COMMUNITY WORK AND GOVERNMENT:

TERMS OF OPPOSITION?

by

Katarina E. Hertes

B.A., The University of Saskatchewan, 1985

B.S.W., The University of Regina, 1988

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ABSTRACT

This report provides an overview of theoretical knowledge, policy, and practice implemented during my practicum placement with Saskatchewan Social Services. The practicum placement occurred from April 21 to August 8, 1997, at North Battleford, Saskatchewan.

Throughout my practicum experience I utilized principles of community organizing to establish an alternative measures program for young offenders. Specifically, I successfully introduced the family group conference model to various communities in Northwest Saskatchewan, including an urban center, small towns and First Nations communities.

The family group conference model is one alternative to Western society's traditional justice system, and is congruent with restorative justice principles. These principles support the inclusion of victim, community, and offender in a process of reparation. To promote change from a traditional criminal justice system to a restorative justice approach was challenging: it required successful navigation of bureaucratic systems, soliciting the support of judiciary, law enforcement, and community members, while maintaining a critical approach to social work and community work. This report summarizes theory and policy, while integrating practice issues.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

From April 21 to August 8, 1997 I completed the practicum requirement for the Master of Social Work degree through The University of Northern British Columbia. This sixteen week placement took place at Social Services in North Battleford, Saskatchewan. During this time period, I had the opportunity to integrate practice, policy and theory through my experience of implementing a community based restorative justice program. In the following report, I outline the theoretical premises that guided my practice and skill development, the policies that impacted upon program development, and practice issues that arose throughout my practicum placement.

The city of North Battleford is the center for administration for the North West region of Saskatchewan Social Services. The region encompasses numerous villages, towns, and First Nations communities covering approximately 20,000 square kilometers. Provincial government policy is established at Social Services' central office located in Regina, and administered in semi-autonomous regions. Practicum supervision was provided by Liz Weston, program manager, at the North Battleford office. This practicum placement was not specifically associated with any one work unit; however, I frequently worked with the alternative measures co-ordinator, Young Offenders program. I was also in contact with numerous collateral agencies throughout the placement, including the John Howard Society, Justice Advisory Committee members in several communities, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, several First Nation child welfare agencies, public school counselors, and other government departments.

Throughout my practicum experience, I worked in the area of alternative measures for youth in conflict with the law. Alternative measures are supported by the

federal Young Offenders Act, and are designed to divert young offenders that are not high risk from the court system by utilizing options available in the community, such as restitution to the victim(s), personal service or community service work. Alternative measures are one aspect of a restorative justice model, which incorporates the broader relationship between victim, offender, and community (Bazemore & Umbreit, 1995). The family group conference process is an alternative measure consistent with restorative justice principles. This process includes not only victim and offender, but their support groups from the community as well.

Although the Young Offenders Act is federally legislated, young offender programs are administered provincially. In Saskatchewan the young offender program is administered by Social Services, with "an attempt to preserve elements of a social work approach to the needs of youth" (Family and Youth Services, 1995, p. 4). In other provinces (British Columbia and Alberta), young offender programs are administered by the Department of Justice or Attorney General. Consequently, the focus of these programs tend to be more retributive, as they are based on an adult corrections model. These concepts are expanded within the scope of this practicum report.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The goal of this practicum report is to provide the reader with a comprehensive overview that links practice to theory and policy. Throughout my practicum experience I utilized the principles of community organizing to establish an alternative measures

program for young offenders within the context of a restorative justice model and a return to community ownership. My learning objectives were:

1. to increase my knowledge in community organizing
2. to practice appropriate community work skills and roles
3. to foster innovations in restorative justice for young offenders, particularly aboriginal and metis youth in conflict with the law and their communities.
4. to determine if social workers employed by government can implement successful community work strategies that are congruent with a critical social work approach.

The practicum report is divided into four chapters. The introduction provides an overview of learning objectives and a brief summary of the placement. Chapter Two incorporates four sections of the literature review including: community organizing, human service agencies as bureaucratic organizations, retributive vs. restorative justice, and the family group conference. Chapter Three outlines the practicum placement in relation to the previously noted learning objectives. In the final chapter I utilize a conceptual model to integrate theory, policy and practice. In addition to a reference list, two appendices are provided: Appendix 1 shows a map of Saskatchewan and Appendix 2 illustrates the conceptual model discussed in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER TWO - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In 1995, the Canadian federal government announced changes to the transfer of federal funds to the provinces for health, education, and social services (Department of Finance, 1995). These changes were implemented in April, 1996. Established Program Financing and the Canada Assistance Plan were amalgamated into the new Canada Health and Social Transfer, a single block fund for social services, health, and education (Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1996). These changes, combined with market globalization and competitiveness have resulted in social polarization and increasing inequality (Wiseman, 1996). These key issues and trends set the context for community organizing in the mid-1990's.

Some authors infer that Canadians are experiencing a return to a residual welfare state (Ecumenical Coalition for Economic Justice, 1993; Mullaly, 1993; Bach and Rioux, 1996; Pulkingham and Ternowetsky, 1996). This model of the welfare state is based on the premise that only when the private market and the family are unable to meet an individual's needs properly, institutions should temporarily intervene as a last resort (Titmuss, 1974). Williams (1994) indicates this residual model of welfare represents anti-collectivism with an emphasis on a market-based, rather than a needs-based society.

In this political climate of neo-liberalism (Teeple, 1996) and anti-collectivism, there is a decrease in social spending and an increasing government impetus to return to a residual model of social welfare. Consequently, there is a growing global interest in the concept of community development by a wide variety of political actors (Craig, 1996). Geographic communities, social service agencies, First Nations and other cultural groups as well as governments have shown interest. A cynical perspective about government

interest in community participation is that "cuts in essential services are hidden behind a rhetoric of voluntarism and community involvement: self-help can mean the route for democratic participation in decision-making, as on the political left, but it can also mean social services on the cheap" (Craig, 1996, p. 3). Craig maintains that community development initiatives appear to satisfy a wide range of political agendas, thus resulting in ideological confusion. In the midst of this ideological confusion, what then is community and community development?

Community Organizing

Wharf (1992) defines community "as a network of individuals with common needs and interests" (p. 16), indicating that the two essential ingredients are relationships and needs. Wharf indicates there are two types of communities. Traditional communities are "characterized by geographic boundaries, shared values, history, an economic base, and a governing structure" (p. 16), for example, a village. Community can also refer to large, diverse groups of people with a common existence of needs. Examples of the latter type of communities are the First Nations community, or the homosexual community.

