EXPLORING FACTORS IMPACTING TRANSFER OF LEARNING IN CHILD WELFARE TRAINING: A DELPHI STUDY

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AUTHORIZATION TO SUBMIT DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The child welfare profession is dependent on a well-trained, competent workforce to perform difficult job responsibilities in a complex environment. Child welfare training efforts must lead to increased competency to be effective. Learning in the training environment must transfer to practice changes in the field. Few studies have examined transfer of learning specific to child welfare training. The purpose of this study was to explore what child welfare experts identify as key factors to enhance transfer of learning from child welfare *training* to child welfare *practice*. A three round Delphi Approach was used to expand identification and understanding of individual learner, training, and organization factors enhancing transfer of learning for child welfare workers. Child welfare experts identified factors impacting transfer of learning and began the process of operationalizing those factors. Results were integrated into a training evaluation logic model. The importance of relationship-related factors to transfer of learning for child welfare workers was identified. Supportive supervisor, trust and trusting relationships, and genuine care between colleagues were all found to be important factors for transfer of learning.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Children are an especially vulnerable population because they are largely and sometimes completely dependent on caregivers to sustain and protect them (Olds, 2012). Child abuse and neglect is a terrible reality for some children and families. In the United States, 3.3 million reports of child abuse are made annually. Each day, five children die from abuse (United States Government Accounting Office, 2011). The mission of child welfare is to respond specifically to the needs of children reported as abused, neglected, or at risk of maltreatment (Pecora, Whittaker, Maluccio, Barth & DePanfilis, 2009). Child welfare workers are trained professionals who carry out that responsibility, and they require specialized skills to both protect vulnerable children and work with the caregivers who abused or neglected them (Collins, Kim & Amodeo, 2010). When child welfare workers have received training and transferred that learning to their work, they are more likely to be effective with children and at risk families (Collins, Amodeo & Clay, 2007). The purpose of this study was to explore what child welfare experts identify as key factors to enhance transfer of learning from child welfare *training* to child welfare *practice*.

Transfer of learning (TOL) occurs when learning in one context impacts performance in another context (Perkins, 1992). Transfer of *Training* (TOT) is a closely related concept that includes both generalization of learned material to the job and maintenance of trained skills over a period of time (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Human resource studies began to use the term transfer of training, which implies a more specific focus on training but is essentially synonymous with transfer of learning. For purposes of this study, transfer of learning was used to include both concepts. The American Public Human Services Association (2005)

identified appropriate training as essential to equip the workforce to provide child welfare services needed by children and families. However, gaps sometimes exist between training content delivered and trainee practice (Liu & Smith, 2011).

Child welfare workers provide direct services to children and their families, offering counseling, and through case management, help families gain access to a range of services, including health care, mental health services, child day care, and housing. These professionals also facilitate legal intervention when children are abused or neglected and must, for the children's protection, be separated from their families (Encyclopedia of Social Work, 1995, p. 429).

Idaho child welfare caseworkers are required to be licensed as a social worker, which entails a minimum of a bachelor's degree in social work (Idaho Division of Human Resources, 2013). Upon employment with the state, Idaho child welfare caseworkers receive training beyond their formal education. This additional training is referred to as the Child Welfare Academy and includes family centered practice, legal and policy issues, Adoption and Safe Families Act, Indian Child Welfare Act, risk assessment, service planning, alternate care, independent living, adoptions, and worker safety (Idaho's Statewide Self-Assessment Child and Family Service Review, 2003). Child welfare workers are required to complete Child Welfare Academy requirements within nine months of employment (Child and Family Services New Worker Field Training Manual).

Beyond the standard Academy training, additional training for child welfare workers is often implemented in response to identified issues. For example, in 2008 Idaho participated in the Child and Family Services Review required by federal statute. The review identified five key areas needing improvement: (1) maintaining children safely in their home and in

alternate care placements; (2) engaging families; (3) enhancing child permanency; (4) improving child/youth stability in foster care; and (5) improving administrative and operational structure and processes to support change. The 2008 Idaho Program Improvement Plan identified training as part of the response to each area of concern with the exception of improving administrative and operational structure. For training to be effective, learning that occurs in the training environment must transfer to the work environment. Underlying the approach of using training to improve employee performance and outcomes for children and families is an assumption that training will lead to professional practice change in child welfare workers and improved outcomes for children and families.

Logic models have been used extensively in training, program planning and evaluation to visually represent linkages between outcomes, program activities and theoretical assumptions (Arnold, 2002; Millar, Simeone & Carnevale, 2001; W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). A logic model visually presents the relationship between inputs (resources invested), outputs (activities planned) and outcomes (results achieved). Specifically, outcomes are separated into short term (learning), medium term (action) and long term (conditions). Training (output) is expected to result in learning (short term outcome) which is expected to result in practice change (medium term outcome), which is expected to result in change in organizations, communities or systems (long term outcome). This study will focus on the space between short term and medium term outcomes to examine factors that promote transfer of learning to professional practice.

Transfer of learning occurs between short term outcomes of a change in knowledge, skills attitude, motivation, or awareness and medium term outcomes of change in behaviors, practices, policies or procedures. Although training professionals acknowledge the

importance of transfer of learning and often attempt to build TOL strategies into instructional plans, some studies estimate as little as 10% of training actually transfers to the job site (Georgenson, 1982). Broad and Newstrom (2001) are more optimistic stating perhaps 50% of all training content is being utilized a year after training. Regardless, a gap exists in regards to increasing TOL rates.

With shrinking state and federal training budgets and an increased dependence on training programs to provide child welfare workers with needed skills, it is important that TOL occur. This study explored what child welfare experts identify as key factors to enhance TOL from child welfare *training* to child welfare *practice*.

Child Welfare Profession

The number of children and families impacted by child abuse and neglect helps to emphasize the importance of the work done by child protection workers. The Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2010), reports two counts for child victims of maltreatment. The *duplicate count* of child victims counts a child each time he or she was found to be a victim. The *unique count* of child victims counts a child only once regardless of the number of times he or she was found to be a victim during the reporting year. During federal fiscal year 2012, an estimated 678,810 unique children were victims of maltreatment. In addition, five times that number of children were reported for suspected abuse, investigated and/or received a service from a child welfare agency (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). Children who must be removed from their families are cared for in the foster care system. As of the September, 2011, Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System reported approximately 400,540 children resided in U.S. foster care (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012).

Child welfare work is exceedingly complex and difficult (Collins et al., 2010). Practitioners must be able to interact with vulnerable populations such as abused and neglected children, individuals with physical, mental or developmental disabilities, chemical dependency issues and cultural differences. Practitioners must also be able to demonstrate policy and program level knowledge of complicated social problems, as well as assessment and case management skills (Franke, Bagdasaryan & Furman, 2008). For example, parental drug use is a prevalent and complicating factor in many child welfare cases (Testa & Smith, 2009; Young, Boles & Otero, 2007). An estimated 50% to 80% of substantiated child abuse and neglect cases involve some degree of substance abuse by the child's caregivers (Kropenske & Howard, 1994; Semidei, Radel, & Nolan, 2001). Child welfare workers must have an understanding of substance use disorders including assessment, treatment options, legal issues, risk assessment and family impact. In addition, workers must be able to manage their own personal response to parents with drug and alcohol problems in order to work collaboratively and improve the parents' situation.

Child welfare workers may have to coordinate services and planning with several other agencies such as substance use treatment centers, therapists (for the parent and the child), attorneys, and Court Appointed Special Advocates. In addition, victims of child abuse and neglect experience behavioral issues such as delinquency, teen pregnancy, low academic achievement, drug use, mental health problems and abusive behavior, at twice the rate of the general population (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2008). Child welfare workers are responsible for helping to identify child problems, assess need, and arrange for services. Children in foster care with behavior problems often result in foster families needing additional support from the child welfare worker.

This case-level work is being conducted while a macro level, parallel process moves the case through the court system. The Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 mandates states work toward family reunification and concurrently plan for long term care of children in state's care (Child Welfare Information Gateway). Child welfare workers are essentially working under supervision of the courts on two plans with families: one to reunify the family and one to terminate parental rights and find adoptive or other long term solutions for the child or children.

Workers are also the primary contact for foster families, therapists, attorneys, parents and the child or children. The Child Welfare League of America recommends caseloads of 12-15 cases per worker. However, an average caseload for child welfare workers often exceeds recommendations by as much as double (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2010).

Child welfare professionals are expected to make important decisions such as recommending a child be removed from or returned to their family. Sometimes these decisions are made without adequate information, under time pressure, and with limited training and supervision (Collins et al., 2010). Mistakes can have tragic effects on a child or family, and fear of making mistakes can lead workers to rely on strict adherence to procedure rather than professional skill (Collins et al., 2010). The child welfare professional is *the expert* at the center of service delivery and effective training is fundamental to worker's success.

Training child welfare workers to utilize knowledge and skills needed to be effective with children and families is essential. Transfer of learning has been studied extensively in corporate training settings while studies specific to child welfare remain scant (Collins et al.,

2010; Franke et al., 2008). Promoting TOL in child welfare training may require an approach different from corporate settings.

Child welfare caseworkers across the country tell stories of emotional and frustrating jobs that are low in pay and high in stress because of hostile families, large caseloads, lack of resources, and paperwork demands. In comparison to other human service professions, child welfare worker's median annual salaries are $41,530: $13,520 less than teachers and $23,940 less than registered nurses (Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, May 2013 averages). In a collaborative study surveying administrative level child welfare staff in 42 states, the American Public Human Service Association (APHSA) found 28% of respondents ranked low salary as highly problematic (2005). The same study looked at workload issues and found that 81% of respondents ranked too high and/or too demanding workloads as highly problematic in retention issues (APHSA, 2005). In 2003, the United States General Accounting Office (USGAO) reviewed nearly 600 exit interview documents completed by child welfare workers who severed their employment. The researchers also completed interviews with caseworkers in four states. They found low wages and workload issues are frequently cited reasons for child welfare workers leaving the profession.

Seventy percent of caseworkers in Texas reported being a victim of violence or threats of violence in the line of duty (USGAO, 2003). Caseworkers and supervisors who were interviewed estimated between 50% and 80% of their time was spent on administrative duties like paperwork. Specifically, Illinois caseworkers reported that each child on their caseload required 150 forms to be completed (USGAO, 2003).

In 2000, the Louisiana Job Task Force reported that it takes two years to develop skills and knowledge to work independently and effectively in the field of child welfare (Strolin,

McCarthy & Caringi, 2007). However, the average length of employment for child welfare professionals is *less* than two years (US General Accounting Office, 2003). In 2006, the turnover rate for Idaho social workers was 22%, largely due to low pay and excessive workloads (Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, 2008).

Child Welfare Training

An important development in child welfare training came in 2000 when the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services began a Children and Family Services Review (CFSR). This process required states to demonstrate outcomes resulting from interventions with families (Milner & Hornsby, 2004). Previously, federal reviews of states largely focused on procedural requirements. The CFSR changed the focus to positive outcomes for children and families (Milner, Mitchell & Hornsby, 2001). The CFSR evaluates state agencies on a multitude of factors thought to impact safety, permanency and well-being for families and children who receive services. The CFSR is an in-depth process that includes state and federal reviewers examining case records, conducting interviews with children and families engaged in services and interviewing community stakeholders such as foster parents and case workers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). In addition to evaluating outcomes for families and children (safety, permanency and well-being), the CFSR requires states to evaluate their training efforts. States must provide data about (1) training all staff, including supervisors and managers; (2) the content, amount, and quality of training; and (3) how training is reflected in job performance (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). As a consequence, states are under pressure to demonstrate that a worker's

performance on the job reflects the training they receive. Evaluation of TOL is essential to demonstrate effective training.

