Interactions / Communications:**

Interacting and communicating across cultures poses barriers to appropriate services:

There are a lot of families that I've worked with where the message I'm getting is we'll do everything you want and jump through all these hoops.

Families end up on your caseload and you don't know what's going on, you need an interpreter to help you. It's hard to communicate through an interpreter; sometimes you get the sense that the family is not happy with what is going on but the family doesn't really say what they are thinking. It's really kind of hard to get a good grasp of what's being said in interviews and what's happening because you have the language disadvantage. You also have some of the cultural stuff, and the family's already aligning against you.

Professional participants in this study have a sense that assigning social workers of the client's own cultural background will contribute to the development of a more productive service relationship. The reaction to this suggestion is mixed in both focus groups. Some social workers who have worked with clients of the same background as themselves have found it to be a mutually beneficial experience, while others have not. Thus, more than a mere similarity of heritage appears to be required to ensure a productive relationship with clients:
You really need somebody that they can identify with because basically they need somebody of their own population that they can feel comfortable with and work with rather than just white Anglo Saxon or Jewish or Catholic or whatever. And we're not going to be identified as their culture group, and they're just not going to be able to relate to us.

I have cases that are largely South East Asian families, because I am of that background. Mainly because I can speak the language and it just works better because I can communicate in Cantonese without having to use an interpreter, and its works out fine.

Because they know my last name is Tamil and they assume I can speak Tamil, which I can't, their expectations are a bit different because they expect me to be more sympathetic or to know more about the culture.

**Summary**

The lack of resources combined with not knowing what constitutes culturally appropriate services contributes to workers feeling that cases comprising of South Asian families are more difficult. Workers have to go to greater lengths to ensure that they are carrying out their child protection role. Cases from the mainstream can easily be referred to children's mental health agencies that have programs to provide counseling and other assistance to families where child maltreatment is a problem. Yet
these agencies are not always geared to meet the needs of diverse clientele. Language poses the most obvious barrier, but other factors such as not knowing the help-seeking behaviours of clients from diverse backgrounds contribute to the problem.

Nine essential elements emerge from the study with respect to the provision of child welfare services to clients from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (see Table 29). Although child welfare theory focuses on differential definitions of child maltreatment by various racial and ethnic groups (Korbin, 1991), the current study, like other studies (Giovannoni & Becerra, 1979; Rose & Meezan, 1996), suggests that definition issues may not be central in the provision of culturally appropriate services. The current study, like those by Hong and Hong (1991) and Shor (1998, 1999), suggests that differences in parenting norms and values are present for diverse groups and must be factored into service provision. These norms and values are important to parents, but they have multiple ways in which to exercise them depending on the surrounding context, their support networks, their personality, and the personality of each child. Additionally, the transmission of norms is important for promoting cultural and religious values which provide guidance for living and serve as a barrier against a social environment that is harsh because of racial and cultural diversity and minority status. Studies (for example, see Denby & Alford, 1996; Gorman, 1998; Jarrett, 1999) of minority racial and ethnic groups show that parenting is closely related to helping children to succeed in a social environment that is harsh because of race, ethnicity, and minority status.

Social workers need to engage with parents from diverse backgrounds when
providing services in order to understand what motivates certain parenting approaches and to ensure that practices that enhance functioning for a minority child are not inadvertently judged as harmful and undesirable. Cross-cultural communications, however, can be challenging according to the child welfare professionals in the study. Lack of familiarity with a group, perception of a group as culturally different, ethnocentrism among social workers, language barriers, and lack of trust by minority groups of mainstream institutions interfere with or prevent communication. These factors also contribute to making mainstream resources ill-suited for many families from diverse backgrounds, and conversely, the lack of culturally relevant resources undermines service provision to diverse groups.
Table 17 Essential Elements in the Provision of Culturally Relevant Child Welfare Services.

1. A focus on differential definitions of child maltreatment by diverse racial and ethnic groups is misleading.
2. Social workers need to be sensitive to the diverse norms and values of groups.
3. Judgment of parenting approaches from a Eurocentric perspective can confound professional relationships.
4. Social workers should be aware of the needs of particular groups because of differences in the contexts of groups. Specific services need to be developed for members of diverse groups.
5. Child welfare/social work cases are complex because of the contextual and cultural diversity of groups, yet members of diverse groups have such varied responses that it is difficult to make generalizations, further complicating cases.
6. It is difficult to know what is appropriate cross-cultural social work practice. Workers are learning about cross-cultural services "in action", that is from ethno-specific resources.
7. Lack of appropriate resources can result in harsher child protection intervention.
8. Problems associated with cross-cultural communication can result in misunderstandings.
9. An extreme lack of resources for diverse racial and ethnic groups makes it difficult to provide appropriate child protection services to these families.
Chapter 8
Discussion

Discussion and Implications for Practice

This mixed-method exploratory study sought to understand parenting approaches of South Asian Canadians and the way in which these approaches are incorporated into child welfare service provision. Child welfare researchers have suggested that in order to provide culturally sensitive services, social workers need to determine the nature of abusive and non-abusive behaviour within a particular group (Korbin, 1981, 1991). Within this framework, studies have been conducted to understand differences in definitions of child maltreatment among diverse racial and ethnic groups in North America (Giovannoni & Becerra, 1979; Hong & Hong, 1991; Rose & Meezan, 1996). These studies have begun to provide some understanding of differences in definitions of child maltreatment.

A limitation of these studies, however, is that the behaviours of diverse racial and ethnic groups are viewed in static terms, and only limited understanding of the influence of context for individuals is gained. Additionally, the diversity within a particular ethnic group is little understood. The current study provides a broader understanding of one diverse ethnic group. The findings suggest that although diversity in norms and values can be prevalent for diverse racial and ethnic groups, responses to these by members of the group are varied depending on the context of group members. Social workers, however, tend to perceive members of diverse ethnic and racial groups
in monolithic terms, that is, similarly because of cultural affiliation. Furthermore, lack of familiarity with members of diverse racial and ethnic groups results in difficult cross-cultural communication. The problems associated with cross-cultural communication together with a lack of relevant resources makes cases comprised of diverse racial and ethnic groups more difficult to serve.

Since the findings from the current study suggest that contextual issues mediate the practice of culture, Falicov's multidimensional approach to racial and cultural diversity continues to have resonance because it captures both context and culture within its framework. I have chosen to organize my findings within Falicov's parameters, with some modifications to her framework, for the following reasons.

These reasons have emerged from the study:

1. Rather than providing a prescriptive approach to diversity, Falicov's framework provides broad parameters within which to consider services to members of diverse racial and ethnic groups. Social workers will inevitably encounter situations which have not been identified in the literature and can use the broad framework within which to organize their new information.

2. The framework highlights the multidimensional influence on members of diverse racial and ethnic groups, while also exploring within group commonalities, thereby alerting social workers to the complexity of cross-cultural social work service. Social workers are challenged to understand how context and culture are internalized by each member of the group rather than viewing the group as a monolith.

3. Instead of focusing either on culture alone or on structural barriers to services,
factors influencing diverse racial and ethnic groups in society, barriers to social services, and diversity in preferred norms and values are incorporated into the framework. The framework provides a lens both to assess the needs of diverse groups, while critiquing structural barriers to services.

4. Findings from the study support such a multidimensional and broad framework as will become evident from the discussion below.

**Migration / Acculturation:**

Findings from the current study suggest that since the South Asian participants in the study are relatively recent immigrants to Canada, they are negotiating many of the contextual issues that arise for individual and families because of migration, while the level of acculturation of individuals also influences the settlement process. Migration results in the disruption of both internal and external meaning systems. Internal meaning systems include separations and reunions, trauma and crisis, grief and mourning, disorienting anxieties, and cultural identity. External meaning systems include language, social networks, institutions, and values (Falicov, 1995).

In moving to a new country, immigrants leave behind familiar social support networks which Williams (1998) calls "plausibility structures." These structures "provide a foundation for knowledge, customs, morals, leadership styles and commitments, supporting civic order and personal health" (Williams, 1998, p.186). Being uprooted from meaning systems can result in psychological distress, including culture shock; a sense of marginalization, isolation and alienation; psychosomatic
symptoms such as palpitations, dizziness, insomnia; anxiety and depression; and post-traumatic stress (Doyle & Visano, 1987; Garza-Guerro, 1974; Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989; Herberg, 1993; Naidoo & Edwards, 1991; Steiner & Bansil, 1989). Other practical dilemmas that can leave immigrants, both new and old, feeling disempowered include raising children in a cultural context that is different from the one in which they were raised and being dependent on their children serving as interpreters of both language and dominant cultural expectations.