Community work, community development, and community organization appear to be used interchangeably by some authors (Ife, 1995). Craig (1996) and Ife (1995) maintain part of the ideological confusion results from an unclear use of these terms. Ife states, "the terms *community work, community development, community organization, community action, community practice and community change* are all commonly used, often interchangeably, and although some would claim that there are important differences between some or all of these terms, there is no agreement as to what these

differences are, and no clear consensus as to the different shades of meaning that each implies" (p. 1, italics included).

Craig (1996) defines community development as "a way of working which essentially starts with the needs and aspirations of groups of disadvantaged people in poor localities and which struggles, first of all, to articulate and organize politically around those needs and aspirations, placing them at the front rather than the end of the political debate" (p. 12). Similarly, Ife (1995) defines community development "as the process of establishing, or re-establishing, structures of human community within which new ways of relating, organizing social life and meeting human need become possible" (p. 2).

Many authors (Cox and Derricourt, 1975; Muller, Walker, and Ng, 1990; Ife, 1995; Mayo and Craig, 1995; Craig, 1996) indicate that true community development and empowerment may not be possible if government organizations are initiating the changes as they often have underlying agendas. However, Mullaly (1993) and Carniol (1995) also suggest that in social work there are ways to work within the government systems to empower clients. Given that "social work is the one profession that is called upon - indeed which calls upon itself - to work for beneficial social change" (Riches and Ternowetsky, 1990, p. 18) and that social work holds values that are congruent with community development (Haynes and Mickelson, 1986) is it also possible to empower communities from within government systems?

Depending on the approach utilized for initiating change, governments can either help or hinder the change process. Rothman and Tropman (1987) identify three important models of purposive community change: locality development, social planning, and social action. Each of these models have distinct tasks and processes,

however some overlap in practice occurs, so they are not totally independent of one another.

Locality development is more commonly described as community development and is "'tentatively defined as a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and the fullest possible reliance on the community's initiative'" (United Nations as quoted in Rothman and Tropman, 1987, p. 5). Therefore, locality development relies on consensus, the capacity of the community to identify and solve their own problems, and participatory action. Rothman and Tropman (1987) indicate that this approach is process-oriented.

The social planning "approach presupposes that change in a complex industrial environment requires expert planners who, through the exercise of technical abilities, including the ability to manipulate large bureaucratic organizations, can skillfully guide complex change processes" (Rothman and Tropman, 1987, p. 6). Participatory action is not central to this approach to community work as the goal is to target a specific target group with a substantive social problem. Social Planning is task-oriented with the goal of manipulating formal organizations to produce change (Rothman and Tropman, 1987).

Finally, social action "presupposes a disadvantaged segment of the population that needs to be organized, perhaps in alliance with others, in order to make adequate demands on the larger community for increased resources or treatment more in accordance with social justice or democracy" (Rothman and Tropman, 1987, p. 6). This approach includes both task and process-oriented goals with the desired outcome of redistribution of power and resources (Rothman and Tropman, 1987).

Following from these approaches, it is useful to distinguish the differences between directive and non-directive community work. Batten (1967) uses the term

community work "in the very broadest sense to include almost anything that anyone may do to influence people's values, ideas, attitudes, relationships, or behavior for the better" (p. 4). Batten recognizes the difficulty in defining "better" because it is a subjective word. He indicates the directive approach "means that the agency which it itself decides, more or less specifically, whatever it thinks people need or ought to value or ought to do for their own good..." and "these decisions become the agency's betterment goals *for* people" (p. 5, italics included). On the other hand, in the non-directive approach the people and community "decide for themselves what their needs are" thus encouraging a "process of self-determination and self-help" (p. 11). Thus, while both of these approaches fit Batten's definition of community work, there are distinct ideological and practice differences.

Following from Batten's distinction between directive and non-directive community work, is it possible then, to engage in community organizing using a directive approach within a government agency while adhering to structural social work principles? Batten (1967) notes how there are some advantages to using a directive approach. He states that "the agencies which use it have achieved and are still achieving a tremendous amount of good" (p. 7). Ife (1995) observes how community workers employed in bureaucracies "can often negotiate or establish a degree of autonomy and sometimes even official support which enables viable community development projects to be established" (p. 251). This directive approach may be more consistent with Rothman and Trepan's (1987) model of social planning rather than locality development or social action.

Riches (1997) proposes a continuum of community work that conceptualizes both the directive and non-directive approaches. He suggests that the term *community*

organizing is more closely linked to a directive approach, and that the term *community development* may be associated with a non-directive approach. Despite these differences, both approaches are in the realm of *community work* as there are commonalities in the roles of the worker, and goals of the project.

Christiansen-Ruffman (1990) observes that working within communities and government may be positive as "state-sponsored community participation, although extremely difficult, is important for the increased involvement and better results of community-based planning, and ultimately, for transformations within the state" (p. 102). Hall, Land, Parker, and Webb (1975) identify general criteria for determining the priority that government considers when an issue becomes forefront. These criteria are: legitimacy, feasibility, and support. Therefore, if a community and community worker have considered these components, government authorities may be more likely to advance the project. Similarly, if the worker is employed within government, these criteria may be easier to achieve.

It is noteworthy that social workers have struggled with maintaining social work values while working in bureaucratic organizations. Abramovitz (1993) states "since its origins at the turn of the century, social work has strived to maximize human development, self-determination, and social justice ....at the same time, the profession faced strong pressures to promote individual adjustment and to protect the status quo" (p. 6). In this statement, Abramovitz summarizes the ideological conflict that exists for social workers, particularly for those working in bureaucratic organizations (Carniol, 1995). Rothman and Tropman (1987) indicate that "within the field of social work, programs emphasizing substantive decision making typify this [social planning] approach" (p. 6).

A key concept in both social work and community work is empowerment (Taylor, 1995). Empowerment is integral to practicing effective community organization. Taylor states community work has attempted to empower people through a variety of interventions in relation to the state. She maintains that community work is now "either acting as its [government's] agent or seeking to find the cracks in the system through which empowerment is drawn" (p. 109). Advocacy and consciousness raising are two dynamics of empowerment (Moreau, 1989). Rappaport (1984) states empowerment "is a process: the mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their lives" (p. 3). Swift (1984) maintains it is critical for target populations to participate in the empowerment process "in any intervention affecting its welfare" (p. xiv). By empowering target populations through their participation, the process "aims to increase the power of the disadvantaged" (Ife, 1995, p. 56).

In addition to active participation, empowerment can be achieved through consciousness raising, an educational role that "aims to help people locate their own problems, dreams, aspirations, sufferings and disappointments within a broader and political perspective" (Ife, 1995, p. 210). Ife (1995) indicates how consciousness raising is "one of the most pervasive roles of a good community worker, as almost any situation has consciousness raising potential" (p. 211).