Training for child welfare workers is often seen as the solution to a variety of issues including CFSR Program Improvement Plans (Cohen, 2003; Milner, 2003; Milner & Hornsby, 2004) and recruitment and retention efforts (Curry, McCarragher & Dellmann-Jenkins, 2005; Strand & Bosco-Ruggiero, 2011). Substantial federal, state, and local resources are used for child welfare training. However, there remains little focus on the relationship between training and changes in practice (Collins, Amodeo & Clay, 2008). Robinson and Robinson (1998) declared the mission of the training profession is changing from providing skills or knowledge to performance improvement.

Training Evaluation

Child welfare training is not just about effective learning, it is about effective practice. Training is communication directed at a defined population for the purpose of developing skills, modifying behavior, and increasing competence (Loos & Fowler, 1999). Training is effective when it fulfills those purposes. For training to be effective, it requires transfer to the work environment. Transfer of learning is the goal of any training endeavor (Yelon & Ford, 1999). However, many child welfare training efforts are not evaluated beyond reaction of participants and increases in knowledge (Antle, Barbee, & van Zyl, 2008; Collins, 2008; Curry, Caplan & Knuppel, 1994; Franke et al., 2008), leaving the extent of transfer unknown. Administrators and trainers do not know for sure how effectively training transfers because they do not evaluate efforts beyond initial satisfaction. Idaho is no exception; the 2008 Program Improvement Plan does not include evaluation of training efforts beyond reporting that training occurred and the percentage of staff who attended the training.

A variety of evaluation models exist to help trainers integrate evaluation into training development. Kirkpatrick's (1996) model is recognized as the most influential and commonly used training evaluation model (Beech & Leather, 2006). Kirkpatrick's (1996) Four Level Model identifies four levels of training outcomes including reaction, learning, behavior and results. The reaction level measures participant's reactions to training such as, the instructor, topics, presentation style, and schedule. The learning level measures what participants learned as a result of the training (knowledge, skills and attitudes). The behavior level measures the transfer of learning by checking to see if on the job behavior changed as a result of the training. The final level, results, measures the impact of changes on the business (Kirkpatrick, 1996).

Despite the importance of training transferring to a change in knowledge, skills and attitudes for learners little evidence is found in the literature reflecting child welfare training program evaluation beyond levels one and two, reaction and learning (Antle et al., 2008; Collins et al., 2010; Collins et al., 2008). Trainers often evaluate participants' levels of satisfaction with the training and whether or not the training resulted in learning. However, the real goal is for participants to *utilize* what was learned in training when working with children and families.

This study sought to use the knowledge and experiences of child welfare experts to identify TOL factors specific to child welfare training. Child welfare experts have participated in pre-service and on-going training efforts as well as supervising, observing and evaluating child welfare workers who have participated in pre-service and on-going training efforts. The bulk of research related to TOL originates "within commercial sector organizations… [with] arguably very different human resource management practices,

business strategies and values" (Clark, 2002, p. 147). Investigating child welfare expert experiences could be invaluable in helping to establish key factors in promoting TOL specific to child welfare practices settings and could also lead to identification of outcome indicators for evaluation.

Transfer of Learning

Researchers have long been interested in how information learned in one setting gets transferred to another setting. Early research on training and transfer of learning was largely conducted in the disciplines of psychology and education. Psychology focused on learning transfer from one part of the body to another. For example, Munn (1931) looked at 100 college students and instructors to examine how practicing a skill with one hand impacted the ability of the other hand to perform that skill. Educationally focused studies looked at how learning in one domain impacted learning in another domain. Salisbury (1934) completed a study with 474 middle school students to determine how learning the skill of outlining impacted other study situations and mastery of content. During the 1950s and 1960s focus on transfer of training in organizations increased. In an address given before the Training Officers Conference in Washington, DC, and an article published in *Personnel*, Mosel (1957) asserted little or no difference in behavior could be attributed to training efforts and ushered in a renewed focus on TOL in organizations, as administrators demanded a return on investment of training dollars.

Baldwin and Ford (1988) conducted a literature review on transfer of training that identified concern about a growing transfer problem. Their review provided a critique of existing transfer research and made suggestions for future research. Baldwin and Ford's (1988) review found that TOL factors identified by previous studies largely fell into three

categories: training design, trainee characteristics and work environment characteristics. Training design factors include use of learning principles, sequencing of training material and job relevance of training content. Trainee characteristics include ability, motivation and personality. Work environment characteristics refer to supervisor or peer support and opportunities to perform learned behaviors on the job. Much of the current literature continues to be organized into these three categories.

Baldwin and Ford's (1988) suggestions for future research included the need to operationalize training, individual and environmental factors. They also suggested future researchers focus on literature historically neglected by industrial training researchers. Specifically, research in areas of counseling and psychotherapy could expand understanding of training transfer. While child welfare casework is not the same as counseling or psychotherapy, the three areas have overlapping elements. Despite Baldwin and Ford's recommendation, research continued to largely focus on industrial or corporate training settings (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Ford & Weissbein, 1997).

While a primary focus of TOL research has clearly been on corporate settings, child welfare researchers have contributed some literature to the field (Antle et al., 2008; Curry et al., 1994; Curry & Chandler, 1999; Miller & Dore, 1991; Mueller, 1985). Collins et al. (2008) developed a comprehensive conceptual model for training development and evaluation. Their model is similar to a logic model as it seeks to represent the underlying logic of the chain of events from program goals, to activities, to outcomes (Collins et al., 2008). Their model identifies a "gap" between individual project outcomes and cluster or long-term outcomes. This gap illustrates the on-going struggle for training to translate to changes in participant practice and improved long-term outcomes. A greater understanding of

this gap between learning and practice has the potential to positively impact child welfare training, so training can translate to improved practice for workers and outcomes for children and families.

Statement of the Problem

Although extensive research has been conducted regarding transfer of learning in corporate settings, limited research is available for TOL in child welfare training, specifically measuring outcomes of child welfare training (Franke et al., 2008). The demanding nature of child welfare work requires a unique set of skills and abilities (Collins et al., 2007) and training is often relied upon to help child welfare workers develop needed skills. Collins et al. (2010) described the core technology of child welfare practice as residing within the worker and his or her ability to engage, assess, provide counsel, plan, evaluate, and make decisions. If training does not translate into application of skills, the result could be serious and long-lasting negative impacts on families and children. For training to be effective, it must transfer from the training room to the work arena. Child welfare experts are in a unique position to identify factors that improve learning transfer for child welfare workers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore what child welfare experts identify as key factors to enhance transfer of learning from child welfare *training* to child welfare *practice*. The study used a Delphi approach in which child welfare experts explored factors related to (a) trainee characteristics that enhance TOL, (b) training characteristics that enhance TOL, and (c) organizational characteristics that enhance TOL. For this study, "child welfare expert" was defined as (a) child welfare professionals holding a position of Chief of Child Welfare or (b) child welfare supervisors identified by a Chief of Child Welfare as an expert.

Expert status was assumed from minimum qualifications required for this position which included being licensed as a Masters Level Social Worker in Idaho and experience in child welfare, child protection, or child mental health (Idaho Division of Human Resources, 2013). Chiefs of Child Welfare are responsible for program direction, program consulting/training and supervision. Chiefs of Child Welfare have expertise and knowledge to identify and recommend other experts who were helpful to this study.

Results contributed to reducing the gap in literature related to child welfare training and TOL; expanded understanding of job specific aspects of TOL; and led to development of a model to be used by child welfare trainers and supervisors as they attempt to train and maintain a competent work force.

Significance of the Study

The study contributed to the literature through an iterative process of soliciting expert opinions of a panel of child welfare experts, analyzing, interpreting and reporting findings, and inquiring deeper to get a rich understanding of child welfare training and transfer of learning. Transfer of learning research has largely focused on corporate training settings with scant research conducted directly on child welfare training and transfer of learning (Collins et al., 2010).

Results from this study can be used to help trainers, supervisors and organizations build a culture conducive to transfer of learning resulting in a knowledgeable and skilled child welfare workforce. Brittain (2004) warned that child welfare training "must shift focus to not only information or knowledge provision, but also a careful and calculated approach to skills training, so that child welfare professionals are sufficiently prepared to work with vulnerable children and families and achieve outcomes of safety, permanency, and well-being" (p. 3).

This study focused on factors related to transferring skills learned in training to the work setting.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed:

Research Question 1. What *learner factors* enhance transfer of learning for child welfare workers?

Research Question 2. What *training factors* enhance transfer of learning for child welfare workers?

Research Question 3. What *organizational factors* enhance transfer of learning for child welfare workers?

Research Method

This study utilized the Delphi approach. The Delphi approach is a forward looking model of inquiry. It approaches inquiry inductively by gathering raw data first, then working toward a more general theory of explanation (Linstone & Turoff, 2002). Delphi is a method for structuring a group communication process designed for a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem (Linstone & Turoff, 2002). This study used a Policy Delphi study approach. A Policy Delphi is a means of identifying differing positions rather than establishing consensus (Turoff, 1970). The Delphi approach was used by Melpignano and Collins (2003) to determine training needs of child welfare workers specific to youth transitioning out of care and potential policy approaches for this group. Their study included 19 academic and practicing experts and found training needed to emphasize an approach with youth focused on connection and relationship. The results of their study were ultimately used to inform the design and delivery of the training project (Melpignano & Collins, 2003). In

this study, the Policy Delphi approach was used to identify factors that enhance transfer of learning in child welfare training. This information can inform the design, delivery and evaluation of statewide training efforts.

Use of the term "expert" in relation to Delphi studies remains controversial due to little consensus about the definition of expert (Baker, Lovell & Harris, 2006). Mead and Moseley (2001) suggested experts can be defined in a number of ways including their hierarchical position, or as recommended by other participants in a study. For purposes of this study, experts were a purposive sample of Idaho child welfare practitioners. The panel consisted of two types of respondents: Child Welfare Chiefs and practitioners identified by Chiefs as having expert knowledge. All current Chiefs of Child Welfare in the State of Idaho were identified and asked to participate. The Chiefs of Child Welfare were also asked to identify other child welfare practitioners they deem to be experts in the field based on experience or special training.

The Delphi approach used a structured group communication process to reach a deeper understanding of TOL and child welfare training. The process included three rounds. The first round asked open-ended questions linked to the research questions. Responses were analyzed for themes and consolidated into a list. The second round distributed the analyzed list to the expert panel and they were asked to assign a score to each item on the list indicating level of importance. The rankings were analyzed and the analysis was distributed for a third round to the expert panel. In the third round the experts were asked to choose their top 6 most important factors and to choose 2 factors to operationalize. Findings from this study contribute to the gap in research literature investigating transfer of learning specific to child

welfare training. In addition, the results could be used to shape the design and delivery of child welfare training in Idaho.

Limitations and Delimitations

This Delphi approach study was limited by research design to a panel of child welfare professionals working in the State of Idaho. Federal authorities determine child welfare standards to which States must adhere. However, how states interpret and implement those standards can vary. Thus, findings from this study may not be generalized to other geographic locations. Another limitation is study participants are qualified as "experts" based on the researcher's definition which excludes relatively new or worker level child welfare practitioners. The perspective of direct service workers was not examined for purposes of this study. It was assumed participants answered truthfully and accurately based on their professional experience. As a researcher from outside the organization it is impossible to know about various political or organizational issues that might have influenced participant's willingness or ability to share information truthfully. Last, the study was limited in its focus to child welfare training efforts and cannot be generalized to training in other professions.