Few immigrants are prepared for the uprooting and turmoil that migration causes. Indeed, the initial response to the prospect of migration tends to focus on the hope and excitement of a better life ahead, while little attention is paid to a vague sense of loss that is also felt at leaving behind family members and familiar structures. Immigrants work at establishing new meaning systems and plausibility structures as they adjust to their new country. They become involved in religious and other social organizations which provide them with opportunities to develop new contacts and meaning systems. Immigrants gravitate to familiar social structures, not so much to separate themselves from settled society but to give themselves breathing space in familiar settings and to develop new plausibility structures for themselves and their children. As newcomers settle and adjust to the new country, find employment, become familiar with their surroundings, gain fluency in the English language, and establish new relationships, many of the original psychological distresses decrease.

South Asian participants in the current study identify a number of issues that arise because of migration, the most critical of which is the loss of a social support
system. Over and over, parents note how difficult it is for them to raise children without the support networks to which they have been accustomed. These support networks are comprised of not only instrumental help, such as caring for children, but more importantly, a supportive context that contributes to socializing children in the preferred ways of the group. When children are being cared for by grandparents, uncles, and aunts in the home country, they are also learning the values and customs of the group from these relatives, unlike what occurs when children are being taken care of in daycare or other paid care in Canada. Critical for parents is the loss of supportive and familiar neighbourhoods. Parents comment that in the home country they had a sense of certainty that others in the neighbourhood had norms and values similar to their own making it easier to allow their children to visit and have friends in the neighbourhood. However, parents note that because of the diversity of norms and values and the greater prevalence of mainstream values, they are more wary about their children playing with neighbours and are more watchful over them. Consequently, parents have increased demands upon them and may have little relief from their children. In a similar vein, parents in the study also note the increased need to practice their religion. In the home country, their religion was very evident around them and was more easily transmitted to their children. However, in Canada, if they do not make increased efforts to transmit religion to their children, then their children have little knowledge of their religion.

Migration also requires parents to make greater efforts to transmit a sense of identity and belonging to their children. Parents have concerns that, if they do not help
their children to develop a sense of identity and belonging, because of difference from the mainstream due to race and ethnicity, they will have a sense of loneliness, isolation, and alienation. The consequences of migration noted can also contribute to increased psychological distress associated with migration. Parents in the study identified many ways in which they routinely adjust their parenting in response to contextual issues confronting them. However, if families do not have adequate financial and social resources, their sense of alienation and isolation is likely to increase. These families can be helped to link with supports in the community. In some instances, however, a sense of failure and shame at not succeeding in the settlement process can cause families to resist being linked with their community network. Care needs to be taken that such families do not remain isolated. Child welfare professionals noted instances where some South Asian families did not want to be linked with their community. In one instance, the family spoke little English, were relatively recent immigrants to Canada, and had come to the attention of child welfare services because of excessive use of physical discipline. The social worker assessed that the family was isolated and that linking them with culturally-based community resources would help to relieve some of their stress. The social worker hoped that the children and parents would find friends and would become involved in community recreational activities. Contrary to the social worker's suggestions, the family refused to be linked with groups of the same ethnic background as themselves. The social worker did not want to press the issue, noting that many individuals and families did not necessarily want to remain connected with their cultural communities. Although correct in her assessment, it is important that special efforts
continue to be made to link the family with some networks. Leaving this family without supports can result in increased isolation and alienation, with detrimental effects on the family because even though the family did not want to be linked with community supports from their cultural background, they may not have the resources to establish links with mainstream institutions; and conversely, many mainstream institutions are often not equipped to provide culturally-relevant services.

Together with issues emerging from migration, social workers must become knowledgeable about issues relating to acculturation in order to provide adequate services to members of diverse racial and ethnic groups. Shifts have taken place in the past melting pot theory of adaptation which held that newcomers to a country should shed their original culture and blend in with the host culture (Lessinger, 1995). If members of diverse groups experienced problems, the focus of social service providers was to help members to acculturate — to abandon their original culture and to take on the culture of their adopted country. Indeed it was not uncommon to find social service recordings that noted that the family’s problem was either resistance to adopting the norms of their new country or a lack of desire to acculturate to their adopted country.

However, with the increasing recognition that many minority groups are not assimilated into the North American culture, cultural pluralism is regarded as a better model of adaptation to a new country (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998). De Anda (1984) notes that pluralism accepts the development of a bi-cultural identity among members of diverse groups, resulting in many immigrant groups holding on to their own values and cultural identities. Still, the desire to retain cultural values does not mean that
members of diverse ethnic groups do not want a measure of integration into mainstream society. Gordon (1961) distinguishes between structural assimilation and cultural pluralism. The former gives minority groups access to legal, social, occupational, civic, and service organizations equal to that enjoyed by other groups, while the latter allows for retention of cultural values and norms. South Asian participants in the study certainly wish to retain aspects of their culture while striving for structural assimilation. Thus, helping clients to acculturate when experiencing problems is unlikely to meet with much success. A measure of acculturation and assimilation is bound to occur just because of the process of adjustment and settlement in a new country and because of the desire for structural assimilation that provides access to jobs, housing, and social services.

Different levels of acculturation can influence a family's ability to access help. Those South Asians from large urban settings, with access to western education and greater fluency in English, will find the transition to the new country easier (Assanand, et al., 1990). Others from rural settings, where the opportunity to learn English and western ways is limited, will likely have greater difficulty with acculturation to a new environment, particularly a large city. The social worker, therefore, will encounter South Asian clients with differential degrees of acculturation which depends on their personal, social, and economic situation in their original country, the region from which they migrated, and the duration and location of residence in the new country. Still, so much variation exists in the degree of acculturation for a South Asian individual or family that social workers need to develop understanding of the client through each
individual encounter while still recognizing that acculturation occurs because of the fact of migration.

Social workers should provide opportunity for clients to discuss issues relating to migration / acculturation by tentatively exploring with them the influence of migration for the family. Utilizing narrative approaches to therapy (White & Epston, 1990), social workers can provide opportunities for clients to speak about their history of migration, of the losses they have experienced, and the strengths that they have manifested, thereby allowing clients to speak about their grief in leaving their home country, while also acknowledging their strengths and exploring with clients ways to build upon them. Social work services can also be directed at two other levels. First, clients should be assisted with practical issues of settlement, which invariably involves services such as advocacy for housing, day-care, English as a second language classes, and mediation between school and the family. Second, families who have lost the support networks of the extended family can be assisted to find new support structures.

Initially, families are too busy with practical issues of finding employment and housing and enrolling children in schools to focus on forming new relationships. Still, having these support systems can ease the issues around settlement. Families are often accustomed to built-in support networks in their home country and some may not realize that these have now to be consciously established. Social workers can explore with their clients support networks that would be meaningful to them. Many South Asian respondents in the current study note that even if they have extended family in their adopted country, distances prevent a close relationship with these members. Many
of them develop closer relationships with friends of similar cultural backgrounds who are in close proximity to them and call on these friends for help rather than on family members from whom they have grown apart. Yet others rely entirely on family for support and help. Thus, the emerging support networks are not necessarily replicas of systems that existed in the country of origin. Finding supports in geographic locations that do not have large numbers of South Asians can pose added problems.

Other studies are also beginning to focus on successful settlement patterns of immigrants, and findings from the studies are useful in helping individuals and families who are struggling with such issues. For example, Chicoine, Charbonneau, Rose and Ray (1997), focusing on research with women in Montreal who had immigrated from three regions – Poland, South Asia, and Latin America – note that immigrant women's networks are generated in close proximity to their residence. All 37 women interviewed in the study reported that most of their support networks consisted of women from their home country. These women formed networks with the aid of intermediaries that they have contacted through their husband or their associates at work or school, in addition to other sources that change over time. The study suggests that cultural issues, residential space, and support networks are closely related. The researchers' observation that immigrant men largely create networks through work has implications for those who are unemployed. Unemployment may prevent immigrant men from establishing supportive relationships through work, while they may also have fewer resources and opportunities than do the women in the study to establish support networks in their neighbourhoods.
Findings from the study suggest that issues relating to the migration / acculturation patterns of South Asians in Canada, must be considered in multi-contextual rather than strictly cultural terms. Because they are not monolithic constructs having uniform consequences for individuals and families, migration / acculturation factors present challenges to social work assessment. Social workers need to assess the individual effects of migration and the level of acculturation of clients to determine the nature of service provision.