Despite Moreau's (1989) assertion that consciousness raising and advocacy are important aspects of empowerment, Ife (1995) indicates that advocacy "assumes that the advocate is better able to represent the case than the person or people directly involved in it" (p. 216). The role of advocate is therefore potentially disempowering for the community, and the "goal of a community worker must be to enable people to represent

their own interests, rather than to feel that they need someone else to do it for them" (Ife, 1995, p. 216).

Ife (1995) identifies that advocacy is only one aspect of the community worker's representational role. He provides a comprehensive overview of four community work roles including: facilitative, educational, representational, and technical roles. The following is a summary of the characteristics of each role:

a. facilitative roles - social animation, mediation and negotiation, support, building consensus, group facilitation, utilization of skills and resources, and organizing
b. educational roles - consciousness raising, informing, confronting, and training
c. representational roles - obtaining resources, advocacy, using the media, public relations, networking and sharing knowledge and experience
d. technical roles - data collection and analysis, using computers, verbal and written presentation, management, and financial control.

These four roles, as defined above, suggest that a community worker must have the knowledge, skills and abilities of a generalist to ensure that specialization does not interfere with effective practice (Ife, 1995). Generalist practice is a concept familiar to social work, which suggests that an integrated approach and combination of methods are applied to resolve complex problems and situations (Johnson, 1986). The worker may therefore borrow "from a spectrum of conceptual materials and social science disciplines in order to move toward a solution" (Collier, 1984, p. 65), by combining case work, group work and community work.

Burghardt (1982) indicates tactics are an integral part of community work strategy, and distinguishes between two types: process-oriented and task-oriented tactics. Process-oriented tactics include dialogue, information sharing, communication, and the process of getting tasks completed. Task-oriented tactics on the other hand "are concerned with concrete issues, action, and results" (p. 22). Burghardt maintains these tactics are not separate entities, but are inter-related. He suggests it is useful for the worker to determine if he/she is process or task-oriented to best utilize his/her strengths.

In regard to the skills required for effective community work, Ife (1995) observes how there are manuals, books and resource kits available providing instructions about "'how to do it', by using a cook book approach" (p. 227). Ife (1995) argues these cook books may provide some usefulness in terms of ideas, however, he warns there are limitations to using these approaches. First, he indicates community work is a chaotic process and does not progress in a linear manner, which is what many of the cook books assume. Second, communities are not generalizable, and solutions must be found within the context of each community's culture, politics, geography, religion and economy. Third, each community worker has different styles that may not conform with the cook book's style. Finally, he states, "the cook book approach tends to treat skills in isolation....to discuss them in isolation from values and knowledge is to make an artificial separation" (p. 228).

Ife (1995) does, however identify core competencies required for effective community work which integrate theory, reflection and practice. He states that the community worker "must be constantly reflecting on the nature of her/his practice to gain a deeper understanding of the community, society and social change, and to be evaluating theory in terms of practice and practice in terms of theory" (p. 230). The worker

therefore, develops skills in a unique way, dependent on their reflection of practice in relation to theory. The competencies evolving from this perspective include: analysis of what is happening, awareness of self and community, experience by participation, learning from others through observation, and intuition - by relying on values, experience, and feelings.

The literature supports the notion that community work is a holistic, integrated approach to empowerment of disadvantaged groups. Workers embarking on a project whether or not employed by government must therefore concurrently assess and evaluate numerous aspects on a continuous basis: structural inequalities and distribution of power, organizational agendas, community needs in the context of culture and geographical location, group dynamics and recognition of potential leaders within groups, as well as their personal theoretical view of the world. Nozick (1992) summarizes these aspects appropriately when she states, "what we can do is a three step process - self-awareness, community action, and linking with others outside the community" (p. 212). Thus, community work occurs at three levels: micro (individual and small group), meso (community), and macro (society).

Human Service Agencies as Bureaucratic Organizations

As indicated in the previous section, the social planning approach to community work requires the ability to manipulate large bureaucratic organizations (Rothman and Tropman, 1987). Hasenfeld (1983) indicates human service organizations are those bureaucracies "whose principal function is to protect, maintain, or enhance the personal well-being of individuals by defining, shaping, or altering their personal attributes" (p. 1).

He adds that human service organizations differ from other bureaucracies in two ways: 1) they work directly with clients, and 2) they function under mandates, which justify their existence. Saskatchewan Social Services is an example of a bureaucratic human service organization.

Hasenfeld (1983) states there are numerous reasons for the welfare state evolving into a bureaucratic system. These reasons include fair and equitable access of services on a large scale basis for individuals, efficient division of labor requiring specialized knowledge, and socialization and/or social control of individuals whose families could no longer control the individual's behavior. Gummer (1990) observes how we live in an organizational society which "is becoming even more so [organized] as the scope and influence of bureaucratic organizations expand" (p. 3). This phenomenon has influenced the study of social welfare to include organizational behavior as well as policy analysis and the evaluation of professional practice (Gummer, 1990).

A bureaucracy is a system based on "rational organizational principles" (Hodge and Anthony, 1991, p. 696). Max Weber is acknowledged for his work defining bureaucratic processes. To summarize Weber's definition of the formation of bureaucracy, Lee (1993) states:

> To Weber, the process of bureaucratization is a shift from organizational management based on the interests and personalities of specific individuals, to one based on explicit *rules* and *procedures*. These rules and procedures are identified with the *roles* in the organization rather than individual people. [Italics included] Bureaucratic organizations thus take on an impersonal, mechanical character. (p. 320)

Hasenfeld summarizes Weber's interpretation of how bureaucratic organizations are an efficient method to mobilize resources and power in an industrial market economy.

Therefore, de-personalization through rules, roles and procedures ideally avoid preferential treatment of clients by individuals within the organization. It is interesting to note how "Weber foresaw the possibility that the very efficiency of a bureaucracy would lead to the concentration of immense power in the hands of bureaucrats and managerial elites, power that would be buttressed by their control over a highly complex technology" (Hasenfeld, 1983, p. 17).

Many authors (Hasenfeld, 1983; Carniol, 1995; and Leflaive, 1996) identify that power relationships within organizations are a reconstruction of power relationships at the societal level. According to Leflaive (1996), the power within hierarchical organizations is intended to empower individuals along hierarchical lines. This hierarchically-based mode of empowerment has questionable utility if we revisit the definition of empowerment from a community organizing perspective. The Marxist theory of bureaucracy suggests that power is "in the class division of industrial and industrializing societies, and in the function of bureaucracy in directly controlling the extraction of a surplus product, and regulating class conflict; to analyze this requires a political economy of class, rather than a political sociology of organization" (Beetham, 1996, p. 83). Beetham (1996) proposes that bureaucratic power stems from a combination of modern organization *and* class, and is therefore not monocausal but is multidimensional.