Definition of Terms

Child welfare: A formal service delivery system which is sanctioned by the community and designed to assist children who have been abused or neglected or who are at risk and their families (Encyclopedia of Social Work, 1995).

Child welfare expert: There is no official definition of the term "child welfare expert."

For the purposes of this study, "child welfare expert" will be defined as child welfare professional that occupies the position of Chief of Child Welfare or is identified by a Chief of Child Welfare as an expert.

Child welfare training: No official definition for this term exists in the literature. For the purposes of this paper child welfare training will refer to pre-service or ongoing training participated in by child welfare workers as a requirement of their employment in a child welfare agency.

Child welfare training: Provide direct services to children and their families, offering counseling and, through case management, helping families gain access to a range of services, including health care, mental health services, child day care, and housing. These professionals also facilitate legal intervention when children are abused or neglected and must, for the children's protection, be separated from their families (Encyclopedia of Social Work, 1995, p. 429).

Transfer of learning: Occurs when learning in one context impacts performance in another context (Perkins, 1992).

Transfer of training: Includes both generalization of learned material to the job and maintenance of trained skills over a period of time (Baldwin & Ford, 1988).

Summary

In Chapter 1 it was established that child welfare workers perform difficult tasks under challenging conditions (Collins et al., 2010; Curry et al., 2005) requiring specialized skills to

achieve positive outcomes for children and families they serve (Miller & Dore, 1991). The literature reflects training is a key method for preparing child welfare workers with the skills they need (Wehrmann, Shin & Poertner, 2002). Scant research focuses on transfer of training for child welfare workers. Due to their time in the field and deep level of knowledge, child welfare experts are in a unique position to provide insight into enhancing transfer of learning in child welfare specific trainings. This Delphi study identified a set of transfer of learning factors specific to the child welfare experience, contributed to research literature on child welfare training and contributed to job specific understanding of transfer of learning theory. The ultimate goal was to provide child welfare trainers and supervisors a blueprint to enhance transfer of learning for child welfare workers.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Literature examined for this study highlights the importance of transfer of training for child welfare practitioners and the relatively sparse research available to support effective transfer. Literature on transfer of training in corporate settings is extensive, however, transfer of learning research specific to child welfare is lacking. Included in this section is literature on child welfare training, transfer of learning, and training evaluation models. The review surveys studies that looked specifically at child welfare training and transfer of learning. Logic models are widely used in training development and evaluation as a visual depiction of assumptions underlying the expectation that inputs will lead to outputs which will lead to outcomes. The literature reviewed illuminates an existing research gap between outputs and outcomes identified in logic models.

American corporations spent an estimated $156.2 billion dollars on employee training in 2011 (American Society for Training and Development, 2012). Given such a large budget, commitment, and the role of human capital in an organization, it is understandable that organizations expect training to result in improved organizational and employee performance. Thus, new skills and knowledge covered in training need to transfer to the work environment to be effective. Transfer of learning occurs when learning in one context is applied and subsequently impacts performance in another context (Perkins, 1992). Transfer of training is a closely related construct defined as learned behavior generalized to the job context and maintained over time (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). For purposes of this study, transfer of learning will be used to include both concepts.

Training of child welfare professionals is important because child welfare is notoriously difficult work requiring specialized training to equip workers with skills and knowledge needed to work in difficult conditions (Collins et al., 2010; Franke et al., 2008). In addition, child welfare work has high burnout rates and training has been positively linked to reduced turnover rates for child welfare workers (Curry et al., 2005). Without strategies for child welfare workers to transfer learning from the training arena to the work setting, trainers lack specific tools to facilitate success of child welfare professionals. Use of research-based strategies to increase transfer of learning rates for child welfare professionals can result in improved competence for child welfare workers. Competent child welfare workers could improve outcomes for children, families, organizations and communities (Milner & Hornsby, 2004).

An assumption underlying training as a response to pressures of child welfare work and the accompanying need for skill development is that training provided will result in a change of practice. Child welfare trainers often assume training leads to an increase in knowledge and skill which in turn leads to changes in child welfare worker practice resulting in positive outcomes of safety, permanency and well-being for children and families.

The Logic Model is an effective method for linking outcomes with program activities/processes and theoretical assumptions of the program (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004). The logic model concept will be used to frame much of the discussion on training evaluation in this study.

Training researchers and practitioners have long understood the importance of transfer of learning issues (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Cheng & Ho, 1999; Ford & Weissbein, 1997). Transfer of learning research has largely focused on corporate or human

resource perspectives and identifies a variety of factors that increase transfer of learning. Factors found to increase learning fall into three categories: individual (learner) characteristics, training characteristics, and work environment characteristics (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Ford & Weissbein, 1997). When planning efforts consider these factors, transfer of learning rates can be improved (Alliger, Tannenbaum, Bennett, Traver & Shotland, 1997; Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Cheng & Ho, 1999; Ford & Weissbein, 1997).

Many child welfare researchers, assuming findings from corporate and human resource studies are applicable to child welfare training, take what is learned in other settings and apply it to child welfare training (Collins, 2008; Curry et al., 1994; Wehrmann et al, 2002). However, Franke et al. (2008) and Clarke (2002) asserted known factors about learning in corporate environments should be carefully considered. Evidence for applicability to child welfare settings is lacking implying an importance for researchers to explore factors more specific to transfer of learning for child welfare professionals.

Training Requirements for Child Welfare Professionals

Pre-service and on-going training requirements have long been a part of child welfare practice. Training requirements vary from state to state but have common elements. For example, pre-service training is directed to new caseworkers designed to equip workers with basic knowledge, attitude, and skill competencies to enter the field and begin work with children and families. In-service and continuing education is directed to caseworkers, foster parents, supervisors, and/or administrators and is designed to support implementation of changes in practice or further competencies in particular topic areas or methods (e.g., domestic violence, multidisciplinary case assessment). Professional education (usually

Bachelor of Social Work or Master of Social Work) is designed to provide current or future workers with college/university coursework and field practica to understand the theories governing high-quality social work practice, including sound clinical, programmatic, and administrative decision-making (Collins et al., 2007).

In Idaho, child welfare training is organized into three components: Pre-Academy Orientation, Academy, and Knowledge and Learning Center. Table 1 presents the training schedule for Idaho Child Welfare professionals (Child and Family Services New Worker Field Training Manual). Pre-Academy Orientation is for new workers and these activities are expected to be completed within the first couple of weeks of employment. Academy topics are presented regionally in sessions that usually cover several topics over several days. The Knowledge and Learning Center (KLC) is an on-line training component. All Pre-Academy, Academy, and KLC training requirements must be completed within nine months of employment. In-service training also continues during and after the nine month period.

Table 1
Training Schedule for Idaho Child Welfare Professionals

Pre-Academy Orientation (First two weeks)	**Academy Topics (Within nine months)**	**Knowledge and Learning Center (Within nine months)**	**Professional Education (On-going)**
Office orientation Children and Family Services Program Orientation Community orientation Field training orientation	Family Centered Practice for Workers Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) Intake/Priority Guidelines Assessing safety Comprehensive Assessment Concurrent Planning Service Planning Case Management Independent Living (youth) Foster Care Child Welfare: Professional practice in a statutory context Legal perspectives ICPC IV-E Financing Indian Child Welfare Act Knowing Who You Are	Worker Safety Service Integration Child abuse and neglect related to domestic violence Child abuse and neglect related to substance abuse issues Working with persons (children/parents) with disabilities Referral protocol and Infant Toddler Program	Bachelor of Social Work Master of Social Work Licensure requires completion of 20 continuing education units (hours) each year

Funding and Legislation Related to Child Welfare Training

Funding for child welfare training comes primarily from two Federal sources: Title IV-E and Adoption and Safe Families Act. The Title IV-E child welfare training program was created as part of the Child Welfare and Adoption Assistance Act of 1980 to support training in foster care and adoption services. This program is a major source of federal funding for education and training the child welfare workforce. In fiscal year 2007, states received an estimated $226 million in Title IV-E training reimbursements (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2008). This figure does not include state matching requirements and individuals who privately funded training on their own.

The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) implemented in 1997 also had a significant impact on child welfare training. The law created new standards for child safety, permanence, and well-being. It also required a series of Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs) designed to hold states accountable for positive outcomes (Child Welfare Information Gateway). States found deficient in any area were required to develop a Program Improvement Plan (PIP). The Children's Defense Fund reviewed the PIPs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico in 2006 and found that no state "passed" the CFSR and thus, every state submitted a PIP. Further, all 50 states, D.C. and Puerto Rico indicated in their PIPs that they planned to improve or change training for workers (Children's Defense Fund, 2006) in an effort to improve positive outcomes for children and families.

Training Needs

Child welfare professionals must have knowledge, skills and values needed to operate effectively with vulnerable populations in highly complex organizations. Miller and Dore (1991) declared comprehensive training and support is the only way to prepare child welfare

workers to meet the challenges of populations they serve. Challenges faced daily by families who access child welfare services are well documented and include: poverty, child maltreatment, domestic violence, homelessness, substance abuse, funding challenges, divorce, single-parenthood, AIDS, sexual abuse and mental illness (Collins et al., 2010; Curry et al., 2005; Miller & Dore, 1991). Child welfare programs depend on highly skilled workers to meet the unique demands of child welfare work.

Training Seen as a Solution

Training is often identified as a solution to the complexity of child welfare work. Public child welfare agencies rely on training to prepare employees, introduce changes, and establish practice standards (Wehrmann et al., 2002). Major professional child welfare organizations understand the importance of training for child welfare practitioners and offer a variety of training options to promote professional growth and better serve clients (Child Welfare League of America; National Association of Social Workers, 2013). The importance of training for child welfare workers has been noted by the need for specialized training for workers who must make critical decisions for children and families (Miller & Dore, 1991). They examined four innovative child welfare training programs in four different states and encouraged on-going innovations and evaluation to design and develop effective child welfare training (Miller & Dore, 1991).

More recently, Collins et al. (2010) asserted that "core technology" in child welfare practice resides within the worker and his or her skills. Child welfare workers must be able to establish a partnership with children and parents who are often resistant or defensive. Workers also require skills to assess needs, provide services, counsel, plan, and evaluate outcomes (Collins et al., 2010). Thus, intensive training is necessary to help workers develop

the required skills. Applying trained skills in job performance is essential to achieve desired outcomes for children and families. Child welfare workers work with vulnerable populations that require competent, skilled workers to achieve the best outcomes.

Recruitment and Retention of Child Welfare Professionals

Provision of training has been a popular response to addressing well documented recruitment and retention problems in child welfare services. The US Government Accountability Office (2006) surveyed all 50 states to identify the three primary challenges to improving services to children under their care. States identified recruiting and training case workers as the second most important issue behind providing an adequate level of services for children and families. Twenty-five states identified on-going training as a performance indicator for recruitment and retention challenge. Eighteen states identified initial training as the performance indicator. A national qualitative study conducted by Gomez, Travis, Ayers-Lopez and Schwab (2010) found a high number of states report training, including orientation and on-going training, as a recruitment and retention strategy. Specifically, of the 50 state websites reviewed for recruitment and retention strategies, 29 listed paid, on-going training; 18 identified university training; 12 listed orientations; and 10 listed on-the-job training as available training opportunities. Thus, child welfare training is relied upon not only prepare workers for complicated, difficult work, but also as a response to recruitment and retention issues.