Ecology / Environment:
Parent participants as well as child welfare professionals in the study note that the environment poses a number of challenges for South Asian Canadian families. The various factors that form the family's ecological context include: interaction with the community in terms of ethnicity, religion, race, and social networks; the living environment, including housing and neighbourhood and their safety; work, which includes income, schedule, stability, satisfaction, and discrimination; school, which includes achievement, discipline, parent involvement, race and ethnicity; and other institutions such as legal, medical, and mental health (Falicov, 1995). These ecological elements, encompass the "total field" of a problem, providing a framework for understanding the individual or family interactions with outside institutions.

South Asian Canadians' ethnicity, religion, race, language, and availability of social networks influence the surrounding environment. Because they are relatively recent immigrants to Canada, South Asians are still dealing with issues of settlement
and inclusion. The first South Asians who arrived in Canada around the turn of the twentieth century confronted accusations that they were "contaminating" the purity and virtue of an essentially white Anglo-Saxon Protestant society (Johnston, 1999). Discriminatory legislation in British Columbia resulted in the loss of basic civil rights for South Asians in 1907 and eventually halted their further immigration by 1919. Although South Asians struggled on their own to gain the rights that were natural for immigrants from Europe and Britain, they remained disenfranchised until 1947 when the restrictions on their immigration were partially lifted. A significant change for South Asians came in 1967 when, like other residents of Canada, they were permitted to sponsor more distant relatives. As a result, the mass of South Asian immigration to Canada has occurred since the 1960s. Increasingly, South Asians have established religious and social service agencies which not only ease their settlement but also lobby on behalf of newcomers for access to relevant services.

South Asians generally find that migration has transported them to a vastly different community environment. Cultural, religious, racial, and language differences contribute to making the community environment different for South Asians. South Asian parents in the current study identify cultural differences in child rearing approaches, differences in expectations for their children, raising children in a society that does not support these expectations, differences in what they perceive as parental responsibility, the overwhelming presence of mainstream values in basic social institutions such as schools and community organizations, and lack of extended family and kinship ties as some of the contextual issues they confront in their daily lives in
raising children in Canada. Living in neighbourhoods that have greater numbers of South Asians can provide proximity to familiar surroundings as well as social and cultural amenities, such as music, movies, restaurants, shops carrying South Asian goods, places of worship, recreational facilities, and home language and religious classes for children. For many, residing in an ethnic neighbourhood forms a buffer against culture shock while meeting their needs and making access to companionship and support networks more readily available. Participants in the study note the value of having people of a similar background that they can rely on for support, the benefit of being available to others of a similar background, and the need to establish friendships from the same background because physical distance has weakened ties with family members who are in Canada. Still, South Asians may also chose to live away from ethnic neighbourhood, while others may be forced to live away because of lack of employment. Although not a direct finding from the study, one can assume that if South Asian parents are trying to impart group values and a sense of identity and belonging to their children and rely on individuals from the community for help, then those living away have fewer social supports of choice available to them. Providing services to clients who reside in areas where there are fewer South Asians can present special challenges to social workers as they will need to ensure that the nature of the support networks that they are helping their clients to develop are meaningful for their client. In other words, do their clients feel a sense of connection, belonging, and acceptance by these networks?

Living in close proximity to extended family members offers many supports.
Grandparents, uncles, and aunts are available to help transmit and support group values, thereby relieving stress on parents who are endeavouring to provide the atmosphere in which they grew up but without the supports that were available to their parents. Under such circumstances, husband-wife and parent-child relationships can be burdened. Without relief from parental responsibilities, parents can become overly restrictive with their children, especially when their children are adolescents and are striving for more independence. Under similar circumstances in the home country, grandparents often act as the voice of reason to diffuse the tension between parents and children. Pettys and Balgopal (1998) found in their study of multigenerational conflicts among South Asians in the United States that grandparents in India who maintained strong links with their children and grandchildren in the United States continued to play this mediating role. Indeed, grandparents cautioned parents about becoming overly restrictive with their children and encouraged them to understand that their children were now American and had to learn to live in the North American context. The focus group discussions with South Asian parents show both supportive relationships as well as stressful relationships (which result from intergenerational conflicts) with extended family members.

Relocation not only results in the immediate disruption of support networks, but also presents the challenge to establish new support networks that are often unlike the ones in the home country. Models of support systems that worked in the original country do not always have relevance in the adopted country as neither the context nor the resources are the same as in the original country. Demands on parents and
expectations of themselves and their children are different in their adopted country requiring parents to rethink their parenting approaches. Findings from the study suggests that South Asian Canadian parents are cognizant of the need to change their parenting approaches and adjust their approach as required by the context, while at the same time being conscious of the need to provide their children with a sense of identity and belonging. This strength of South-Asian parents, and parents of other culturally diverse groups has been noted by researchers. Petty's and Balgopal (1998) note that findings from their research suggest that South Asian parents in the United States work at finding a middle-ground in their approaches to parenting. They assist their children to attain assertiveness skills required for success in the United States while imparting South Asian values in order to provide their children with a sense of identity and belonging. Denby and Allard (1996) researching African American parenting and Gorman (1998) researching Chinese American parenting found that these parents used strategies that helped to teach their children to respond to an environment that discriminated against them.

Differences relating to race, ethnicity, religion, and language combined with South Asians being a more recent immigrant group has implications for the person / family-environment fit with respect to their living situation, their interactions at work, at school and with other institutions. Although the current study did not research for these variables directly, comments made by participants suggest that social workers who provide services to South Asian Canadian families must fully explore the ecological context, which includes the variables noted, in order to gain comprehensive
understanding of their client's situation and to provide the most pertinent services. Since the change in immigration policy which now allows more diverse groups of South Asians to come to Canada, South Asians with limited resources have settled in increasing numbers. The result is that impoverished South Asians are faced with living in neighbourhoods that are considered unsafe and less conducive to raising children. Parents have to be extra vigilant in such situations, with the result that levels of stress increase. South Asians, like other visible minority groups, can also encounter discriminatory practices in their attempts to obtain adequate housing (Quann, 1979).

In assessing the ecological context, social workers need to consider the work context of clients. Exploring with clients issues such as job satisfaction, job stability, adequacy of income for family needs, flexibility of the work schedule, and the nature and extent of discriminatory experiences at work contributes to a greater understanding of the individual's or the family's situation. Child welfare professionals note that one of the unique features of their clients of South Asian origin was their refusal to take leave from work for appointments. Child welfare professionals viewed the reluctance of South Asian parents to take leave from work as a South Asian trait whereas the reluctance could be the result of a harsh work environment because of race or alternatively the fear of a new immigrant of long term negative consequences of missing work. South Asians in Canada generally have considerable concerns relating to a work environment in which their professional and skilled-trades qualifications are not recognized, educational credits are not always granted equivalent status, and the requirement of Canadian experience puts barriers to finding employment (Israel,
1999b). They then take up other employment but are often dissatisfied at having to endure lower standards than those that they had set for themselves. Many also miss working in their profession, yet other advantages gained by making the move prevents a return to the country of origin. A large number of participants in the study were unemployed increasing the stress upon the family. Some of the participants were not able to secure work in their profession while yet others did not have their credentials recognized. Some South Asians also find that bias in the workplace has denied them access to certain jobs and opportunities for advancement. Although the research on South Asians specifically is scant, a study of visible minorities generally shows that the average wage offer for minority males, both immigrant and non-immigrant combined, was 28.5 per cent less than that for white males. For minority females, it was 45.8 per cent lower than for white males and 9.4 per cent lower than for white females. Only about 30 per cent of the gap could be accounted for by productivity differences. Other studies confirm discrimination in the employment practices of companies as well as by employment agencies with respect to visible minorities (Christofides and Swidinsky 1994). A number of studies (Abella, 1984; Bambrough, Bowden, & Wien, 1992; Billingsley & Musynski, 1985; Canada, 1984; da Silva, 1992; Henry & Ginzberg, 1984; Jain, 1985; Rees, 1991; Reitz, Calzavara, & Dasko, 1981) confirm discrimination in the employment practices of companies as well as by employment agencies with respect to visible minorities.

Assessments of South Asian families should also include an understanding of the childrens' school environment, the consequences of race and ethnicity within the
school environment, the level of parent involvement in the school environment, the childrens' school achievement, and disciplinary concerns at school. Because of their racial and ethnic minority status, South Asian families encounter within the school system issues relating to a Eurocentric curriculum, racial harassment, lack of representation, racially-biased practices of teachers and administrators, and devaluation of the role and participation of the parents and the community (Henry, Tator, Mattis, & Rees, 1995). Newer South Asian immigrants attempt to make sense of contextual differences between the school environment of the home country and the adopted country. Such contextual differences include: a higher degree of parental involvement, greater expectations for children to express their opinions, more discussion of social matters such as sex education, and a generally more liberal atmosphere in the school system (Assanand et al., 1990). Parents in the current study raised the aforementioned as areas of concern with respect to the schooling of their children.