Since the inception of social work, the profession has been characterized by a disjunction between philosophy and practice. This disjunction is based on the two opposing themes of social action and individual interest (Franklin, 1990). These two contradictory aspects of social work have evolved into two major competing views of

society: the conventional view and the progressive/critical view. The conventional view suggests "that social problems do exist, but defines them in terms of personal difficulties that require social work intervention either to help people cope or adjust to existing institutions or to modify existing policies in a similar fashion" (Mullaly, 1993, p. 32). This approach supports the status quo of the existing social, economic and political structures in society by focusing on individual pathology. On the other hand, Mullaly (1993) maintains that the critical view adheres to the belief that existing institutions are unable to meet the needs of people in society. As a result, interventions are aimed at changing societal institutions and the distribution of wealth and resources. Critical social work is based on values of equality, freedom and collectivism through democratic participation and humanism.

Carniol (1995) observes how the public sector is the largest employer of social workers, yet government institutions exist as part of the social order that supports inequality in the welfare state. Collier (1984) argues social work "developed as a service to the industrial state and exists in order to tend the casualties of the system" (p. 23). This has the effect of camouflaging the growing disparity between rich and poor (Carniol, 1995). Christenson (1996) draws parallels between the welfare state and bureaucratic institutions where "remaining 'in business' does not depend on satisfying clients but satisfying budgetary and policy requirements..." (p. 144). Given that social workers are largely employed by institutions that support the existing status quo, we may be compelled to ask, whose side are we on? The uneasy relationship between conventional and critical practice within human service work, including community work, continues to challenge workers in the field.

Change within large organizations is often a slow and laborious process, occurring from the top, down hierarchical lines (Hasenfeld, 1983). However, the post-modern perspective is that clients possess knowledge that is important in effective service delivery (Greenwood & Lachman, 1996). Clients are becoming "co-producers of the service they seek, partaking with the professionals in the production processes" (Greenwood & Lachman, 1996, p. 565). Hasenfeld (1983) indicates an acceptable balance between increased service efficiency and public input is a major challenge for human service agencies today. Restorative justice initiatives, which are discussed in the next section, seek to find the common ground between these competing demands.

Retributive versus Restorative Justice

Traditional criminology has its basis in 18th and 19th century philosophy and theology (Fattah, 1993). The relationships in this traditional approach are adversarial in nature and place the actual victim of the crime in a passive position by focusing on the state as victim (Umbreit, 1989). In the traditional court system, offenders and victims are represented, and are therefore rendered into a conflict not between the actual parties involved, but between representatives of the legal system. Fattah (1993) argues that the victim is in fact "so thoroughly represented that she or he for the most part of the proceedings is pushed completely out of the arena, reduced to the trigger-off of the whole thing" (p. 788), thus becoming doubly victimized by the offender and the system.

Kennedy (1990) states Western society defines crime "strictly as behavior that breaks the law and is liable to public prosecution and punishment" (p. 1). Consequently, crime is treated as a phenomenon isolated from contributing social factors. This Western

model of justice is retributive in nature by having court systems impose punishment on the offender to prevent future crime (Umbreit, 1989).

There are numerous theories in criminology. Mainstream criminology is characterized by "a strong correctional bias, a pathological interest in criminals and a weak reformist interest" (Williams, 1991, p. 287). Williams (1991) argues that radical and conflict criminologists focus on the meaning of crime rather than individual pathology. Conflict theorists maintain that the roots of crime are manifested in conflict between opposing groups in society with differing needs (Kennedy, 1990; Williams, 1991). Kennedy (1990) indicates that "conflict may provide an integrative function, defining clearly the rules or laws that need to be applied in controlling behavior" (p. 12). It has been argued that the actions of the police, courts and corrections serve the needs of the powerful in society, resulting in social control (Marshall, 1988; Harris, 1991; Williams, 1991). Conflict theorists suggest "that the behaviors of the powerless in any society are more likely to be criminalized, and this same group is more likely to be arrested, convicted and harshly sentenced" (Williams, 1991, p. 301). Conflict theory is not to be confused with the individual who is in *conflict with the law*, but occurs as a societal level of conflict between opposing power groups. A Canadian example is the disproportionate numbers of arrest and detention of First Nations people that come into contact with the justice system. Statistics show that aboriginal people are over-represented in the welfare system (Satzewich & Wotherspoon, 1993; Monture-Angus, 1995; Durst, 1990). When First Nations people do come into contact with the system, Frideres (1993) states "they have tended to become virtually permanent clients, as evidenced by recurrent patterns of detention and arrest..." (p. 275).

Monture-Angus (1995) indicates the child welfare system is on a continuum with the criminal justice system because "the child welfare system feeds the youth and correctional systems. Both institutions remove citizens from their communities, which has a devastating effect on the cultural and spiritual growth of the individual" (p. 194).

Radical criminologists, influenced by conflict theorists, also identify disparity between groups as a root cause of crime. Williams (1991) summarizes the work of Chambliss by stating, "He argued that acts are only defined as criminal to protect the ruling economic class..." and "crime reduces surplus labor by providing jobs in such areas as law enforcement and welfare" (p. 304). Radical criminologists have highlighted the perpetuation of problems in a conflict oriented society (Williams, 1991). Zehr (1990) however, warns that framing all crime in terms of conflict may lead to blaming the victim (e.g. situations of domestic violence). He indicates that crime is not simply an escalation of conflict, and it is therefore misleading to equate violence with conflict because of other factors. These other factors may include relationships, power, and social impacts.

Zehr (1990) indicates crime results in harm through four dimensions: 1) the victim, 2) interpersonal relationships, 3) the offender, and 4) the community. He indicates that the retributive model of criminal justice focuses on the community, but in an impersonal and abstract manner. Zehr (1990) states that "Retributive justice defines the state as victim, defines wrongful behavior as violation of rules, and sees the relationship between victim and offender as irrelevant" (p. 184). A restorative approach by contrast, incorporates all four dimensions of harm. Zehr (1990) indicates:

> A restorative lens identifies people as victims and recognizes the centrality of the interpersonal dimensions. Offenses are defined as personal harms and interpersonal relationships. Crime is a violation of people and relationships. (p. 184)

Restorative justice requires a shift from a traditional paradigm to an emerging paradigm that is more inclusive. Saskatchewan Justice (1996) identifies the main differences between the paradigms as follows:

Traditional approach	Restorative approach
- defines crime as a violation of state	- defines crime as a violation of one person by another
- focuses on establishing blame	- focuses on problem-solving
- ignores the needs of the victim and community	- involves the victim and the community, and responds to their needs
- stigmatizes and alienates the offender	- forgives the offender and reintegrates the offender with the community. (p. 1)

Wright (1991) indicates the restorative model attempts to restore the situation through reparation which involves process, as well as outcomes. He states, "the model is not based on meeting offenders' needs (though that can be part of it) nor punishing their deeds; rather it builds on their good qualities by requiring them to make amends...the ultimate objective is spoken of in terms not of deterrence and coercion but of healing and reconciliation" (p. 113). The goals of healing and forgiveness would ideally replace punitive judicial consequences for all but the most serious offenses, allowing the justice system to "focus its resources on the high-risk, violent offenders who pose a significant threat to the public" (Saskatchewan Justice, 1996, p. 1).