Transfer of Learning

Early research on training and transfer (identified as "learning" in early research) was largely conducted in the discipline of psychology and focused on animal learning (Sutherland, 1917; Webb, 1917) or learning transfer from one part of the body to another (Norcross, 1921;

Swift, 1903). In the 1950s and 1960s researchers began looking at transfer of training as it related to organizational training. Mosel (1957) was beginning to sound an alarm that evidence reflected little or no difference in behavior could be directly attributed to training efforts. Concern over what became known as the "transfer problem" led Baldwin and Ford (1988) to review existing research. They recommended further efforts at examining transfer from a broader and more dynamic perspective and operationalizing factors that influence training transfer.

Transfer of learning is the ideal outcome for any training or educational endeavor. Indeed, application of learned skills to the job defines training success (Alliger et al., 1997). Training programs are ultimately invested in changing the behavior of training participants so training transfer has been identified as a core issue for human resource development researchers (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Despite the importance of learning transfer, estimates of actual transfer range from a mere 10% (Georgenson, 1982) to 50% (Broad & Newstrom, 2001). To determine if a training is worth the investment of time and money, evaluation needs to focus on transfer of knowledge and skills to the workplace (Wehrmann et al., 2002).

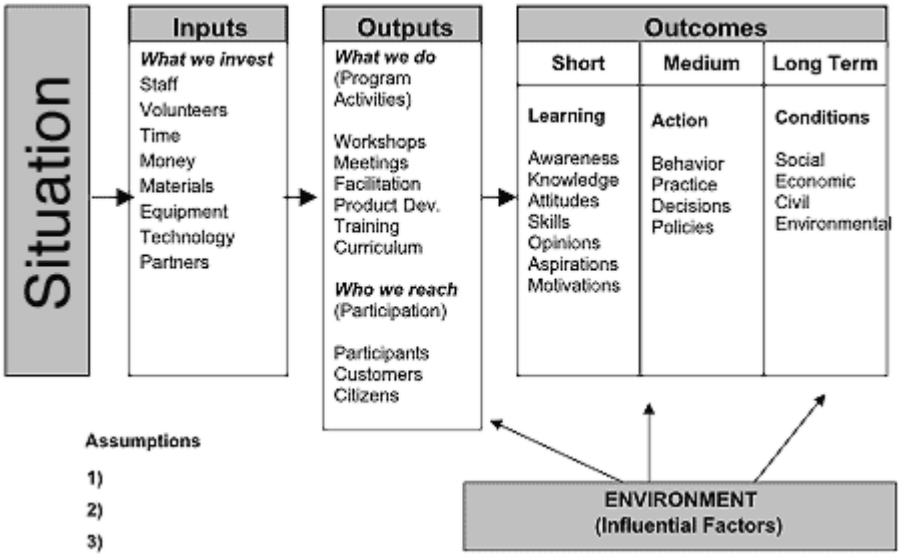
Logic Model

Many program evaluations follow a logic model, which is a visual representation of process a program goes through from resources to final outcomes (Millar et al., 2001). Logic models serve as a planning and evaluation tool (Arnold, 2002). The logic model helps to make explicit the assumptions that resource allocation will result in certain outputs and then expected outcomes. For example, if an organization inputs resources such as funds, time and staff, then they will develop a training program. If workers participate in the training program they will experience an increase in knowledge and skills. If they have an increase in

knowledge and skills, then their practice will improve. If their practice improves, the organization will meet its goals. Logic model components include inputs, outputs, and short, medium and long term outcomes connected by the assumption that activity in one component leads to activity in the next (Millar et al., 2001).

Transfer of learning occurs between short term outcomes of a change in knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation or awareness and the medium term outcomes of change in behaviors, practices, policies or procedures (Arnold, 2002; Millar et al., 2001). Figure 1 displays a basic logic model as presented by Arnold (2002). For purposes of child welfare training and transfer of learning, inputs (what is invested) may include staff, money, and materials. Outputs (program activities) may include workshops or trainings for child welfare workers and supervisors. Short term outcomes may include increases in knowledge, skills and attitudes such as understanding a family centered approach or how to conduct a family group decision meeting. Medium term outcomes include changes in behaviors or practice where child welfare workers actually implement family centered practice interventions or allowing a family to make decisions in a family group decision making meeting. Long term outcomes include improvements in safety, permanency, and well-being for families and children.

Figure 1. Basic Logic Model. Reprinted from Arnold, M. E. (2002). Be "logical" about program evaluation: Begin with learning assessment. *Extension Journal,* 40(3). Reprinted with permission.



The focus of this study was an exploration of the gap between an increase in knowledge or skill (short term outcomes) and application of learned knowledge and skill (medium term outcomes). The majority of child welfare training studies end with measures of short term outcomes and assume that medium term outcomes also occur. For example, Patterson (2004) conducted an experimental pre-test-posttest study evaluating the impact of training on police recruits' knowledge, skills and attitudes toward abused children and abusive parents. The researcher evaluated changes in participant's knowledge, skills and attitudes (short term outcomes), but did not evaluate changes in behavior or practice (medium term outcomes). Because researchers did not evaluate for practice change they could only conclude the training they provided "may consequently prepare police recruits to provide an early intervention response to families experiencing child abuse" (Patterson, 2004, p. 279).

Transfer of Learning Reviews in the Literature

Several key literature reviews serve as a primary foundation for many studies looking at transfer of learning and evaluation. Baldwin and Ford's (1988) seminal review of existing TOL literature is frequently cited and used as a foundation for other studies. The three major influential transfer of training conceptual factors reviewed were (1) training design characteristics; (2) trainee characteristics; and (3) work-environment characteristics. Training design factors include incorporation of learning principles, sequencing of training material, and job relevance of training content. Trainee characteristics include ability, skill, motivation, and personality factors of the trainee. Work environment factors include transfer climate, social support from supervisors and peers as well as constraints and opportunities to perform learned behaviors on the job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Transfer of training literature includes studies which identify a variety of variables, but major literature reviews continue to largely organize factors according to this three element taxonomy (Alvarez, Salas & Garofano, 2004; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Ford & Weissbein, 1997).

Ford and Weissbein (1997) completed a review and analysis of twenty studies found to focus on transfer of learning since the publication of Baldwin and Ford's 1988 review. Specifically, they were interested in identifying any progress made on limitations noted by Baldwin and Ford. They found progress including more measures of transfer beyond self-report, an increase in use of conceptual frameworks to inform choice of trainee characteristics to study, and operationalizing environmental factors such as transfer climate. While not as comprehensive as Baldwin and Ford (1988), this review was helpful in tracking developments related to transfer of learning studies.

More recent comprehensive reviews of transfer of training literature were conducted by Burke and Hutchins (2007) and Blume, Ford, Baldwin and Huang (2010). Burke and Hutchins continued the trend of organizing variables into the three categories of learner characteristics, intervention design and delivery, and work environment influences. Their goal was to look for strong, empirical evidence of variables influencing transfer. Further, they sought to identify gaps in the literature, document progress made since Baldwin and Ford (1988) and Ford and Weissbein (1997), and establish suggestions for further research. Studies reviewed included a variety of disciplines indicating several learner characteristics demonstrated strong or moderate relationship with transfer; cognitive ability, self-efficacy, pre-training motivation, anxiety/ negative affectivity, openness to experience, perceived utility, career planning and organizational commitment (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Training design characteristics demonstrating a strong or moderate relationship with transfer included: learning goals, content relevance, practice and feedback, behavioral modeling, and error-based examples. Work environment characteristics demonstrating a strong or moderate relationship included: transfer climate, supervisory support, peer support, and opportunity to perform (Burke & Hutchins, 2007).

Blume et al. (2010) completed a *quantitative* review of transfer of training literature focusing on factors directly effecting transfer and moderating factors of transfer relationships in an effort to advance research and practice based on "evidence." Their meta-analysis included 89 empirical studies that looked at predictive factors for transfer of training to different tasks and contexts. They further looked at moderator effects on transfer of learning. Their findings confirmed positive relationships between transfer and the predictor factors of cognitive ability, conscientiousness, motivation and a supportive work environment. Most

significant were findings indicating predictor variables tend to have stronger relationships to transfer when the focus of training was on open versus closed skills. Yelon and Ford (1999) distinguished between open and closed skills. Open skills are tied to learning principles that may be adapted to varying circumstances of the job, and closed skills are tied to performance of a skill in a work environment that is highly prescribed or identical to the learning environment. Yelon and Ford (1999) and Blume et al. (2010) concluded that the type of skill being trained (open or closed) should be considered when developing training programs to maximize the effectiveness of transfer strategies.

While most studies include motivation as an individual or learner characteristic (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Burke & Hutchins, 2007), it is notable some authors propose motivation should be considered separately from individual trainee characteristics (Cheng & Ho, 1999; Kontoghiorghes, 2004). Specifically, Cheng and Ho (1999) conducted a literature review covering ten years of research and not only included motivation as a separate transfer factor but further split it into four major dimensions: career and job attitudes; organizational commitment; decision and reaction to training; and post training interventions. Motivation factors were found to have a positive effect on transfer of training. Alvarez et al. (2004) reviewed ten years of training evaluation and effectiveness research and found summarizing findings related to motivation factors difficult due to the many different motivation types studied. The authors suggested training motivation is an important part of training outcomes and needed more construct clarification and research. Burke and Hutchins (2007) briefly addressed motivation in their literature review and suggested future research that distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivational components impacting transfer.

Evaluation of Training

Evaluating effectiveness of professional training programs is essential to measuring transfer of training. Research measuring training effectiveness largely focuses on two elements: learning, which is an increase in knowledge, skills or attitudes (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2006), and transfer of learning, which occurs when learning in one context impacts performance in another context (Perkins, 1992). The majority of training evaluations measure learning in the training environment, but fail to measure transfer of learning to the work environment (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Collins et al., 2007; Curry et al., 1994). The "transfer problem" has been well documented in corporate training research (Baldwin & Ford, 1988) and child welfare training efforts (Burke, 1997; Liu & Smith, 2011).

Training that provides child welfare practitioners with needed knowledge, skills and attitudes are crucial to their success. In a review of the previous twenty years of child welfare research, Collins et al. (2010) located only fourteen research studies focusing on evaluating effectiveness of child welfare training, and including at least one quantitative outcome measure beyond satisfaction. Of these 14 studies, only four had outcome measures that measured a change in behavior (TOL). Prior to 2000, evaluation of training for child welfare workers largely focused on the participant's reaction to training (Curry & Chandler, 1999). Since 2001, several studies have begun to closely examine factors impacting TOL in child welfare training (Antle et al., 2008; Antle, Barbee, Sullivan & Christensen, 2009; Curry et al., 2005; Liu & Smith, 2011; Wehrmann et al., 2002). These studies will be discussed in detail under the child welfare and transfer of learning section. Collins (2008) predicted child welfare training efforts would be increasingly required to demonstrate effectiveness. Liu and Smith (2011) referred to transfer of training to practice as an ongoing challenge in child

welfare services. Evaluating child welfare training programs for transfer of learning is key to effective child welfare practice.

Evaluation Models

Donald Kirkpatrick developed an evaluation model increasing the focus on transfer of learning. Kirkpatrick's four level evaluation model was introduced in 1959 in a series of articles published in the *Journal for the American Society of Training Directors*. Since that time, his model has been one of the most popular approaches to evaluating learning outcomes for training.