South Asian parents who wish to retain their cultural expression within the home encounter more difficulty once children attend public school (Lessinger 1995). Parent participants note the difficulty in imparting their values especially to adolescent children since mainstream values are so pervasive. In a similar vein, child welfare professionals also struggle with many parent-teen conflicts among their South Asian families. Many parents respond to their children's quest for freedoms that their Western friends have by taking the positives from both cultures and finding a middle ground (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998). Parents in the current study identified ways in which they attempted to reach a middle ground with their children.
When South Asians interact with mainstream social institutions, they confront barriers relating to language, race, ethnicity, and familiarity, which inhibit full access to equitable services. Child protection social workers in the study note that the lack of culturally appropriate resources for South Asians necessitates a more intrusive and directive approach with these families. Social workers fear that the lack of resources for these families leaves them without the appropriate support and help that is routinely provided to families to help reduce the risk to children when families are receiving child protection services. Because mainstream agencies dealing with mental and public health problems are not necessarily equipped to meet the needs of their South Asian clients, child welfare professionals refer their South Asian clients to ethno-specific agencies. Child welfare professionals note, however, that some of these agencies are still at the developmental stage and are therefore not always equipped to help clients resolve their issues; some focus on issues relating to racism and neglect to consider the individual needs of the client; and there is a considerable shortage of these resources.

An additional explanation may also require asking whether mainstream child protection agencies are as involved in assisting ethno-specific agencies, both financially and with other resources, to develop programs that address child protection issues with culturally diverse clients as they are with other mainstream agencies? Indeed, these alternative services are not always adequately funded and therefore continue to function on the margins in comparison to mainstream agencies (Agnew, 1998).

Findings from the study suggests that interpersonal relationships and communications between child welfare professionals and their South Asian clients are
prone to problems. Child welfare professionals note that they had difficulty in knowing whether they were successful in establishing a productive relationship with their South Asian clients. It appears to them that their clients often agree with them so that the case can be closed. Yet they are uncertain whether their attempts at counseling their client are successful. Workers fear that the lack of communication with their South Asian clients results in problems not being resolved and that these problems will surface at a later date and may escalate. Workers further comment that it is difficult to "read" the body language and facial expressions of their South Asian clients.

Establishing rapport with clients is the hallmark of therapeutic social work relationships. Derlaga, Hendrick, Winstead, and Berg (1991) consider the interpersonal relationship to be the key ingredient in professional helping, while Willis (1980) contends that therapeutic gain is based on a significant relationship with the client and is based on "feelings of mutual respect, acceptance, and liking or positive regard" (p. 2). The pivotal role of the relationship in therapy is also supported by empirical studies of client perceptions of therapy (Ford, 1978; Saltzman, Luetgart, Roth, Creaser, & Howard, 1976; Strupp 1977). Still, establishing such a relationship in cross-cultural / racial situations is not easy. Proctor and Davis (1994) note: "in cross-racial helping, the professional faces a formidable challenge— the development of a relationship qualitatively different than either party may have previously experienced with a racially dissimilar other" (p. 315). Despite this challenge, "clients want therapeutic relationships in which they feel understood, in which they trust their workers, and in which they have confidence in the worker's ability" (Proctor & Davis, 1994, p. 316). Thus, in cross-
cultural situations, service providers must make concerted efforts to establish credibility through words and actions (Brody, 1987; Frank, 1961; Proctor & Davis, 1994).

Consideration of a client's ecological context is a fundamental aspect of any comprehensive social work assessment. If this assessment detects the family's inability to cope with its particular environment, the social worker can act as an intermediary with outside institutions (Falicov, 1995), or alternatively, can offer counseling that can enhance the client's responsiveness. Clients from diverse cultural backgrounds inevitably have differential coping abilities and strategies to interact with people who, in turn, have a broad range of responses to them. Thus, as is the case for migration / acculturation, the ecological context requires individualized assessment and intervention.

**Values / Norms:**

Findings from the study suggest that South Asian Canadian parents employ a range of parenting strategies to discipline and socialize their children. The study does not find that any particular culturally based parenting strategy poses risks to children. Parents identified particular norms and values that are important to them in parenting their children. They consider these norms and values to be different to mainstream norms and values. Parents encounter difficulty in transmitting these norms and values to their children as the environment is generally unsupportive of them, while parents are also trying to impart them in a context that is substantially different to the one in the home country. Parents recognize that the context is different to their home country and that
they need to adjust their approaches to meet the needs of the current context. Yet because of racism and ethnocentrism in society, they are also cognizant of the need to transmit a sense of belonging and identify to their children. They are thus forging new approaches to parenting their children in the North American context.

Social workers can be helpful to their South Asian clients who need child protection services by developing a broad understanding of family dynamics and family structure of importance to South Asian families and how these are being negotiated in Canada. Becoming aware that diversity exists in how family life is organized among diverse groups and that the stages and requirements of individuals differ during different life cycle stages for different groups can help social workers to incorporate diversity into their practice and to be responsive to the uniqueness of families from diverse groups.

Western family organization is based primarily on the husband-wife dyad, and the nuclear family is considered to be the ideal (Falicov, 1995). In some diverse cultures, however, dyads such as the parent-child, the father-son, the mother-son within the context of an extended family system are given high status. Falicov notes that these dyads influence the boundaries that dictate who is included or excluded from the family, what is the power balance across gender and generations within families, what are the values relating to personal individuation and family connectedness, whether communication styles are direct or indirect, and whether emotional expressivity between family members and outsiders is high or low.

In the traditional western nuclear family, according to Falicov (1995), the
central husband-wife dyad has clear and exclusive boundaries around it, egalitarian relations are the ideal, direct communication style is the norm, individuation is favoured, and intergenerational coalitions are considered a threat. In eastern cultures, the dominant dyad is more often the parent-child dyad within an extended family. Additionally, boundaries around the parent-child dyad are clear but inclusive, relationships are hierarchical, communication styles are indirect, connectedness is greatly emphasized, and same generation alliances can be a threat. The concepts of both dyads are not dichotomous but need to be understood as extending along a continuum. South Asian family organization tends to be more typically organized around the parent-child dyad within an extended family (Assanand, et al., 1990; Hines, et al., 1992).

The South Asian family organization can be further understood through the constructs of collectivism and individualism. Although South Asians come from vastly different traditions, values, and world views that are further influenced by such factors as socioeconomic status and regional location, Triandis (1994) notes that they tend to come from a collectivist culture. Collectivist cultures are those that organize their subjective experiences around one or more collectives such as the family, religious group, or kinship network (Triandis, 1994). A collectivist culture defines identity by group membership (Pettys & Balgopal, 1998) and emphasizes the internalization of group values, norms, and roles (Shor, 1998). South Asians in Canada find themselves to be immersed in an individualistic culture, whereby personal identity is based primarily on individual characteristics. Since the self is largely independent and separate
from groups, autonomy and individuation are the developmental tasks of individuals (Triandis, Brislin, & Hui, 1988). While an individual can be a member of many groups in individualistic cultures, no single group fully defines one's identity nor determines one's behaviour. In collectivist cultures, by contrast, people are attached to fewer groups, but these attachments have significant influence in defining one's identity (Hui, 1988).

Collectivism and individualism prescribe different ways of rearing children and cultivating relationships within groups. In collectivist cultures, values such as family integrity, security, obedience, and conformity are more valued, while achievement, pleasure, and competition are favoured by individualist cultures. Collectivists emphasize attributes such as harmony and saving face preferring homogeneous in-groups while requiring that disagreements are not shared with out-groups (Triandis et al., 1988). Child-rearing emphasis is on obedience, duty, respect for elders, and sacrifice for the group (Shor, 1998). Parenting tasks include responsibility for behaviours of children even into adulthood and ensuring the happiness and security of adult children through finding appropriate marriage partners (Assanand et al., 1990). Parent participants in the current study identify many aspects of parenting that can be defined as leaning more to collectivism than to individualism. In noting differences between their approaches to parenting and the approach of Western parents, they note that for them it is an expectation that they be highly involved in the lives of their children whether young or old and ensure their well being even when they are adults. In addition, they feel that they place greater expectation on their children to be respectful
of adults, heed the advice of parents and other elders, be obedient, respect the rules of
the family and the community, and not shame the family by their behaviours. To a
social worker who is socialized in the traditional Western culture, the expectations of
children from parents may appear to be unfair as was noted by some in the study. Child
welfare professionals not only note that the actions of parents in certain vignettes were
unacceptable, but also that it was a shame that children did not have the freedom to
choose whether to help a parent or not with household chores or that a ten year old
child did not have the freedom to choose whether to attend church or not. In a
therapeutic relationship, if parents feel that their values are being judged then they are
unlikely to share their concerns with the social worker. Within such an environment it is
unlikely that a productive therapeutic relationship will develop. Child protection
professionals can assist their South Asian clients by judging the action of the parent
rather than the value that they hold and can further explore how to reach a middle
ground as many other families are doing.