Numerous interest groups can benefit from a restorative justice approach. Victims of crime will have more involvement, offenders will have an opportunity to make meaningful amends while learning how their actions have affected other, and

communities may experience less crime. The benefits to governments, and ultimately the taxpayer, will mean less money being poured into the existing criminal justice system. One negative aspect in some people's opinion may be a decrease of jobs for lawyers, judges and criminal justice employees. However, the decrease in tax dollars spent on incarcerating offenders could possibly result in job creation in other areas.

The family group conference is one alternative to Western society's traditional justice system. The rationale, process and theoretical basis of this reparative approach are examined in the following section.

The Family Group Conference

The family group conference (also known as community accountability conference, community justice forum, and family-group decision making) originated in New Zealand by the Maori people, although similar problem-solving processes have been used around the world by indigenous groups (McDonald, Moore, O'Connell, & Thorsborne, 1995) and by First Nations people in Canada for centuries (Aboriginal Justice Learning Network, 1997). The family group conference process is congruent with restorative justice principles in that it works "toward two interwoven goals: 1) repair the damage and minimize further harm caused by offending behavior and 2) maximize the social justice achieved for victims, offenders and other members of the community affected by that offending behavior" (McDonald, et al., 1995, p. 2).

In New Zealand, the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act passed in 1989 emphasizes the following issues, in order to deal effectively with youth in conflict with the law:

1. the rights of families and young people to participate in any decisions made about what will happen to a young person who has offended
2. it sets out the processes by which victims can be involved in the process of deciding what should happen
3. the importance of protecting young people's rights and enhancing their well-being
4. the importance of maintaining and strengthening the links that young people have with their families, communities and culture (Maxwell & Morris, 1994, p. 1)

In 1990, the positive outcomes of the New Zealand model of family group conferencing were observed by an Australian police officer. The process was modified and implemented by city police in Wagga Wagga, Australia and by educators in Queensland, Australia (McDonald, et al., 1995). The Wagga Wagga model was brought to the United States in 1994 and later introduced in Canada. Family group conferencing has been used in Sparwood, B.C. for approximately two years (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 1997) and in Regina, Saskatchewan since 1996 (Losie, 1996).

Reintegrative shaming is the basis of the family group conference. John Braithwaite (1989) provides an explanation of why reintegrative shaming is effective. Braithwaite distinguishes between stigmatizing shaming and reintegrative shaming. He indicates that stigmatization leads "to outcasting, to confirmation of a deviant master status....stigmatization pushes offenders toward criminal subcultures" (p. 12-13). Conversely, reintegrative shaming "shames while maintaining bonds of respect or love...instead of amplifying deviance by progressively casting the deviant out" (p. 12-13). The emphasis is on the distinction between the youth as an individual and his/her behavior; the criminal act is separated from deciding whether the youth is a good or bad person (McDonald, et al., 1995).

In the family group conference, McDonald et al. (1995) indicate how "shame is

experienced when a person recognizes damage to their emotional bonds with others" (p. 8). The effects of reintegrative shaming are such that "people will go through great lengths to avoid it" (Nathanson, 1992, p. 15). Thus, a youth's experience of reintegrative shaming through social disapproval becomes internalized, resulting in conscience building that acts as a mechanism to control future deviant behavior (McDonald, et al., 1995).

Saskatchewan Justice (1997) has listed several criteria in their young offender diversion policy to assess the suitability of a case for family group conferencing. Some of these criteria include:

1. victim participation (or surrogate)
2. the youth must acknowledge responsibility for his/her behavior
3. the youth must voluntarily participate
4. there must be sufficient evidence to support a criminal charge

Numerous other criteria, such as offenses to be excluded are also outlined in the policy.

The following stages of the family group conference process are summarized from the Real Justice training manual (McDonald, et al., 1995) and the Aboriginal Justice Learning Network (1997) symposium:

1. Preparation

Preparation involves obtaining offender agreement and victim (or surrogate) agreement. Participants should include the offender and his/her parents

or guardians, family members and others significant in the young person's life, the victim, his/her parents or guardians (if a youth) and family, and/or significant support person(s). Each participant should be informed of the process. A map of the seating arrangement should be completed, using principles of group dynamics.

2. The family group conference

a. Introduction

The conference begins with an introduction of participants, and their reason for attending the conference (roles). A cultural ceremony to open the conference may be appropriate (i.e. a sweetgrass ceremony). The offender is advised of his/her right to leave the conference, but that if he/she does chose to leave, the matter will be dealt with through the court system.

b. Offender tells the story

The offender is asked to present what happened, what he/she was thinking at the time, and how his/her actions may have affected others.

c. Victim tells the story

The victim is asked how the incident has affected them, and the consequences of the offender's behavior.

d. Supporters' reactions

First the victim's supporters are asked to speak, in turn, about how they have been affected by the incident. Next, the offender's supporters are asked to indicate how the offender's behavior has affected them.

e. Plan action/future

The victim and his/her supporters are asked what they would like to see happen out of the conference in terms of reparation. This might include restitution, personal service work, community service work, a formal apology , or any other alternatives that they feel are appropriate. The offender and his/her supporters are also asked to have input into what they think is a fair agreement.

f. Closure

When agreement is reached, the conference is formally closed, and the agreement is prepared for signing.

g. Reintegration

This informal aspect is symbolic of reintegration into the community. Refreshments are served, and the group shares food and drink together. It is appropriate for this to take place while the conference facilitator is preparing the agreement.

3. Follow-up

Checking to ensure that the agreement conditions have been met by the dates indicated is important. During the conference, participants decide who will complete the follow-up, and who will report it to the facilitator.

McDonald, et al. (1995) suggest some important aspects should be observed in the conference. The use of open-ended questions is imperative to obtain full information, and silences and pauses must be allowed. They indicate that if the offender does not admit responsibility for his/her actions, that the conference be stopped. Additionally, they indicate it is crucial to remind participants that the focus is on the incident and that criticism is not on the youth, but on the youth's behavior.