Kirkpatrick's evaluation model includes four levels: reaction/satisfaction, learning, behavior/transfer of learning and results. Level 1, reaction/satisfaction measures how well trainees like a training program and often includes various aspects such as the topic, speaker, and schedule. Measuring participant reaction to training is important because it helps to assess motivation and interest in learning. Participants who like a program are more likely to put forth an effort to learn (Kirkpatrick, 1996). Level one does not measure any learning that takes place.

Level 2, learning, is a measure of the knowledge acquired, skills improved, or attitudes changed due to training. A pretest-posttest or posttest only experimental design works very well to evaluate training at level two. Patterson (2004) used a pretest-posttest approach in his study to determine impact of child abuse training on the attitudes, knowledge and skills of police recruits. He used Hazzard and Rupp's (1986) Child Abuse Survey and a modified Leung and Cheung's (1998) Skills Scale as evaluation instruments finding training participants acquired more knowledge, developed more skills and felt more caring and sympathetic toward abusive parents than a control group. Kirkpatrick (1996) noted that not

all trainings will evaluate all three elements (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) but an evaluation should align with training objectives.

Level 3, behavior/transfer of learning, is a measure of the extent to which participants change their behavior on the job because of training. This level is measured outside a training setting and often depends on participant self-report or supervisor report. For example, Liu and Smith (2011) asked training participants to self-report on items such as "I have been able to transfer the skills learned in training back to my actual job" (p. 151). Antle et al. (2009) used a more labor-intensive file review to determine if training participants used trained skills in their work with children and families.

Level 4, results, measures the final results of training and subsequent behavior change. This evaluation level may include variables such as higher productivity, reduced costs, or improved quality (Kirkpatrick, 1996). In child welfare, key results-level variables might be positive outcomes in safety, permanency, and well-being for children and families. This level can be difficult to evaluate as the more time passes, the more difficult it is to attribute changes made directly to training. However, Maher, Corwin, Hodnett and Faulk (2012) demonstrated significant reductions in substantiated incidences and re-reports of child maltreatment and cost savings for the state of Louisiana resulting from implementation of the Nurturing Parenting Program. Kirkpatrick's model is often viewed as sequential with reactions leading to learning, learning leading to behavior and behavior leading to results. However, according to Alliger and Janak (1989) this relationship has not been sufficiently established. Specifically, they examined 12 articles reporting 26 correlations and found only moderate positive correlations between levels 2, 3, and 4: $r_{2,3} = .13$; $r_{2,4} = .40$; $r_{3,4} = .19$.

More than five decades after its introduction, Kirkpatrick's model remains a foundation for evaluation of training efforts. During this time, several authors have sought to augment Kirkpatrick's model. For example, Alliger et al. (1997) suggested a broadened framework that remains simple but identifies distinctions within evaluation levels. The augmented model they developed maintained Kirkpatrick's level 1, reaction, but divided it into affective reactions and utility judgments. Affective reactions evaluate how much the participant liked or disliked the training. Utility judgments ask participants to rate usefulness of training for subsequent job performance. Kirkpatrick's second level, learning, changed to include three subcategories. Immediate post-training knowledge is assessed at the end of training. Knowledge retention is knowledge assessment after training, once some time has passed. The third subcategory, behavior/skill demonstration, is measured within the training and includes a behavioral proficiency element. Kirkpatrick's third level, behavior, becomes transfer. Alliger et al. (1997) used "transfer" to refer to behavioral change demonstrated in the work environment. The fourth level of Kirkpatrick's model, results remains as is and focuses on organizational impact of training (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Augmented Training Evaluation Model

Kirkpatrick's Taxonomy	Augmented Framework
Reactions	Reactions Affective Reactions Utility Judgments
Learning	Learning Immediate knowledge Knowledge retention Behavior/skill demonstration
Behavior	Transfer
Results	Results

Alliger et al. (1997) used the expanded framework and conducted a meta-analysis of relationships among training criteria in 34 studies. Their findings indicated modest correlations between training criteria with strongest correlations between different criteria within levels.

Holton (1996) essentially dismissed Kirkpatrick's model as a simple taxonomy. Holton gave some credit to Kirkpatrick for important contributions to the field but demanded an evaluation model grounded in research. The model Holton proposed was based on existing research and did not measure reaction as a training outcome because research has found no direct link between reactions and learning. Another proposed element was to replace behavior with individual performance. According to Holton, individual performance is a broader construct and more appropriate for human resource development objectives. His model sought to represent training evaluation in all the complexity inherent in such a model.

Holton's model proposed measuring three outcomes: learning, individual performance and organizational results. He further identified a complex system of primary and secondary influences that impact learning outcomes. For example, primary influences include ability, motivation and environment. Secondary influences include attitudes, personality characteristics and intervention readiness (Holton, 1996). Most importantly Holton recognized his proposed model required validation and he encouraged critical research to test his model and develop an evaluation model grounded in validated theory.

Holton, Bates and Ruona (2000) expanded on Holton's idea of a complex learning transfer system and developed the Learning Transfer System Inventory (LTSI), an instrument to measure factors affecting learning transfer. Holton et al. (2000) were interested in developing an instrument that moved beyond measurement of training outcomes to measurement of factors affecting transfer. The instrument was based on an earlier version and included 112 items measuring sixteen constructs. The authors administered the inventory to 1,616 participants and used exploratory factor analysis to identify sixteen constructs as important factors influencing transfer of learning. The factors identified were: learner readiness, motivation to transfer, positive personal outcomes, negative personal outcomes, personal capacity for transfer, peer support, supervisor support, supervisor sanctions, perceived content validity, transfer design, opportunity to use, transfer effort, performance, resistance, performance self-efficacy, and performance coaching. They considered the LTSI to be an instrument organizations could use to diagnose transfer of training problem areas and intervene to enhance transfer of training. Holton partnered with several researchers to establish validity of the LTSI. Cross-cultural validation was established by several studies (Bates, Kauffeld, & Holton, 2005; Chen, Holton, & Bates, 2005; Khasawneh, Bates, &

Holton, 2004). Holton, Bates, Bookter, and Yamkovenko (2007) were able to establish convergent and divergent validity of the instrument with their study of twenty-eight comparison measures. The LTSI shows promise as a tool to help assess areas impacting transfer of training.

Training Models Specific to Child Welfare

Several authors have developed training models to guide training efforts in human service settings. Specifically, Curry et al. (1994), Antle, Barbee and van Zyl et al. (2008) and Collins et al. (2008) developed models to assess, intervene in, and evaluate the learning process. Curry et al. (1994) recognized a lack of evaluation in social work training extending beyond reaction/satisfaction surveys. The authors used an exploratory study to develop a model to assess and intervene in the learning transfer process. The Transfer of Training and Adult Learning (TOTAL) model they proposed considered three major transfer components: trainee characteristics, training design, and the trainee environment, at three points in time: before, during and after training. This model may be valuable, but the study offers no evidence to support its use. Additionally, the authors state, "Transfer will occur if the total number and strength of the positive transfer forces are greater than the total number and strength of negative forces" (p.11). No evidence was provided to support this claim.

Following Curry et al.'s (1994) work on the TOTAL model for training, Curry continued his research focus on factors influencing transfer of training by teaming with Chandler (Curry & Chandler, 1999) at the Northeast Ohio Regional Training Center. Curry and Chandler developed and tested a tool to evaluate training and learning transfer. The Human Services Effectiveness Postcard (HSTEP) incorporated all four levels of training evaluation in Kirkpatrick's widely accepted model. Curry and Chandler's study was a mixed-

methods approach with the qualitative portion designed to identify a list of factors that participants perceived as helping transfer and those that hindered transfer. They found the top three factors perceived as helping transfer were perceived learning, trainer adult learning and transfer strategies, and training relevance and applicability of training. Factors perceived as hindering transfer were [lack of] training relevance and applicability of training, [lack of] adult learning and transfer strategies and time and size of caseload demands (Curry & Chandler, 1999). Interestingly, time and size of caseload demands (identified by 14% of participants as a hindering factor) was not commonly identified in corporate or human resource focused studies as a factor impacting transfer of training. These factors may be unique to human services settings.

Collins et al. (2008) developed a detailed and comprehensive conceptual model for training design and evaluation to assist them in the National Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Grants funded in 2003 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The authors were tasked with completing a multiple-case study of nine previously funded training projects. They designed the comprehensive model to guide development of data collection instruments, completion of interviews, analyzing data and writing the final report (Collins et al., 2008). They developed a conceptual model resembling a logic model as it serves to conceptualize linkages between program goals, program components, activities, and outcomes. The model begins with consideration of contextual factors then moves to training project activities and individual project outcomes.

Unique to this model, is an identified gap between project outcomes such as trainings provided and long term outcomes such as improvements in practice, the child welfare field, or child and family well-being (Collins et al., 2008). The gap is important to note because

training success does not always translate to longer term change. Acknowledging this gap "will help limit perceptions of training as the panacea for wide-ranging systemic problems" (Collins et al., 2008, p. 84). They found their model successful in guiding evaluation efforts, and identified areas needing modification, for example, distinguishing between perceived outcomes and evidence of outcomes. They concluded their model to be "comprehensive without being unwieldy" (Collins et al., 2008, p.78),

Antle et al. (2008) developed a comprehensive model for evaluation of child welfare training in an effort to identify predictive training transfer factors. Development of the model took into consideration studies from transfer of training in general, and those focusing on the unique challenges for child welfare workers. The model was tested through a pretest-posttest, experimental-control group, study that included 72 supervisors and 331 child welfare case workers. The study focused on predictive factors of learning readiness, personality, team support, management support and global functioning of the organization. Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling and found support for individual learning readiness, supervisor support of learning, and knowledge gain as predictors of training transfer. Antle, Barbee et al. (2009) built on the Antle et al. (2008) study by evaluating impact of training reinforcement on training transfer. They evaluated 120 case records from child welfare workers in one of three groups: classroom training only, classroom training and reinforcement, and no training. The study measured transfer of training by evaluating case records for evidence of proper use of skills trained. Study results indicated training and reinforcement leads to a higher level of transfer. However, this study also found mixed results on several measures. The no training group actually performed better than the classroom training only group on measures of assessment, documentation of family

development, secondary family goals and child out of home care goals. These findings further underscore that little is known about what influences TOL in child welfare training.

Transfer of Learning in Child Welfare Training

In the late 1990s evaluation emerged as a concern reflected in human resources literature, as well as evaluation specific to child welfare training. The California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) submitted a Training Evaluation Framework Report in 2004 outlining a model designed to identify levels of evaluation (Parry & Berdie, 2004). The model was developed in partnership with the American Humane Association and expands Kirkpatrick's model to ten levels: course, satisfaction, opinion, knowledge acquisition, knowledge comprehension, skill demonstration, skill transfer, agency impact, client outcomes, and community impact. The report reflects a growing concern in child welfare training programs about the effectiveness of training provided. Interestingly, the most recent report of CalSWEC efforts indicates evaluation at the transfer of learning level on a statewide basis had not begun (Zeitler, Parry, Johnson & Berdie, 2009).

Transfer of learning is important to child welfare workers given the seriousness of the work and the profession's dependence on training to equip practitioners with needed skills. While transfer of learning has been researched extensively, many studies looking at transfer of learning have a human resources focus. Child welfare workers practice in a demanding, high risk environment and few studies looked specifically at transfer of training issues related to their work. Several studies during the early 1990s identified a need to evaluate for transfer of learning specific to child welfare training (Antle et al., 2008; Curry et al., 1994; Curry & Chandler, 1999; Miller & Dore, 1991). Yet Collins et al. (2010) located only fourteen

research studies published during the previous twenty years that focused on training child welfare workers and included at least one quantitative outcome measure beyond satisfaction.