Although the constructs of individualism and collectivism are valuable for
understanding broad differences among cultures, researchers are now finding
considerable intra-group differences that must be factored into discussions of the
constructs. Freeman's (1997) research shows that socioeconomic status, occupational
status, urban residence, and education correlates with higher levels of individualism in
Sri Lanka. Freeman also found antecedent features to families having individualistic or
collectivist features. Freeman's study suggests that even though the constructs of
individualism and collectivism are useful in understanding broad cultural differences,
they should not be seen as applying universally to particular groups. Indeed, his research shows that aspects of both constructs are often found in families. He thus cautions against seeing the construct as opposite ends of a single bipolar dimension. The extent to which South Asian Canadian families and individuals are individualistic or collectivist varies considerably. Families may choose to be individualistic in many aspects in order to compete in a society where individualistic characteristics are valued, but they may still retain many aspects of collectivist values.

Determining the extent to which a family adheres to individualistic or collectivist values and norms can be further complicated by the fact that many South Asians, particularly the more recent-arrived immigrants, are still in a state of transition, whereby values of the extended family are being replaced by values of the nuclear family. Some of these families struggle with divided loyalties about whether to uphold values that support individualism or those that support collectivism, while these loyalties become even more complicated by expectations from different family members about which values should be given prominence. Social workers can learn much from their clients not only about the fit between a family's current structure and the needs of its various members but also about the conflicts members may be experiencing in renegotiating values and norms (Falicov, 1995). Social workers will, therefore, need to remain open to the variety of South Asian family structures and household types. In Canada, as in the home country, households typically range from nuclear families comprised of husband, wife and children to extended families including parents, children, married sons and their families. In most circumstances, unmarried children,
even if they are considerably older, will continue to reside with the family of origin.

Migration can result in a disruption of familiar family patterns and ties, with resultant changes in roles and responsibilities of individual members. Parent participants in the study noted a number of changes in roles because of their new context. The need for two parents to work, the emphasis on material goods in North America, and the lack of language are some of the factors contributing to role changes. For newer immigrants, roles are challenged when children act as interpreters and assist parents with unfamiliar transactions. The role can be demanding for children, while disrupting the authority of parents. Children may also question the traditional authority given to extended kin. Although, parent participants in the study identified family members as the preferred helpers when a family experiences problems, the reality for South Asian families in Canada is that many do not have extended family here. Others do not have a close relationship with family members because of physical distances. Additionally, a sense of failure in the settlement process can lead to shame and prevent accessing family members for help while some families are making a choice to change their help-seeking behaviours preferring help from the social service system. Thus, social workers need to consider that there is no one particular mode of help that is uniquely South Asian. Social workers must remain open to the range of options that might meet a South Asian family's choice of help.

When providing service to culturally diverse families, social workers should also remain open to diversity in family life cycle as developmental stages and transitions in the family life cycle are culturally patterned. Therapists use the concept of family life
cycle to understand individual and family age-appropriate behaviour; transitional points in families such as birth, marriage, raising children, and death; and changes in rules occurring at such times (Falicov, 1996).

Findings from the study suggest that the definitions, stages, and rituals of the family life cycle of South Asian families are influenced by collectivist values, respect for authority, large family networks, expectation of life-long parent-child interconnectedness, and religion. The realities and necessities of life in a new context, however, mediate the family cycle for South Asians in Canada. Since family life cycle stages and rituals are passed on from one generation to the next (McGoldrick, 1996), South Asian Canadian parents are confronted with this internalized understanding of what it means to raise children, to impart values, and to help children move through life cycle stages. Yet in the new context, parents recognize that other dimensions have to be included in the rearing of their children in order to help them to meet the requirements of the society within which they are living as well as to handle effectively the overwhelming influences of a culture that is different to their own. Although all parents to some extent make changes from one generation to the next, South Asian parents and their children confront unique challenges because parents are raising children in a culture so different to the one in which they were raised and children are confronted with making sense of two very different sets of values and norms.

At various stages of the family life cycle, social workers will need to be responsive to diverse cultural values. For example, South Asians tend to value interdependence between parents and children, although the nature, extent, and quality
of this interdependence will vary in each family. Some families expect a higher degree of obedience from their children than do others. The personality of the child and parents as well as family experiences can influence the degree of interdependence in the family. What may appear to a social worker trained in Western theories of family life cycle to be an over-involved and enmeshed relationship between the parent and the child is likely to be the norm within South Asian culture. Problems can arise when parents try to maintain the same norms but do not have the built-in structure to support the practice of the norm. For instance, parents may feel guilty that they are unable to do all that their parents did for them because of the constraints of not having extended family members to share the responsibility. The need for both parents to work also prevents exercising the accepted norm of the family. Leaving children in daycare with strangers can be a source of guilt for many South Asian parents who may be concerned about cultural differences in child management. Some South Asian parents have resolved these difficulties by residing in neighbourhoods with a large concentration of South Asians from which they can access support. As well, daycare facilities in such areas tend to have South Asian staff, thereby increasing the comfort level of parents.

With the emphasis on interdependence, South Asian parents are less inclined to embrace concepts of adolescent separation and individuation. Parents encourage their adolescent children to learn the responsibilities of adulthood within the context of retaining a high degree of connectedness with the family. Adolescents are expected to learn the cultural values of maintaining family unity, privacy, and integrity. The diversity in expectations of adolescents can be a potential source of conflict between
parents and their teenage children. Both parent participants as well as child welfare professionals noted that parent-teen issues, which resulted from negotiating cultural values and norms appear to be a source of problems for many South Asian families. However, child welfare professionals in the focus group went on to suggest that in fact parent-teen conflict among other families was just as prevalent. Indeed, what may be different is that parent-teen conflicts among South Asian families emerge in the form of cultural conflict while for other families it takes on various forms. In other words, a degree of parent-teen conflict is inevitable, some parents are able to resolve these while others are not, some parents come to the attention of child welfare services because they have been unable to resolve such conflicts, and for South Asians the conflict is in the form of cultural issues while for others it takes on various forms.

Conflict in which the teenage children want the degree of freedom that their non-South Asian peers appear to have can be particularly complicated. South Asian youth can be vulnerable as they try to negotiate their identity in two very different cultures. Parents for their part may become extremely cautious about giving their teen-aged children freedoms because they fear that they will lose their vital family connection, that the South Asian culture will be overwhelmed by the influence of Western culture, and ultimately, that the children will be left isolated with no sense of belonging to any family or culture. From a Western perspective, it may appear to the social worker that the teenager's requests for more freedom and independence are reasonable, but this stance can invalidate the parents' knowledge of child rearing. Parental authority can be acknowledged as parental responsibility so that parents may
feel empowered to provide the structure that their children require. Research by Pettys and Balgopal (1998) who explored multigenerational conflicts among South Asian parents and their teen-aged children also indicates that parents are willing to adjust their parenting approaches to incorporate North American family values. Thus, social workers need to keep in mind that both culture and personality, that is, of the parent and the child, inevitably factor into the intensity of the conflict and the prospects for resolving it.

The challenge for social workers is to find ways to help South Asian families to balance both cultural and contextual considerations in different stages of the life cycle. Although family life cycle stages are culturally patterned, such patterns do not apply universally. Families have internalized ways to negotiate different family life cycle stages from experiences within their own families, which is further influenced by the personalities of the family members. Even when these life cycle stages are in flux because of contextual considerations, families may welcome or resist, to varying degrees, the consequent changes to their culturally patterned existence.

**Conclusion**

Findings from the current study suggests that even though shifts have occurred from a cultural literacy approach to a minority / anti-racist approach to conceptualizing social work approaches to racial and cultural diversity, social workers still tend to approach services to these groups from a cultural literacy approach. The danger of such an approach is that groups can be culturalized and essentialized and social workers can be
prone to making sweeping generalizations about groups. Even when structural influences present for a group are recognized, the tendency remains to view groups in cultural terms.