Research on the effectiveness of the family group conference outcomes was conducted by Maxwell and Morris (1994) in New Zealand between August 1990 and May 1991. They found that a) a larger number of young people were being made more accountable than before the process had been initiated, b) the number of appearances in youth court dramatically decreased, and c) 95% of conferences were able to reach agreement. In terms of the Sparwood project, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (1997) indicate that the program has shown impressive results. They note that out of the sixty five youth who have participated in the program, all have completed the conference agreement, and "on average the time from the date of the offense to the conclusion of the resolution has been 74 days compared to 5 months to one year through the court system" (p. 1).

While the family group conference process is not a miracle cure for criminal behavior, it is an alternative to the traditional court system. Workers involved in organizing conferences must be attentive to community work skills, strategies, and practice to be effective. While the focus is on the individual's behavior, the process is inclusive of family and community members' opinions and input. This process teaches problem-solving techniques that members can transfer to other situations. Given the positive outcomes indicated, this process may be an effective way to involve the community, victim, and offender in an appropriate reintegrative approach to justice.

CHAPTER 3 - THE PRACTICUM PLACEMENT

My practicum placement occurred over sixteen weeks, from April 21 to August 8, 1997. The work did not proceed in a neat chronologically ordered package because I was working with various communities which were at different levels of readiness for social planning. I will therefore describe the practicum placement within the context of the learning objectives, which were outlined in the introduction.

The first part of the practicum placement was orientation. This process was moderated somewhat by the fact that I had previously worked in this office. Upon arriving at the Social Services office, I was introduced to staff I had not previously met, and arrangements were made concerning the practical aspects of placement such as where I would be sitting, phone procedures, calling cards, et cetera. Liz Weston, my practicum field supervisor and I discussed how I would begin the placement. The first step was to determine the goals and objectives, and time lines for these goals. I completed a work plan for myself, setting tentative goals within the larger objectives of the practicum placement. For example, how would I go about meeting objective 1? How would I practice community work skills and roles? Once this workplan was devised, my practicum supervisor provided useful suggestions on where I could access resources.

Objective 1: To increase knowledge in community organizing.

Initially, I concentrated on obtaining information from the social services community development unit in Saskatoon, to determine what projects were already in place, how these projects had been implemented (locality development, social action or

social planning), and what initiatives were taking place in justice oriented programs. Several people within Social Services were very knowledgeable about current initiatives, but the information was piecemeal and there was no comprehensive overview of community programs taking place provincially. My knowledge continued to develop as the practicum evolved, and further contacts were made with others working within Social Services.

In terms of community organizing, most of the people I spoke with that were working with communities did not appear to operate from a specific theoretical base, but appeared to draw most of their knowledge from common sense. Government employees tended to operate from a social planning model of community work encompassing a fairly broad target group, while First Nations people employed by the band were more inclined toward locality development (the geographic community being the focus of change).

In order to increase my own knowledge about community organizing, for this practicum I needed to increase knowledge about the family group conference model that our region was intending to implement. Information regarding this model was scarce, and I was required to contact numerous people both internal and external to Social Services to access resources. I had difficulty obtaining resources from some internal bureaucrats, but found Royal Canadian Mounted Police members very helpful in sharing sources of information. Subsequently, I ordered materials from Pennsylvania which proved very useful in providing background information for the conference process.

Although most of the planning for my project occurred for the city of North Battleford, I also made contacts and was invited to give presentations in other communities (refer to Appendix 1, Map of Saskatchewan). These included the Onion

Lake First Nations community (population approximately 3000, 50 kilometers north of Lloydminster), the town of Spiritwood (population approximately 1000, located 125 kilometers northeast of North Battleford), and the northern community of La Loche (population approximately 2400, located 500 kilometers north of North Battleford). Each of these communities are at various stages of development in terms of their organizing for community justice initiatives.

The Onion Lake band has a Justice Committee comprised of local members currently in place, with a justice co-ordinator who is an employee of the band. This locality was eager to implement the family group conference program, and saw it as an adjunct to the alternative measures/mediation program that is already in operation. Upon the completion of my practicum, service providers to facilitate the conference process were already approved, a protocol for referrals and follow-up established (that interestingly enough by-passes the Crown Prosecutor, which is actually a requirement for alternative measures), and facilitator training requested.

In the town of Spiritwood, no justice committee exists, but the interagency group consisting of school personnel, health employees and ICFS (Indian Child and Family Services) requested a presentation after the assistant director for the school division became aware of the process. Although the feedback from the participants following my presentation was positive, there has been no further contact with this interagency group. Perhaps at a later date, the agency group may revisit this process and develop it at their own pace.

I was also invited to facilitate a presentation of the family group conference process in La Loche for interagency members from the Northern towns of La Loche and Buffalo Narrows. Participants included RCMP members, community development

corporation employees (funded jointly by SaskJustice and Social Services), Social Services staff, and employees of the Buffalo Narrows Friendship Center. Both of these communities have rampant social problems including high rates of crime, unemployment, teenage pregnancy and alcohol/substance abuse. This group of people was challenging, possibly because there is a sense of hopelessness about changing the existing status quo in these communities.

Each of these communities was at different stages of readiness for becoming involved in the development of restorative justice initiatives. Onion Lake, perhaps because of its' size (3000 people) and progressive administration, is ready for program implementation. La Loche, Buffalo Narrows, and Spiritwood will require local interest to be developed, and the support of local agencies. North Battleford, with its numerous bureaucratic institutions (judges, RCMP, crown prosecutors, Social Services, and legal aid) proved to be challenging in order to obtain legitimacy, feasibility and support from all the agencies involved.

Although the educational and facilitative roles were the primary focus of my practicum, the practical development of protocols, referral forms, workplans, and budgetary requirements were essential aspects of obtaining legitimacy for the program. Presenting a feasible plan that fit with community needs and differences encouraged the support of community agencies.

It is noteworthy that in each of these communities, participants requested information of a parallel process for family services cases. With the help of Kanaweyimik Indian Child and Family Services staff in Battleford, and drawing on writings by Burford and Pennell (1994), I developed a preliminary draft for a parallel process for child welfare concerns.

Objective 2: To practice appropriate community work skills and roles.

The skills component of this objective was closely related to the roles I was fulfilling in my practicum. Skills that were required depended on the role I undertook; for example, communication skills were important in delivering educational presentations. As indicated in the community organizing section of Chapter Two, Ife (1995) identifies four main roles for community work including facilitative, educational, representational, and technical roles.