Many child welfare specific TOL studies begin with Baldwin and Fords (1988) and Burke and Hutchins (2007) literature reviews as a starting point. Both reviews are organized using a taxonomy including three over-arching categories of conceptual factors influencing transfer of learning; learner characteristics, training design, and work environment. The question remains as to whether factors influencing corporate trainee participants also or equally affect child welfare practitioners. Transfer of training studies looking specifically at child welfare training largely approach evaluation with factors identified in other training settings (corporate training) ignoring the possibility that unique transfer factors may exist for child welfare practitioners.

Participant Action Planning

Early research focusing on human services settings (Mueller, 1985) and child welfare (Delewski, Pecor, Smith & Smith, 1986) evaluated transfer of learning as impacted by participant action planning. Mueller (1985) used a participant action planning approach to evaluation extending a pre-posttest approach in an attempt to document retention of learning. The Participant Action Planning Approach (PAPA) involved participants developing a personal action plan for implementing behaviors or skills learned in training at the conclusion of training. Three months following training, participants were surveyed to determine action items they implemented and factors precluding implementation of their plan. This study was completed over a two year period with two sets of participants. The first year included responses from 190 participants and the second year included responses from 145 participants. Participants in the study developed their own action plan for implementation of

training material and then reported outcomes three months after completion of training. Study results compared the two sets of data and supported use of an action planning approach to provide qualitative evidence of transfer of learning and as a way to furnish accountability to training sponsors. Study results indicated eighty-seven percent of action plans were implemented, fifty-six percent partially and thirty-one percent completely. One finding of particular interest was fifty-one percent of participants identified time/workload constraints as a barrier to completion. The study foreshadowed a research focus on transfer of learning as it applied to child welfare training.

Delewski et al. (1986) also used the participant action planning approach in their study, however they looked specifically at training for child protection workers. Of 142 training participants, only 42 returned the PAPA evaluation three months following conclusion of training. There were a total of 97 actions items. Sixty-six percent of respondents reported their job performance improved to some degree. Similar to Mueller's (1985) findings, participants who did not implement action items most commonly identified lack of time as the reason. Delewski et al. (1986) and Mueller's (1985) studies offer support for using a PAPA method to improve transfer of training rates. However, neither study utilized a control group, making it impossible to determine if PAPA is any more effective than other transfer methods or no transfer intervention. Both studies were instrumental in identifying work load as an important factor in transfer of training for human services work settings thus indicating that training models would benefit from considering this factor.

Evaluation of Child Welfare Training Programs

Some child welfare training research looked at evaluating implementation of large programs. For example, Miller and Dore (1991) reported on innovative child welfare training

programs in four states. The authors cited comprehensive training and support programs as the only way to meet increasing challenges of child welfare work. Their study highlighted innovative training programs in Washington, Ohio, Florida and Tennessee. In Florida, legislators, child advocates, and department staff members asked for more comprehensive training for child protective services. The Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Training Act of 1986 mandated all child welfare staff complete four, week long training academies and 40 hours per year of on-going training. At the time of publication, no evaluation of practice behavior had occurred, yet the goal of the program was identified as evaluating impact of training on worker performance.

Tennessee developed a certification program aimed to increase the level of child welfare professional competence (Miller and Dore, 1991). Successful completion of the program required ten weeks of training combining residential and on the job training. The final requirement for certification is a comprehensive exam that includes both written and performance components. A supervisor's role in the training process is considered to be a cornerstone and includes specific training requirements for the supervisor. While Tennessee's program is comprehensive, evaluating training outcomes has not been an integral part of the plan. Future plans included an impact evaluation and may have happened by now: 25 years later.

Ohio established regional centers to provide training for child welfare workers. After new workers complete a mandatory ten days of core training, each worker completes an Individual Training Needs Assessment Instrument to determine individual training needs (Miller and Dore, 1991). Ohio's training program includes three types of evaluation; participant satisfaction survey; pretest and posttest knowledge assessment; and observation of

trainers to monitor training quality. Miller and Dore (1991) reported that Ohio had completed one evaluation of the impact of training on worker performance but no outcomes were reported.

Washington State made changes in child welfare worker training in response to a widely publicized death of a two year old child in Child Protective Services care. Washington passed legislation mandating implementation of Department of Health and Human Services training academy for children's services to focus on development of minimum performance standards (Miller and Dore, 1991). Budget cutbacks caused the length of the program to be cut in half from six weeks to three weeks. Evaluation included an exam at the end of training but did not evaluate impact of training on worker performance.

Despite Miller and Dore's (1991) assertion that evaluating and demonstrating a training program's impact on worker behavior is essential, Ohio's training program was the only one that evaluated impact of training on participant practice. Miller and Dore (1991) identified limited funding as the reason for a lack of good program evaluation. Even as child welfare trainers understood the importance of evaluating for transfer of learning, programs largely failed to do so.

Strand and Bosco-Ruggiero (2011) examined two specific programs designed to increase organizational commitment, build leadership capacity, increase retention, enhance the ability to navigate and negotiate within agency and community, and increase opportunities for career and personal development. Strand and Bosco-Ruggiero's (2011) study evaluated a mentoring program where mentees (new child welfare workers) are paired with a mentor (supervisors) to develop a professional development plan. The program required participation in monthly meetings and a clinical consultation element for supervisors to receive

consultation regarding supervision skills. Strand and Bosco-Ruggiero identify the two programs as transfer of learning programs although the study did not evaluate transfer of learning from a training program to the work environment. Instead, the two programs might be better described as support programs that incorporated transfer of learning concepts. The study found both programs achieved significant results with improved job satisfaction and organizational commitment and a decrease in intent to leave the agency (Strand & Bosco-Ruggiero, 2011).

Child Welfare Training: Transfer of Learning Factors Research

Recent studies have focused specifically on TOL in child welfare training (Antle et al., 2009; Antle et al., 2008; Curry et al., 2005; Liu & Smith, 2011; Wehrmann et al., 2002). These studies are significant to the proposed study because the focus is on participant behavior change or TOL. These studies evaluated beyond a change in skill or knowledge. Scourfield et al. (2012) completed a study evaluating child welfare worker behavior changes resulting from training on engaging fathers in child protection assessments and interventions. The training course was two days long and 50 participants attended both days. Day one of training involved a variety of sessions including three knowledge-based sessions, four values-based sessions and one interviewing skills session. Day two of training included four skill-based sessions focused on developing motivational interviewing skills. Researchers used a modified social worker self-efficacy scale at the beginning of training and again two months later to measure participants self-efficacy in relation to work with fathers. Researchers recognized self-efficacy ratings may not translate to change in practice so they also asked participants to report on fathers in their current caseloads. Results indicated significant increases in confidence to carry out activities on each of the 17 behaviors participants rated.

In addition, participants reported an increase in the number of fathers on their caseload. While this study found positive results about training provided, it did not identify specific factors that impacted transfer of learning. Instead, the study based its assumption of increased self-efficacy leading to increased fathers on caseload on Social Cognitive Theory which predicts increased self-efficacy leads to increased probability of engaging in that behavior (Scourfield et al, 2012).

For purposes of this literature review, I focused on studies evaluating child welfare training efforts conducted since 2000, measuring behavior change resulting from training, and focusing on identifying factors influencing transfer of learning. Of the five studies meeting these criteria, three rely on participant self-report of behavior change and two rely on observation of behavior change to measure transfer of learning. Table 2 summarizes transfer of learning factors identified in these studies.

Table 2
Transfer of Learning Factors in Child Welfare Studies Since 2000

Study	**Individual factors**	**Instruction/Design factors**	**Organization/Environment factors**
Curry, McCarragher, & Dellmann-Jenkins (2005)	Participant perceived learning Participant motivation to attend Prior experience with training and application	Overall transfer potential (index measured by TPQ) Application planning Adult learning and transfer strategies Relevance applicability Training/organization congruence	Supervisory support Top management and organizational support Co-worker support Training/organization congruence Pre-training preparation
Wehrmann, Shin, Poertner (2002)	Self-efficacy Perceived utility Content familiarity	Trainer attributes (skilled, credible) Performance feedback Curriculum design	Supervisor support post training Supervisor feedback Supervisor incentive to use Opportunity to use Practice/rehearsal Peer support post training Work environment
Liu and Smith (2011)	Motivation		Supervisory support Co-worker support Organizational climate
Antle, Barbee & Van Zyl (2008)	Immediate learning Learning readiness		Organizational support
Antle, Barbee, Sullivan & Christensen (2009)		Training reinforcement	

Several studies looked at child welfare transfer of learning using participant self-report to evaluate transfer of learning (Curry et al., 2005; Liu & Smith, 2011; Wehrmann et al., 2002). Scourfield et al. (2012) and Curry et al. (2005) used the Human Service Training Effectiveness Postcard (HSTEP) to evaluate TOL. Curry et al. (2005) completed a longitudinal study with 416 child protective services workers in Ohio who attended training during a three month period of time. The study evaluated transfer of learning factors as part of a larger question about impact of TOL on staff retention. The HSTEP was mailed to

participants three months after completion of training. Seven years after completion of training participants were categorized as: (1) still employed, (2) left agency, or (3) retired. Logistic regression analysis was utilized to determine if transfer potential/transfer support was associated with staff retention. Study findings identified transfer potential, supervisory support and application planning as factors positively associated with transfer. While the focus of this study was child welfare staff retention, inclusion of transfer of learning considerations qualified it for inclusion in review of the literature for the proposed study.

Wehrmann et al. (2002) conducted a longitudinal study with 129 participants to determine what variables (transfer of learning factors) account for trainee's use of trained skills. The authors used quantitative analysis to develop a model to explain relationships between individual, design and organizational characteristics and transfer of learning. The authors used a variety of scales to assess individual attributes, elements of instructional design and the organizational environment (independent variables). Dependent variables were determined by trainees self-assessing acquisition and use of each training objective at the conclusion of training, and again six months later. Findings showed a drop in the overall dependent variable mean from 95 at training completion to 88 at six month post training measurement. Independent variables with a significant correlation ($p < .01$) to self-assessment of outcomes included self-efficacy (r=.36), perceived utility (r=.38), trainer attributes (r=.44), performance feedback (r=.35), curriculum design (r=.42), supervisor support post training (r=.36), supervisor feedback (r=.27), supervisor incentive to use (r=.44), opportunity to use (r=.47), practice/rehearsal (r=.43), peer support post training (r=.40) and work environment (r=.26).

Wehrmann et al. (2002) conducted a multivariate analysis in an attempt to develop a model to identify variables accounting for most of the variance in self-assessment of learning outcomes. An opportunity to perform new tasks on the job, support of peers upon returning to the job, and content familiarity accounted for 52% of the variance in workers perceptions of their acquisition and use of training objectives six months after training. Note that content familiarity was negatively correlated as participants reporting most familiarity with the content before training reported the least learning and use of new knowledge.

Liu and Smith (2011) conducted pre-training and follow-up surveys of 92 child welfare workers who attended a series of 13 training workshops. They collected trainee's self-report of perceived training transfer, perceptions of supervisory support and organizational conditions. The authors introduced a unique twist to transfer of learning evaluation by conceptualizing transfer of training as having both individual and collective components. Individual training transfer was identified as the individual trainee's effort to apply new learning and collective training transfer was defined as group efforts to apply training content (Liu & Smith, 2011). Supervisory support and co-workers who support continuous learning strengthen motivation, and was positively correlated with individual training transfer. Collective transfer was positively correlated with positive worker perception of co-worker's support for learning and organizational climate. The nature of child welfare work (complex, work in teams, trained in groups) requires careful consideration of collective transfer components. They suggested, "perhaps child welfare administrators and practitioners should evaluate training transfer and its effects at levels beyond individual trainees. Training outcomes could be assessed for groups, teams, departments, and, possibly, organizations as a whole" (Liu & Smith, 2011, p. 154).