Tensions arising from cross-cultural communication, lack of relevant resources, and ethnocentrism regarding values and norms are challenges posed in providing culturally competent services. From the perspective of members of a diverse group, contextual and cultural issues must be given consideration. Although both have resonance for groups, they are internalized and responded to uniquely by individuals and families. Diversity due to language, religion, race, ethnicity, and values and norms need to be considered when providing services to diverse groups. Specific needs of groups due to migration and settlement must be recognized and services provided to assist in these areas. Additionally, families from diverse backgrounds have personal resources and strengths that must not be overlooked.

**Limitations of the Study**

The findings from the study must be considered in light of some of the limitations of the study which are outlined below. Perhaps most significantly, it is important to remember that the findings from the study are not generalizable. Although a mixed-method data gathering technique was used, the study is primarily qualitative. As such, it is a snapshot of a group at one point in time, having value for transferability rather than generalizability. The quantitative data, gathered using questionnaires, must also be viewed with caution regarding generalizability as the sample for the study was not
randomly selected and the sample size of the parent participants as well as of the social workers is small. Additionally, because of the dearth of research pertaining to the topic, the study had been designed as an exploratory study, which further limits generalizability. The study should not be generalized to all topics of child maltreatment as not all topics relating to child maltreatment, for instance sexual abuse of children, were included in the study.

The study design can also have implications for limitations. A limited number of case vignettes were used in the questionnaire that was administered to participants prior to the focus group discussions. Since one of the purposes of the case vignettes in the questionnaire was to direct participant thinking to actions of parents that could be construed as appropriate / inappropriate in order to discuss them further in the focus groups, the question arises whether some behaviours of parents not raised in the questionnaire were omitted in focus group discussions? Despite this limitation, the study continues to have relevance because it achieves its overall purpose of providing broader information on parenting approaches of South Asian Canadian parents.

A further limitation of the research design relates to the issue of social desirability for both parent participants as well as child welfare professionals. Did either of these groups respond to either the questionnaire or the focus group discussion in ways that they considered to be socially desirable? The many detailed examples given by parents about ways in which they handled difficulties with their children supported their discussions of what they considered as appropriate and inappropriate parenting behaviour, suggesting that social desirability was not a central factor in the study. As
well, the intention of the research was to understand what South Asian parents perceived as appropriate and inappropriate parental action; and as such, even if there was influence due to social desirability, the information gathered is valid because the intent was to gain understanding about their perceptions rather than about their action. Social workers identified many problems in providing services to their South Asian Canadian clients suggesting that social desirability was not an issue for them either. If social desirability was an issue, it would follow that child welfare professionals would be reluctant to discuss the difficulties that they encounter in providing services as they want to portray themselves in a positive light.

A further limitation relates to the sample. The sample was recruited by advertising in social service agencies providing a range of services to South Asians, for example English as a second language classes, settlement information, employment readiness classes. Some participants were also recruited through snowball sampling. Since participants self selected for the study, one wonders whether only more verbal and outgoing members of the South Asian community responded and questions whether more outgoing members less traditional and have views that are divergent from other members of the community?

Finally, only those South Asians who spoke one of the four South Asian languages spoken by the researcher and the research assistant, and English, were included in the study raising additional implications for limitations such as lack of inclusion of South Asians who did not speak any of these languages. The demographic data, however, shows that considerable diversity of the South Asian population was
Future Research

The purpose of the current study was to gain general understanding of cultural and contextual influences on the parenting approaches of South Asian Canadians and whether these approaches have the potential to result in misinterpretations by the child welfare system. The study helped to provide an understanding of the broad range of issues that more recently arrived South Asians may confront in their new environment. Additional research is required with South Asian Canadians who are clients of the child welfare system to understand their experiences at various levels of the system. Such studies can focus on experiences of clients in terms of ethnocentrism in social service agencies, personnel, and social work approaches / concepts and its influence on assessment, intervention, and case outcome. Further studies should examine the applicability of risk assessment tools for diverse populations, language and its influence on case outcomes, and issues relating to inter-cultural communications and rapport building with diverse populations.

South Asian Canadian parents noted their struggle to provide their children with a sense of identity and belonging. Thus, studies with South Asian children and youth are needed to gain understanding of their experiences in the Canadian context. Some questions emerging from the current study relate to how youth manage their racial and cultural diversity, how they negotiate their identity, and what issues they may confront because of race and ethnicity. Research on the achievements of South Asian youth can
shed further light about the general success or lack thereof of the group. Studies with youth should be conducted at different ages to provide understanding of struggles and strengths at different life stages.
References


jobs. Toronto: Center for Urban and Community Studies; University of Toronto.


Appendices

Appendix A: Consents

CONSENT INFORMATION FOR SOUTH ASIAN PARENTS

STUDY INFORMATION

Investigators: Nico Trocmé, Ph.D.
Usha George, Ph.D.

Project Manager: Sarah Maiter, B.S.W., M.S.W., Ph.D. in progress

We are interested in trying to understand whether there are differences between the Children’s Aid Society (CAS) and the South Asian Community regarding definitions of child maltreatment and about the interventions in South Asian families by the CAS. Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary.

We will be holding focus groups with South Asian mothers, South Asian fathers, South Asian youth, staff from South Asian Family Support Services (SAFSS), and staff from the Children’s Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto (CASMT). If you decide to participate, you will be asked to be part of a focus group of between 6 to 8 people. The focus group meeting will last a day - from 9.30am to 4.00pm - with a lunch break of one hour. All the information shared in the focus groups will be confidential. We also ask that you maintain confidentiality by not sharing any information discussed in the groups, after the group meetings, either among yourselves or with anyone else. This will ensure that participants do not feel that they are being talked about after the group meeting.

Please read the statements below and indicate with your signature that you have been given this information. A copy of this sheet will be given to you to keep.

I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary.
I understand that I can refuse to participate, but this will not affect the services I receive.
I understand that my responses in the focus group will be completely confidential.
I understand that I am also expected not to share information from the focus group with any one outside the group meeting.
I understand that in accordance with the Child and Family Services Act any disclosure of abuse of children must be reported to the Children’s Aid Society.
I understand that I will receive an honorarium of $20 for participating in the study.

My initials below indicate that I have read and understand the above information.

Initials ___________________________ Date______________________
Consent Form

The purpose of this study, and what is expected of me as a participant, have been explained to me by a staff person at South Asian Family Support Services (SAFFS). I understand that I will be participating in a focus group made up of others of the same gender as myself. All the information from the focus group will remain confidential. I also agree to maintain confidentiality about any information that is shared in the focus group.

Signature of Participant

Print Name

Signature of Staff at SAFFS

Print Name
CONSENT INFORMATION FOR CHILD WELFARE PROFESSIONALS

STUDY INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

Title of the Project: Integration of Culturally Grounded Child Rearing Practices of South Asian Canadians into Child Welfare: An Exploratory Study

Investigator: Sarah Maiter, B.S.W., M.S.W. (Ph.D. candidate)
Phone Number (905) 731-3990

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Nico Trocmé
Phone Number (416) 978-5718

Purpose
The aim of the study is to improve child welfare services for South Asian Canadian children and families.

Procedures
You will be asked to complete a questionnaire which will take approximately half an hour, and to participate in a focus group which will be about one and one half hour in duration. In the focus group we will ask you about your impressions of the parenting approaches of South Asian Canadian families. The information will be compared and contrasted with what South Asian families tell us about their parenting approaches. Understanding the convergence and divergence of information between the two groups will contribute to our ability to better serve South Asian families.

All the information you share will be confidential and at no time will your name be used in any research report. Your participation in the study is entirely voluntary and you may drop out of the study at anytime if you so decide.

Risks
There are no foreseeable risks to participating in the research. However, if you experience any discomfort from participating in the study you may talk to either of the moderators or call the investigator at (905) 731-3990, or Professor Nico Trocmé at (416) 978-5718.

Benefits
There are no direct benefits to participants. However, this study will help to better understand the service needs of South Asian Canadian families. The information will become available for use by child welfare professionals in their work with these families.

Consents
Please read the statements below and indicate with your signature that you have been given this information. A copy of this sheet will be given to you to keep.

I understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary.
I understand that I can refuse to participate at anytime that I chose.

I understand that my responses in the focus group will be completely confidential.

I understand that no names of participants will be used in research reports.

I understand that the questionnaires and tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto.

I understand that I am also expected not to share information from the focus group with any one outside the group meeting.

I understand that I may discontinue my participation in the research at any time that I so wish.

My signature below indicates that I have read and understand the above information.