My role as facilitator developed in two areas: a) I facilitated group discussion with collateral agencies to determine appropriate resources, and b) in the family group conference I co-ordinated. First I discuss my facilitative role with collateral agencies.

Social animation and enthusiasm for this project came naturally, as I believe in restorative justice principles and view the family group conference as an appropriate mechanism to achieve restorative justice. Developing negotiation skills was imperative for working co-operatively with other agencies, particularly to obtain resources. Both monetary support (although I did not have the authority as a student to approve costs) and support for new ideas and methods of implementation, particularly for Onion Lake were also required. In terms of the family group conference, the role of facilitator on a micro level required all aspects of the facilitative role: I organized the conference, provided support to conference participants, encouraged consensus, and assisted in the negotiation process.

As indicated in the section under Objective 1, I completed presentations in North Battleford, Spiritwood, and La Loche. At many of the meetings I attended, I provided a theoretical and practice overview of the family group conference process. Working as a

group facilitator at the front-line level, clients were also advised and informed of the process. Consciousness raising occurred at the client and agency level. I was able to achieve this by giving presentations about restorative justice and how it might be achieved at micro and meso levels.

The family group conference I facilitated was an excellent opportunity to practice facilitation at a micro level, and I gained insight into the effectiveness of the process. In this case, a youth in one of Social Services' group homes had broken a window during an outburst where he had been influenced by another youth. No RCMP involvement had occurred, and the group home staff were willing to participate in the family group conference process to divert the youth from the court process. The youth and his mother agreed to participate. The conference was held, an agreement was reached, and follow-up showed the youth had completed the requirements of the agreement.

I found representational roles difficult to undertake given my status as a student. At collateral agency meetings that required decision-making ability or authority, other Social Service representatives were asked to attend with me. Similarly, although I had knowledge and input about where financial and personnel resources could be obtained, I did not have the power or authority to approve or access resources. Networking was a crucial component of the practicum. The RCMP community-oriented policing has also been supporting the family group conference process for adults as well as youth. I was fortunate to be able to attend their facilitator training in Meadow Lake, and made several contacts at this three day session. Representatives from other agencies (corrections, RCMP and half-way houses) also requested I share academic information with them, to assist them in implementing similar programs. The media was not used during this practicum.

The technical roles I incorporated throughout my practicum included accessing literature and information on the internet, and utilizing word processing systems to develop material for presentations. At the beginning of the practicum, Liz Weston made arrangements for me to attend Lotus Notes training (the department's e-mail system) in order that I could communicate internally with department employees throughout the province.

These roles combined both process-oriented and task-oriented tactics. Educational and representational roles may be more closely aligned with process-oriented tactics because of their networking and informing orientation. Facilitative and technical roles were more concrete, with a specific outcomes identified (e.g. an agreement or contract). Reflecting on my practice, I found task-oriented tactics to be more conducive to my personal style. As I become more comfortable with process-oriented tactics I will gain confidence in their use.

<u>Objective 3:</u> To foster innovations in restorative justice for young offenders, particularly aboriginal and metis youth in conflict with the law, and their communities.

While the family group conference is not a new concept, the use of this mechanism in the implementation of justice is a new idea. Sentencing circles have been adopted from First Nations communities in many areas of Canada, and used in lieu of the traditional court system. However, there is a fundamental difference between a sentencing circle and family group conference. The judge in the sentencing circle still maintains a mantle of power, while in the family group conference, the participants all

have equal power. Mediation processes also have a long history of use for conflict resolution, however they involve only the offender and the victim and exclude their support groups.

Traditional First Nations culture relies on cooperation, and problem-solving with extended family. One example of this principle is the use of healing circles. The family group conference also relies on cooperation and problem-solving with extended family and/or support groups. I found that the First Nations people that I worked with during this practicum were very receptive to the idea, and eager to implement this strategy in their communities.

The development of protocols for use of family group conferencing with the Onion Lake community and a flow chart outlining the implementation process to suit the community's needs was exciting. Their enthusiasm for the project was encouraging, particularly given that I was an outsider coming in to their community.

Objective 4: To determine if social workers employed by government can implement successful community work strategies that are congruent with a critical social work approach.

As indicated in the community organizing section of chapter two, there are several models of community work. Although non-directive, participatory action models such as locality development are most congruent with a critical or structural approach to social work, state-sponsorship may increase involvement and result in effective planning, with the possibility of state transformation (Christiansen-Ruffman, 1990). Some might argue that the state is giving up responsibility for youth crime by putting it in the hands of a

community or restorative approach to justice. Yet offending youth are part of that community, and communities must be encouraged to deal with issues that impact upon it. A community-based, restorative approach encourages participation of community members. I do not believe that facilitators should be requested to co-ordinate conferences on a voluntary basis, but should be paid for their efforts. In this region, arrangements were made to contract the facilitators on a fee-for-service basis.

It is interesting to note that as a student, I did not have a role *within* the bureaucratic system. I experienced more difficulties obtaining information, making contacts, and soliciting support from within my own bureaucratic system rather than from associated agencies such as the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. On several occasions, my practicum supervisor and the alternative measures co-ordinator were able to circumvent the bureaucrats holding information, and access the information I required from other resources.

CHAPTER FOUR - INTEGRATING THEORY, POLICY, AND PRACTICE

A conceptual model of how theory, policy and practice might be integrated is illustrated in Appendix 2. In this model, the individual is linked to community through a series of concentric and overlapping circles. It is important to note that the individual is not viewed as isolated from community, but that intervention with the youth can and may occur at other levels as well.

At the center of the model is the youth. The youth has four components of being: emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental. Each of these components interact to develop a holistic approach to the individual. The perforated lines in the model indicate that the flow of information, influence, and impact is possible in a non-directive manner.

The next circle symbolizes those people who might have the most impact or influence on the youth. This includes the youth's immediate family, extended family, peer associations (keeping in mind the developmental stage of the youth where peer associations are often more influential than family), cultural influences taught by the family, and significant others, such as a coach, teacher, or employer that might have had an influential relationship with the youth.

The community circle includes those aspects of the youth's associations that are present in the youth's life, but may not be as influential as the family circle. These include neighborhood members, organizations/institutions such as school or church, and the larger context of culture. At any given time, these influences may be transposed to a closer proximity to the youth.

The circles outlying but overlapping the community circle represent the larger institutions. While these institutions may not necessarily be viewed as part of the

immediate community, their presence influences the lives of people within the community. These institutions often have more impact on our lives than we may acknowledge.

A youth who commits an offense would find that law enforcement, justice system, federal and provincial legislation might quickly become transposed closer to the center, given the youth's offending behavior. The youth may find that their family has been moved toward the outer circles, as they may no longer have control over the decisions that are made for the youth, but that provincial and federal legislation overrides their wants/needs.