The research conducted by Liu and Smith (2011), Curry et al. (2005) and Wehrmann et al. (2002) all included the same methodological weakness of depending on participant self-report to evaluate transfer of learning. In contrast, Antle et al. (2008) and Antle et al. (2009) relied on worker evaluation of supervisor behavior and chart review to establish transfer of learning.

The purpose of Antle et al.'s (2008) study was to evaluate effectiveness of supervisor training focused on acquiring and transferring supervisor skills. They evaluated social support, reinforcement of skills and evaluation of worker practice. The authors developed a comprehensive model for supervisor training in child welfare and then tested predictive capability of the model. An experimental-control group, pre- and multiple-posttest research design included 72 supervisors and 331 workers. Supervisors attended a 2-day training that included elements such as coaching and mentoring skills and parallel process of supervision. In addition, workers and supervisors both attended three days of training on Solution-Based Casework, and practice skills for assessment, case planning, ongoing case management, and work with community resources. A variety of standardized scales were used to measure predictor variables pre-training, immediately post-training and two months post-training. The predictor variables measured included learning readiness, personality, team support, supervisor support of training/learning and organizational support. Transfer of training was measured using worker ratings of supervisor skills. Findings indicated immediate learning, individual trainee learning readiness, and organizational support are predictive of transfer of learning. A primary strength of this study is research moving beyond participant self-report to evaluate actual transfer of learning. It is notable that the authors originally desired to

demonstrate a link between training and organizational outcomes but were unable to successfully establish a link.

Antle et al. (2009) conducted a study comparing impact of different training models on training transfer. In this study, welfare workers were assigned to classroom only, classroom plus reinforcement or no training group. Transfer of training was measured using a chart file review. This approach is considered a strength of the study as measurement does not depend on self-report. Investigators used assessment and case planning objectives from the training curriculum to examine a total of 120 randomly chosen cases (40 from each group). Results indicated mean scores on assessment skills: training plus reinforcement group, $x = 6.43$; training only group, $x = 5.59$; and control group, $x = 6.08$. Mean scores on case planning skills were: training plus reinforcement group, $x = 5.34$; training only group, $x = 5.14$; and control group, $x = 4.77$. While differences between composite scores did not meet statistical significance, results supported the use of training reinforcement to promote transfer of learning in child welfare. One finding of this study was the control group, which received no training, performed better than the classroom only group on assessment skills. This finding may indicate pre-existing differences between groups affecting their scores.

Summary

Child welfare practice is notoriously difficult work. Child welfare professionals interact with vulnerable populations and must demonstrate policy and program level knowledge of complicated social problems, and assessment and case management skills (Franke et al., 2008). Collins et al. (2010) described stress of child welfare practice when they discussed child welfare professionals being left to make important decisions without adequate information, under time pressure, and sometimes with limited training and

supervision. Mistakes can have tragic effects and fear of making mistakes can lead workers to rely on strict adherence to procedure rather than professional skill. The child welfare professional is the expert at the center of service delivery and effective training is fundamental to their success (Collins et al., 2010).

Turnover in child welfare is an ongoing problem because the work is difficult and implications for making mistakes can be devastating for children and families (Collins et al., 2010; Curry et al., 2005; Gomez et al., 2010; Franke et al., 2008; Miller & Dore, 1991; US Government Accountability Office, 2006). Training is often seen as a method to reduce turnover (Curry et al., 2005; Gomez et al., 2010; GAO, 2006). A reduction in staff turnover allows training resources to be shifted from new worker training to training that can reinforce agency mission, teach new skills, enhance staff capacity to keep up with latest practices and revitalize workforce.

Child welfare training is not just about effective learning, it is about *effective practice*. Transfer of learning from a training environment to a practice environment is essential for effective practice. Many studies are related to transfer of training; few are directly connected to training of child welfare workers. Child welfare workers are professionals who practice in an environment known to be particularly challenging. Workers are expected to perform challenging responsibilities (removing children, partnering with parents who are suspected of child abuse or neglect, responding to quickly changing policy expectations, and maintaining a strengths based, empathetic approach) under difficult circumstances (limited agency and community resources, hostile clients, and potentially disastrous consequences for mistakes).

In this chapter several significant studies were reviewed that looked at TOL in child welfare settings, however, more studies are needed to help isolate TOL factors specific to

child welfare training. A Delphi study of child welfare experts could help illuminate specific transfer factors in child welfare training efforts resulting in training planning efforts that focus on transfer factors specific to child welfare.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The choice of research methodology is a key decision point in any research project. Methodology chosen for this research project was a combination of qualitative and quantitative which reflects a post positivist critical realist approach. A post positivist critical realist perspective accepts that an external reality exists but cannot be known with perfect accuracy (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). A Delphi approach utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data analysis was utilized to identify factors that enhance, or hinder transfer of learning (TOL) for child welfare workers based on information gathered from child welfare experts. This approach was used to structure group communication among an expert panel concerning factors affecting transfer of learning for child welfare workers. The Delphi approach was chosen because its anonymity ensures each individual voice is heard (Melpignano & Collins, 2003) and the iterative nature allows for panelists to evaluate and modify their opinion over the course of the study (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). In this chapter the Delphi approach is reviewed, how it was used to carry out the study is explained, and the methodology approach is justified. Research questions, panel members, and instrumentation will also be discussed.

Complexities and problems related to transfer of learning for child welfare training were reviewed in Chapter 2. Collins et al. (2008) developed a model for planning and evaluating child welfare training projects in which they identified a "gap" between individual project outcomes such as increase in knowledge, and cluster outcomes such as a change in practice. This gap is where transfer of learning occurs. Because no widely accepted model has addressed this issue, opinions of experts were sought.

Delphi Approach Overview

The Delphi approach originated during 1950 – 1960s under the title Project RAND. It was originally designed to assist groups of knowledgeable individuals in forecasting future events (Linstone & Turoff, 1975). The Delphi approach used a group structure, but the group did not meet in person. Because groups did not meet in person, common group problems such as influence of dominant personalities, noise, and group pressure were reduced (Keeney, Hasson & McKenna, 2011). Since its inception, the Delphi approach has continued to evolve and be implemented using different processes. Common forms of Delphi include conventional Delphi, policy Delphi, and normative Delphi. The conventional Delphi is used as a forecasting technique to predict the likelihood of future events. The normative Delphi focuses on developing desirable goals and priorities. The purpose of a policy Delphi is to obtain reliable expert group opinion valuable in resolving a complex problem (Landeta, 2005). The specific approach utilized is determined by the purpose of the study (Yousef, 2007). The Delphi approach used in this study most closely resembles a policy Delphi. The problem addressed in this study was how to increase transfer of learning from child welfare training to child welfare practice. Transfer of learning (TOL) as it applies to child welfare professionals has not been extensively studied, so the policy Delphi was utilized to explore the topic and generate ideas.

Linstone and Turoff (1975) provided a basic definition of the Delphi approach: "Delphi may be characterized as a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem" (p. 3). Skulmoski, Hartman and Krahn (2007) described the Delphi approach as "an iterative process to collect and distill the anonymous judgments of experts

using a series of data collection and analysis techniques interspersed with feedback" (p. 2). Group consensus is often identified as the research goal for studies employing the Delphi approach. However, Linstone and Turoff (2011) reported a common misunderstanding about the Delphi approach is to assume the goal is for the group to reach consensus. Indeed, their initial definition of Delphi approach did not include consensus as a goal.

Many Delphi studies focus on reaching consensus. However, some studies demonstrated Delphi participants can move toward a false consensus based on subtle pressure to conform. For example, Cyphert and Gant (1971) learned participants initially rating a statement below average changed their ratings to above average after receiving false feedback. As referenced in Hasson and Keeney (2011), Uhl described his study of 26 panelists achieving consensus in three Delphi rounds. A year later, he gave an identical questionnaire to the same panelists and found results were more significantly like the first round than the third round. Thus, panelist's initial opinions were more stable than consensus gained. Therefore, achieving consensus may not result in useable outcomes. The Delphi approach used in this study did not seek consensus. In this research study the Delphi was used to explore child welfare training and transfer of learning and generate operationalized definitions of factors that affect TOL for child welfare professionals.

Research Design

The Delphi approach was chosen for this study for several reasons. First, there is little scholarly research on TOL and child welfare training, and this study sought to generate ideas and explore opinions about factors affecting TOL for child welfare workers. Skulmoski et al. (2007) recommended a Delphi approach when incomplete knowledge of a problem is available and when the goal is to improve understanding of problems, opportunities, or

solutions. Given a lack of research studies addressing TOL and child welfare training, the Delphi approach was a good choice to begin exploration of the topic.

The Delphi approach is also a good choice when the problem being studied does not lend itself to analytical techniques but could benefit from subjective judgments on a collective basis (Stitt-Gohdes & Crews, 2004), which is the second reason for choosing a Delphi. TOL and child welfare training is a complex problem. Franke et al. (2008) stated that research on TOL and child welfare is difficult due to the complexity of training content and diversity of settings where skills need to be applied. In reference to dealing with complex problems, Yousef (2007) stated, "sometimes reliance on intuitive judgment is not just a temporary expedient but in fact a mandatory requirement" (p. 5). This study sought expert opinion to increase understanding of factors effecting TOL for child welfare training. Expert panelists were located across a rural sate and the Delphi approach allowed experts to have input and discussion without meeting in person. In addition, the anonymity of a Delphi approach prevented dominant personalities and other social pressures from impacting the outcomes (Keeney et al., 2000). Thus, using the Delphi approach allowed exploration of a complex topic by a statewide group of experts.

A two round Delphi approach outlined by Melpignano and Collins (2003), with an additional third round to gather behavioral descriptions of ideas generated was used for this research study. The study included three rounds of electronic questionnaires to a panel of experts. The goal was to explore factors that affect TOL for child welfare workers.

Characteristics of the Delphi approach for this research. The Delphi approach is designed to facilitate group communication among experts who do not meet in person (Yousuf, 2007). Experts for this study were located across a largely rural state and the Delphi

permitted group communication without travel considerations. This study used a Delphi approach to identify and explore expert opinions to improve understanding of factors affecting TOL for child welfare workers. Child welfare expert opinions are valuable as programs are planned and training efforts are implemented. Beyond program planning, an exploration of the topic contributed to expansion of a model of child welfare training and developed a foundation for future research efforts. This study sought to support decision-making by structuring and discussing diverse views of a desired future (Hasson & Keeney, 2011).

The Delphi approach has four main characteristics (Landeta, 2005; Skulmoski et al., 2007). It is a repetitive, anonymous process with controlled feedback ending with a group statistical response. Repetition and controlled feedback involves panel members being consulted a minimum of two times on every question and given a chance to modify their answer based on information from other panel members. A primary assumption of the Delphi approach is group opinion is more valid than individual opinion (Keeney et al., 2011). Multiple rounds give panel members opportunity to assert their opinions and possibly modify opinions based on other information.