Signature of Participant ____________________________ Print Name ____________________________

Signature of Witness ____________________________ Print Name ____________________________
Appendix B: Questionnaires

Questionnaire for Parent Participants

Demographic Information
Participant Code: _______ Age: _______ Place of Birth: _______
Date of Birth: ____________ Number of Years in Canada ____________
Languages Spoken: ____________ Education (Highest Level): ____________

Employment Status:
Unemployed _______ Employed _______ Occupation ____________
Income ____________

Family Life:
Married _______ Single _________
Number of Children ____________
Gender of Children ____________
Age of Children ____________

Living Arrangements
Nuclear family ____________
Extended family ____________
Who else resides in the home ____________
Parental Action Vignettes

For each of the case scenarios below can you tell us whether the action of the parent is appropriate or inappropriate.

1/ A mother of a 10 year old girl slaps her on her face because she refuses to help out when the family has company visiting. Is the action

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Do you think this family should get help from someone?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If you think the family needs help, who should be contacted?

Select all that apply.

☐ Relatives/friends, ☐ religious/community leader, ☐ other social service agency, ☐ Children’s Aid Society, ☐ Police, ☐ Other, Please explain__________________

Why did you think the action of the parent was appropriate or inappropriate?

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________________________
A father of a 10 year old boy often slaps him across the face because he refuses to go to the temple/mosque/gurudwara/church for religious occasions. Is the action

| Appropriate to a | Inappropriate to a |
| Large Extent | moderate extent | little extent | moderate extent | large extent |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |

Do you think this family should get help from someone?  
☐ Yes  ☐ No

If you think the family needs help, who should be contacted?  
Select all that apply.

☐ Relatives/friends, ☐ religious/community leader, ☐ other social service agency,  
☐ Children’s Aid Society, ☐ Police, ☐ Other, Please explain________________________

Why did you think the action of the parent was appropriate or inappropriate?

________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________
The parents of a 10 year old girl go out shopping, visiting and to work leaving their 10 year old daughter to take care of the two younger children ages 5 and 3. Is the action

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Do you think this family should get help from someone?

☐ Yes  ☐ No

If you think the family needs help, who should be contacted?
Select all that apply.

☐ Relatives/friends,  ☐ religious/community leader,  ☐ other social service agency,
☐ Children's Aid Society,  ☐ Police,  ☐ Other, Please explain____________________

Why did you think the action of the parent was appropriate or inappropriate?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
A 12 year old girl is seen by her parents at the mall holding hands with a boy. The father grounds the girl except for going to school. He takes her to school and picks her up. She is not allowed to use the phone or to see any friends from school. Is the action

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1 2 3 4 5 6

Do you think this family should get help from someone? □ Yes □ No

If you think the family needs help, who should be contacted? Select all that apply.

□ Relatives/friends, □ religious/community leader, □ other social service agency,
□ Children’s Aid Society, □ Police, □ Other, Please explain.

Why did you think the action of the parent was appropriate or inappropriate?
The father of a 12 year old boy spanks him with a belt leaving welts on his back, arms and legs because the boy does not listen to him, refuses to do his school work and is rude to both the father and the mother. Is the action appropriate to a large moderate extent or inappropriate to a little extent?

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Do you think this family should get help from someone?
- Yes
- No

If you think the family needs help, who should be contacted?
Select all that apply.
- Relatives/friends,
- Religious/community leader,
- Other social service agency,
- Children's Aid Society,
- Police,
- Other, Please explain__________

Why did you think the action of the parent was appropriate or inappropriate?

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________
The parents of a six year old girl and a four year old boy often leave their children outside the apartment block till well after it is dark as the father works late and the mother is on medication that makes her drowsy. Is the action appropriate to a large moderate little extent or inappropriate to a little moderate large extent?

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Do you think this family should get help from someone?  
☐ Yes  ☐ No

If you think the family needs help, who should be contacted? Select all that apply.

☐ Relatives/friends  ☐ religious/community leader  ☐ other social service agency
☐ Children’s Aid Society  ☐ Police  ☐ Other, Please explain

Why did you think the action of the parent was appropriate or inappropriate?
A 7 year old boy is brought to the hospital by his father. The father states that the boy was hurt but he is not sure how it happened. Upon examination the doctors find that the boy has fractures of the leg and arm as well as two fractured ribs. The doctor's exam shows these fractures were caused by someone hitting the child. The father states that he had hit the boy because he was being disobedient but he had not hit him very hard. He refuses any help saying that the family can manage their problems. Is the action appropriate to a  large extent? moderate extent? little extent? inappropriate to a  large extent? moderate extent? little extent?

Do you think this family should get help from someone?  Yes  No

If you think the family needs help, who should be contacted? Select all that apply.

- Relatives/friends,  religious/community leader,  other social service agency,
- Children's Aid Society,  Police,  Other, Please explain

Why did you think the action of the parent was appropriate or inappropriate?
The father of a 22 year old girl hits her across the face causing a swollen and cut lip and bruising on the face as she sneaked out to go to a dance at school. Is the action

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1 2 3 4 5 6

Do you think this family should get help from someone?
- Yes
- No

If you think the family needs help, who should be contacted?
Select all that apply.
- Relatives/friends,
- religious/community leader,
- Children’s Aid Society,
- Police,
- Other, Please explain

Why did you think the action of the parent was appropriate or inappropriate?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________
Focus Group Guide for Parental Groups

Focus Group Questions

Some people say that there are differences in the way different cultural groups raise their children. We are conducting a study to understand South Asian Canadian parents’ approaches to raising children, in particular how they discipline their children and how they deal with issues that arise out of discipline problems. We also want to understand issues that are concerns for South Asian Canadians in parenting their children. We hope that this information will be useful to social service providers so that they are able to provide services that respect different approaches to raising children, and so that they can understand some of the issues of concern for South Asian Canadian parents and provide the necessary services to families in need.

Because there are differences in parenting younger and older children and we can only talk about a limited number of subjects in the time we have, we will talk about children between six and twelve years of age.

We will first begin with discipline issues and discipline problems.

Appropriate Discipline

What kinds of rules do you think should be set for children? (Probes: for instance regarding religion, school, homework, household chores, bedtimes)

If children don’t follow the rules or wishes of parents what do you think should be done?

Inappropriate Discipline

Are there some actions of parents when they are trying to get children to follow rules that you think are not okay?

What would these be?

Sanctions of the Community

1. If parents are engaging in these actions or forms of behaviour do you think something should be done?
2. What do you think should be done?

Help Seeking Behaviour

1. Who do you think is the best person to help parents if they are having problems with
their children?
2. Since moving to Canada have you found it difficult to get the help needed to parent children?

Contextual and Cultural Issues
What are some of the issues that South Asian parents face in Canada in raising their children?
2. Would these be different in your previous country?

Perspective of Difference
1. Do you feel that your parenting is different from mainstream parenting?
2. Has it been difficult for you to raise your children since coming to Canada?
   What have some of these difficulties been?
   Do you think that the experiences of other South Asian parents are similar to yours?

Closing Question
Is there anything else you would like to add about any of the questions or issues discussed today?
(Additional thoughts, comments or opinions you may have about our discussions.)
Demographic Information for Child Welfare Professionals

Biographical Information

Participants Name ________________________________ Participant Code____________

Gender______Female ______Male Age________________________

Birth Place_________ ___________

How would you describe your ethno/cultural group________________________

Education
Highest Degree___________________ Highest Social Work Degree__________________

Agency employed_________________ Position at Agency___________________________

Number of years in current position___________________________

Number of years in child welfare______________________________

Number of years in social work______________________________

Training
Have you had multicultural/antiracist training____________________

What was the nature of the training (duration, focus)________________________

___________________________________________________________

Did it have content on South Asian Families________________________

Caseload
Approximately how many families have you worked with in the last year___________

Approximately what portion of your caseload in the last year comprised of visible minority families____________________.

Approximately what portion of your caseload in the last year comprised of South Asian families____________________.
Focus Group Guide for Professional Groups

Focus Group Questions for Child Welfare Workers

Name

Education

Geographic Location of Employment

Number of Years Employed

Introduction to Focus Group
Given the increasing diversity of Toronto and Canada we are cognizant of the task facing child welfare in providing culturally competent services. Through our research we hope to understand how workers and the child welfare system are approaching the issue of diversity generally. One ethnic group that is increasing in Canada and that receives child welfare services is South Asian Canadians. We therefore want to find out about services for South Asian families.

Training
1. What kind of training have you received in working with ethnically and racially diverse families? (Probes: university, ongoing child welfare training, etc.)