Practice, from a community organizing perspective, requires that the worker be able to successfully navigate these elements of the model. While the worker may or may not have contact with an individual youth, contact with families comprising the community is essential for community members to have input into an alternative process. Ideally, the worker would empower community members to influence policy from the inner circles, outward.

While the family group conference model incorporates community and adheres to restorative justice principles, existing legislative policy already allows for the implementation of alternative measures. The challenge lies in convincing resistant bureaucrats, families and youth, community members and agencies to allow alternatives to occur. In the current climate of 'get tough' attitudes, individualism, and difficulties adjusting to change, we have to show leadership to take risks with these youth.

This practicum allowed me the opportunity to explore existing policies, increase knowledge and skills in community organizing, involve communities in restorative justice initiatives, and implement critical social work strategies in the hope of changing

how institutions influence our communities. This work has implications for future research in terms of both quantitative and qualitative study. Does family group conferencing make a difference in recidivism rates? How will communities view alternative measures? How will alternative measures impact on incarceration rates? Will alternative measures result in cuts in government spending, and if so, how? Will communities become responsible for the administration of justice? These questions will need to be examined to assess the impact of restorative justice initiatives, and their future.

Depending on the outcomes of restorative justice, policies and legislation might be adjusted to encourage further use of alternative measures, not only in terms of offending behavior, but in the way we administer social programs and child welfare. As practitioners in the human service field, a critical view of the existing structures in our society must be taken if we are to work with clients and communities towards a vision of social justice. Partnerships between governments, communities, and societal institutions must be encouraged for the development of effective interventions.

Craig and Mayo (1995) state, "national, regional and local government authorities must be required to develop corporate approaches to economic and social development planning and implementation, to provide the overall framework within which anti-poverty strategies and community development strategies can be promoted, working toward the wider goal of strategies to promote social justice..." (p. 108). If this goal is a vision for changes in social policy, and knowing that policy, theory and practice are intrinsically related, how will we as workers conduct our practice? Will we support the status quo by conforming to approaches condoned by existing institutions? Or, will we choose a critical approach to address the blatant and hidden inequalities in our political, social and economic systems? Labonte (1990) states "we are now living in a period of

fairly fundamental social transformation which has characteristics of both revolution and reform. Our challenge, personally and professionally, is to ensure that this transformation moves us towards greater equity in power within and between natons [sic] and to a time when our obsession with power and empowerment no longer dominates our social discourse" (p. 74).

It is necessary to critically examine and reflect on our personal and professional values, our theoretical base, our commitment to social justice, and our approach to practice. Only through this process will we be able to determine if we are supporting the status quo, or if we are making structural changes through critical practice.

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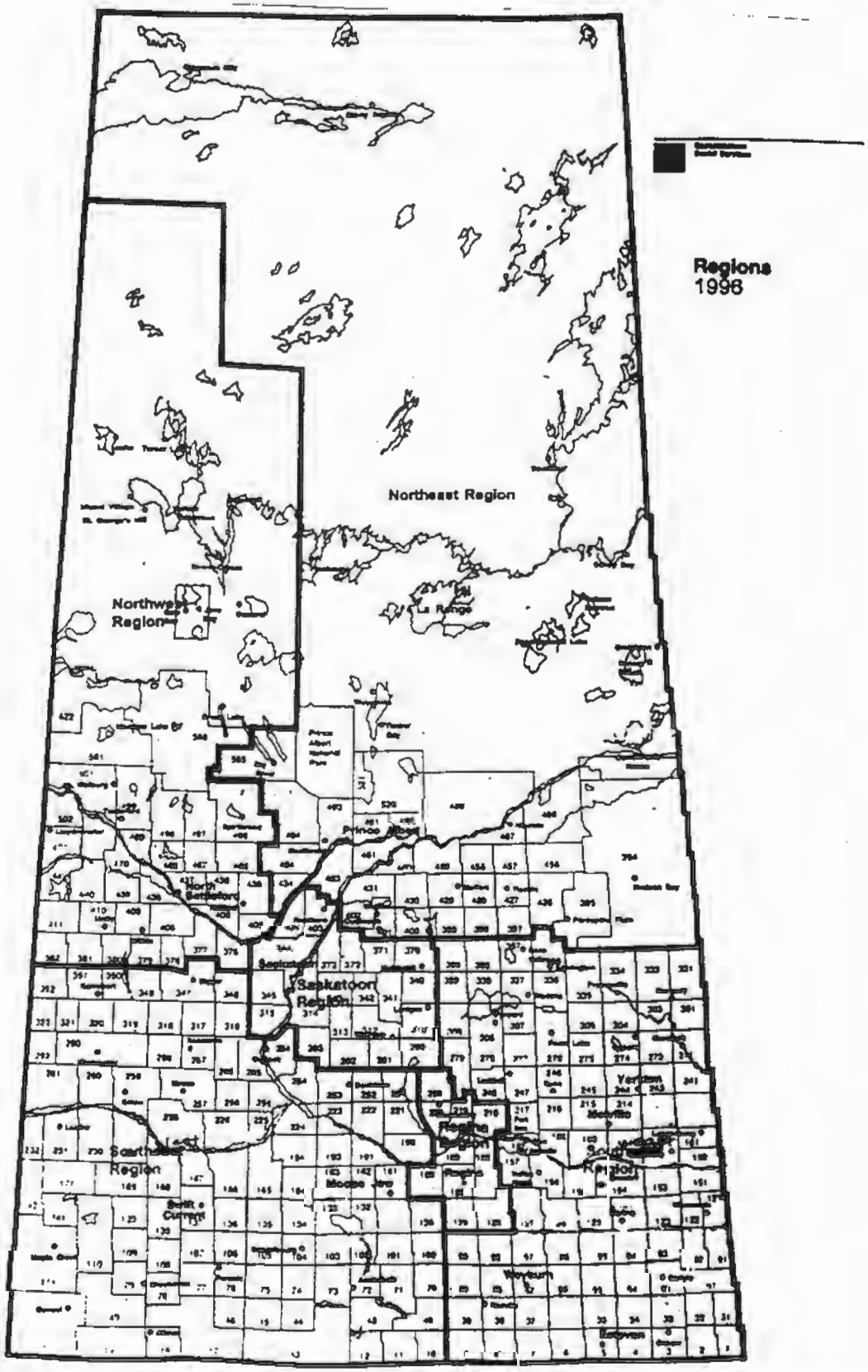
APPENDIX 1 - MAP OF SASKATCHEWAN



APPENDIX 2 - A CONCEPTUAL MODEL