2. Was there a specific focus on South Asians?

Types of Cases
1. What are some of the types of cases involving South Asian Canadians that either you or other workers have dealt with?
2. Do you think these are generally the types of cases that come to the attention of child welfare services for South Asian Canadian families? (Probe: to understand if they believe there are common patterns among these families)?
3. Are these cases easy or difficult to manage?
4. What makes these cases easy to manage and what makes these cases difficult to manage?

General Information on South Asian Families
(Understanding of Culture)
1. Do you think that South Asian Canadian families have a specific parenting approach? (Probe: Describe the approach.)
2. Do you think that South Asian Canadian ways of parenting are different from the ways Caucasian parents typically parent their children?

3. Do you think this approach can increase the possibility of South Asian Canadians being referred to the Children’s Aid Society (CAS)? (Probe: Do you have examples from practice?)

(Understanding of other contextual issues)
1. Besides culture, what are some of the other issues that you think South Asian families encounter in parenting their children? (Probe: immigration time, economic factors, losing supports)

Closing Question
Is there anything else you would like to add about any of the questions or issues discussed today?
(Additional thoughts, comments or opinions you may have about our discussions).
Appendix C  Empirical Studies of Race, Culture, Ethnicity and Child Welfare

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<tr>
<td>Lauderdale Valiunas, &amp; Anderson 1980</td>
<td>Race, Ethnicity, and Child Maltreatment: An Empirical Analysis.</td>
<td>Computation of rates of abuse, neglect, and abuse and neglect together, for each of the major ethnic groups in Texas, namely &quot;Anglos&quot;, Blacks and Mexican-Americans.</td>
<td>Annual rates of all abuse and neglect were 2.87 for Anglos, 3.17 for Blacks &amp; 3.94 for Mexican-Americans per 1000 children. Abuse was found to be more predominant amongst Anglos, while neglect was more prevalent amongst Mexican-Americans and Blacks.</td>
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<td>Spearly &amp; Lauderdale 1983</td>
<td>Community Characteristics and Ethnicity in the Prediction of Child Maltreatment Rates</td>
<td>Study used Central Registry data to examine community characteristics and to predict rates of maltreatment for different ethnic groups.</td>
<td>Rates of abuse, neglect and overall maltreatment were highest among Blacks even after controlling for larger numbers of poor, single parent and working mother families in this group relative to other groups. SES was a predictor of abuse for Anglos, while greater urbanization was a predictor for Blacks and Mexican-Americans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hampton 1987</td>
<td>Race, Class and Child Maltreatment.</td>
<td>Substantiated cases of maltreatment from the first NIS study were analyzed. Percentages and cross-tabulations were calculated to elicit the prevalence of maltreatment among Hispanics, Whites and Blacks. Class was also included in the analyses.</td>
<td>Incidence of neglect and physical abuse was higher among Blacks. Black and Hispanic maltreated children were younger than White children. Black and Hispanic mothers had fewer years of formal education, were more likely to be unemployed and were younger. Black families were much poorer than Hispanic and White families.</td>
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<td>Jones &amp; McCurdy 1992</td>
<td>The Links Between Types of Maltreatment and Demographic Characteristics of Children</td>
<td>Secondary analyses of the Second National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect. Six types of abuse and their links to demographic characteristics were statistically examined.</td>
<td>Higher rates of neglect found for blacks compared to higher rates of sexual abuse for whites. Physical abuse was most distinguishable and predictable. It was related to economic factors regardless of public aid or race.</td>
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<td>Hampton &amp; Newberger</td>
<td>Child Abuse Incidence and Reporting by Hospital: Significance of Severity, Class, and Race.</td>
<td>Comparison between actual cases of abuse that came to the hospital and those reported to CPS. Then weighted according to 79-80 NIS survey.</td>
<td>60% of White families were reported to CPS while 74% of Black families and 91% of Hispanic families were reported. Class and race appeared to be important factors contributing to the decision to report.</td>
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<td>Zellman</td>
<td>The Impact of Case Characteristics on Child Abuse Reporting Decisions.</td>
<td>National survey of mandated reporters. Responses obtained to vignettes in which case and personal characteristics were varied.</td>
<td>Case characteristics had a significant impact on reports made. SES and Race increased the likelihood of reporting of abuse but not reporting of neglect.</td>
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<td>Eckenrode, Powers, Doris, Munsch, &amp; Boliger.</td>
<td>Substantiation of Child Abuse and Neglect Reports.</td>
<td>Examination of cases through regression analyses of factors that predict substantiation of abuse by CPS.</td>
<td>Ethnicity and number of children resulted in higher rates of substantiation. Reports from professionals were substantiated at significantly higher rates than reports from nonprofessionals for all types of maltreatment. Source of report influenced type of action taken after the report was received.</td>
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<td>Trocmé McPhee, Tam &amp; Hay</td>
<td>Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse &amp; Neglect.</td>
<td>Data collected from CAS intake social workers through a survey instrument. Information regarding case status, family and child demographics, risk factors, source(s) and reason(s) for referral and outcome of investigation was gathered.</td>
<td>Rates of substantiation for visible minority families was considerably higher. More children from visible minority families were investigated for physical abuse, while more whites were investigated for sexual abuse. Natives Canadian families were more likely to be investigated for neglect.</td>
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<td>Segal &amp; Schwartz</td>
<td>Factors Affecting Placement Decisions of Children Following Short-Term Emergency Care.</td>
<td>Case files of children in short term emergency residential care were examined. Seven variables were selected as predictors of whether children are returned to their natural parents after discharge from emergency care.</td>
<td>More Black than Caucasian children were returned home after shorter stays in care. Place from which child was admitted, amount of time spent in treatment, age and race significantly contributed to child's return home. Whether abuse had occurred or not was not a significant predictor of child being returned home.</td>
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<td>Barth, Snowden, Ten Broeck, Clancy, Jordan &amp; Barusch 1986</td>
<td>Contributors to Reunification or Permanent Out-of-Home Care for Physically Abused Children.</td>
<td>Quantitative analysis of background factors and service characteristics obtained from case record reviews of closed cases that had been designated as abuse.</td>
<td>Black children were more likely to be placed in permanent out-of-home care. Severity of abuse, child’s older age, poor school behavior, lower SES and intensive contract service was linked with permanent out-of-home placements. Direct service was linked to reunification.</td>
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<td>Tjaden, &amp; Thoennes. 1992</td>
<td>Predictors of Legal Intervention in Child Maltreatment Cases.</td>
<td>Examination of information from CPS and criminal court records utilizing chi square and discriminant analyses to identify factors associated with dependency and criminal filings.</td>
<td>Ethnic minority perpetrator was predictive of dependency filing and prosecution. Legal intervention is rare. Dependency filings and prosecutions occurred only in 21% and 4% of the cases respectively while out-of-home placements occurred in 75% and 50% of the cases respectively.</td>
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<td>Courtney 1995</td>
<td>Reentry to Foster Care of Children Returned to Their Families.</td>
<td>Longitudinal records of foster care histories were used to statistically explore the effects of selected child, family, and foster care system factors on reentry.</td>
<td>Race, poverty and child’s health problems were significantly associated with reentry to foster care. Child’s experience in care, placement setting at time of discharge, length of time in care, and placement stability also related to reentry.</td>
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<td>Hong George &amp; Hong Lawrence 1991</td>
<td>Comparative Perspectives on Child Abuse and Neglect: Chinese versus Hispanic and Whites</td>
<td>Questionnaires consisting of vignettes depicting parental conduct that might or might not be abusive or negligent were administered.</td>
<td>The Chinese rated vignettes of beatings as less severe than did Hispanics and Whites. Similarities among the group was found for neglect of child’s physical health, uncommon sleeping habits and encouraging children to commit crimes. The Chinese also preferred less intrusive forms of interventions often choosing no interventions.</td>
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<td>Rose &amp; Meezan 1996</td>
<td>Variations in Perceptions of Neglect.</td>
<td>66 statements of neglect case scenarios were developed. A five point scale was developed. Means of the mothers, of mothers and workers, and two groups of workers were compared.</td>
<td>High degree of similarity among the mothers was noted. Differences were noted regarding three indices of neglect. Investigating workers rated all indices more serious than protective service workers, while mothers tended to rate most indices more serious than workers.</td>
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<td>Folaron and Hess 1993</td>
<td>Placement Considerations for Children of Mixed African American and Caucasian Parentage.</td>
<td>Content analysis of case records, in-depth qualitative interviews of the child, the child’s parents, agency caseworker and supervisor were conducted.</td>
<td>These children entered the system at the youngest age, they had experienced the greatest number of out of home placements and they had more disrupted reunifications. Concern that the issue of racial identity and their experience of racism is ignored.</td>
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