Anonymity allows panel members to express opinions freely and react to other's opinions without bias based on identities. This approach reduces issues common in groups such as manipulation or coercion to conform or adopt a certain viewpoint (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). It should be recognized that absolute anonymity was not assured in this study. Although responses remained strictly confidential and could not be attributed to any one participant, panel members know each other, making the study quasi-anonymous (Keeney et al., 2011). Controlled feedback is designed to reduce noise, or communication not pertinent

to problem solving. It allows interaction without discord or influence of dominant personalities. Group statistical response ensures all panel member opinions will be included in the final report. Due to a lack of information on the topic, it was important to ensure all options were considered (Franklin & Hart, 2007).

There is no widely accepted model of TOL for child welfare workers, so a Delphi approach was appropriate for purposes of goal setting, policy investigation (Hsu & Sandford, 2007) and developing a range of possible program alternatives (Delbecq, Van de Ven & Gustafson, 1975). Although Yousuf (2007) purported outcomes of Delphi studies are nothing more than opinion and only as valid as the opinion of the expert subjects, in this case expert opinion was necessary to further our understanding of TOL and child welfare training.

Approval. Prior to data collection, the University of Idaho Institutional Review Board approved the research study (Appendix G). After approval was attained, potential participants were contacted.

Identifying panel experts. Panel member experts must be chosen thoughtfully (Baker et al., 2006; Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004; Stitt-Gohdes & Crews, 2004). A combination of purposive sampling and snowball sampling was utilized in this study to identify panel members. Because expert opinions were desired, selected panel members were chosen because of their expert ability to purposefully inform an understanding of child welfare training and TOL (Creswell, 2007). Use of the term "expert" in relation to Delphi studies remains controversial due to little consensus about the definition of expert (Baker et al., 2006). Mead and Moseley (2001) suggested experts can be defined in a number of ways including hierarchical position or as recommended by other panel members in a study. This study used both approaches.

In this study experts were identified as: (1) child welfare professionals holding a position of Chief of Social Work (hierarchical position, purposive sampling), and (2) child welfare professionals identified by Chiefs as experts (recommended by other panel members, snowball sampling). Adler and Ziglio (1996) identified four requirements for "expertise": (1) knowledge and experience with the issue being investigated; (2) capacity and willingness to participate; (3) sufficient time to participate; and (4) effective communication skills.

Expert status of Child Welfare Chiefs is supported by minimum qualifications required for the position which include being licensed as a Masters Level Social Worker in Idaho and experience in child welfare, child protection, or child mental health (Idaho Division of Human Resources, 2013). Capacity and willingness to participate was indicated once panel members were invited and agreed to participate in the study. Panel members were under no obligation to participate. Sufficient time to participate was an especially important consideration for this study because child welfare workers frequently site lack of time as a component of their jobs (Smith & Donovan, 2003). Panel members were given estimated time requirements (1.5 hours for all rounds) as part of an initial presentation, before agreement to participate. Idaho Department of Health and Welfare administrative personnel verbalized their interest in the study and granted permission for Chiefs to participate. Chiefs and those identified by them as experts were assumed to have effective communication skills because strong written and verbal communication skills are required to function in those positions.

A panel of 51 experts was identified for this study. Of the experts invited to participate, 34 completed round one. No argument has been made in literature regarding the optimal number of participants for a Delphi study (Hsu & Sandford, 2007) and panel sizes can

vary from 10 to 1,685 (Powell, 2003). However, Delbecq et al. (1975) suggested 10 to 15 panel members is sufficient if their background is homogeneous. An initial panel of 34 allowed for some attrition without compromising the study. Attrition is a well-documented issue for Delphi studies because participation over multiple rounds is required. Panel members are more likely to stay involved if they are interested in the topic and are directly affected by the outcome (Keeney et al., 2000). Panelists in this study stand to benefit from workers who successfully transfer learned skills to practice. The Delphi approach reduces social compensation (reinforcement and motivation provided by support and social approval of other group members), so another motivator was introduced. Panel members completing all rounds of the study were entered into a drawing for a chance to win a Kindle Fire electronic reader.

Potential expert panel members were informed about the study and asked to participate during a regularly scheduled statewide Chief meeting. Chief meetings are scheduled every month with every other meeting occurring in a face to face format. A personal presentation outlining importance of the study, process, time commitment and need for expert opinion was conducted. Stitt-Ghodes and Crews (2004) asserted, recognition of panel members as experts in their field may be enough encouragement to get them to agree to share their opinions and complete all rounds of a study. He further encouraged researchers to personally invite experts to participate.

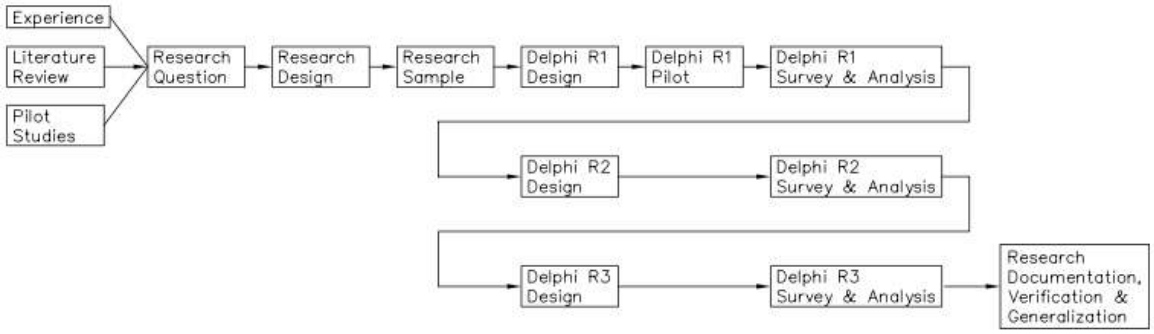
Eight regional Chiefs were invited to participate in the study and asked to identify two additional child welfare practitioners who they consider an expert based on education, experience or special training. This process produced 51 potential panel members. Descriptive statistics on demographic data identifying expert panel member's job titles,

degrees and years of experience are provided in Chapter 4 to clarify qualifications of experts who participated in the study. Child Welfare Chiefs and experienced child welfare workers were essential to the study. They are in a unique position to offer expertise to a research project utilizing their expert opinion to enhance the training process for child welfare workers. Additionally, this study contributes to theoretical underpinnings regarding job specific transfer of training.

Data Collection and Analysis

The Delphi approach applied to this study involved three rounds using an electronic survey through Qualtrics. The data collection process followed the Typical Delphi Process presented by Skulmoski et al (2007) illustrated in Figure 3, with one exception. Pilot studies were not completed prior to development of this study. Experience and literature review were the two elements that led to development of research questions and study design.

Figure 3. Typical Delphi Process (Skulmoski, et al 2007). Used with permission from Informing Science Institute: The Delphi method for graduate research. *Journal of Information and Technology Education,* 6, 1-21, copyright (2007).



Data collection. Implementation of this study involved administration of three iterations of a Delphi survey to structure group communication among a child welfare expert panel concerning factors they believe affect TOL for child welfare workers. Surveys for rounds two and three were developed based on previous rounds. Round one was an open-

ended questionnaire to generate qualitative data. First round questions were based on a review of the literature and research questions. Data from round one was coded and used to develop the second round survey. Panel members were given results of round one and asked to rate items based on importance. The third round reported second round results and ask panel members to choose and rank order the top six most important factors and provide behavioral descriptions of two TOL factors identified in round two.

Communication with panel members was conducted by email. Data collection was via Qualtrics survey research software. Qualtrics is web-based software that allows users to create surveys, gather data and generate reports on secure servers. An overview of the study was presented to all Chiefs of Child Welfare at Idaho Department of Health and Welfare at a regularly scheduled meeting. The study was presented and the need for expert assistance articulated (see Appendix A for script). Contact information was gathered and invited experts received an email within 48 hours of initial presentation. Email contents (Appendix B) thanked panel members for their participation, reviewed basic project information, and provided an active electronic link to the Qualtrics survey. Panel members reviewed and acknowledge consent to participate before accessing the survey (Appendix C).

Data analysis. Round one qualitative data was analyzed by organizing unique responses into a comprehensive list and combining responses of a like nature into a single, aggregated response. Panelist's round two ratings were analyzed using Microsoft Excel data analysis software. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean, median, mode and standard deviation of each response as recommended by Hsu and Sandford (2007) and Melpignano and Collins (2003). The mean was used to determine the overall group rating. A mean of 3.0 or above indicated a group rating of very important or extremely important. This

study did not seek consensus so a consensus level was not established or measured. Instead, the highest ranked items (3.0 or above) were included in the next round for further ranking in terms of importance. Round three data analysis included determining level of agreement between panelists. Kendall's W was calculated to establish level of agreement on importance of factors as recommended by Schmidt (1997). In addition, operational definitions were analyzed. Key elements of those definitions were identified and combined to create an operationalized definition of factors affecting TOL for child welfare workers.

Delphi survey development and administration. A draft survey for round one was developed based on a review of literature. Literature concerning TOL reflects three categories of factors affecting TOL: individual learner factors, training factors and organizational factors. Round one in this study was also organized around those three categories. Under each category, panelists were asked to identify factors enhancing and inhibiting TOL.

Pilot Study. As suggested by Skulmoski et al. (2007) and Jairath and Weinstein (1994), a pilot study of the instrument was conducted with the goals of testing and adjusting the survey, working out procedural problems and gaining an understanding of time commitment expectations. Pilot testing is also recommended by Keeney et al. (2011) to address validity and reliability issues. Participants for the pilot study were chosen from a pool of willing and available, retired child welfare and research experts. Pilot study participants completed the round one survey and provided feedback related to survey directions, question phrasing, and appropriateness of questions. Changes were made to the round one survey instrument based on pilot-test feedback.

Round one: survey and implementation. For round one, panel members received an email that provided a review of the purpose of the study, a letter of consent, and a unique link to the survey. Round one included demographic questions regarding the participant's age, gender, degree, job title and years of experience. Hsu and Sandford (2007) suggested researchers begin with a structured survey based on an extensive review of the literature. However, for the purposes of this study, the intent was to elicit a broad range of responses and an open-ended survey was more likely to achieve that result (Skulmoski et al., 2007). Therefore, round one included six open-ended questions. Panel members had ten days to complete the survey. On day five, panel members who had not completed the survey received an email reminding them about the survey and deadline for completion.

The following brief introduction and questions based on TOL research literature were included in round one:

Transfer of Learning is when something learned in one context is used in another context. *Example:* A worker is trained on motivational interviewing techniques and the next time he/she has a resistant client he/she uses techniques he/she learned in training to engage the client in treatment.

Individual learner factors are characteristics inherent in the individual training participant. *Example:* A trainee's internal motivation to learn.

Training factors are characteristics of instructional design and delivery. *Example:* The specific curriculum used by trainers.

Organizational factors are characteristics of the context or environment in which training occurs. *Example:* Topics presented in training are also discussed in employee meetings.

Given those descriptions and reflecting back to trainings you have participated in and/or trainings your supervisees have participated in, please respond to the following questions:

1. What *individual learner factors* enhanced transfer of learning to the work place?
2. What *individual learner factors* inhibited transfer of learning to the work place?
3. What *training factors* enhanced transfer of learning to the work place?
4. What *training factors* inhibited transfer of learning to the work place?
5. What *organizational factors* enhanced transfer of learning to the work place?
6. What *organizational factors* inhibited transfer of learning to the work place?

Round one: data analysis. Data from round one was analyzed and redistributed to panel members within ten days of the survey closing. Content analysis procedures outlined by Keeney et al. (2011) were followed for round one of the study. The data from round one was gathered and coded into categories for each question. Analysis was conducted by the researcher and a Masters level social worker with child welfare training expertise. The researcher reviewed qualitative data and identified categories and individual factors classified under each category. Then, the second rater independently coded items into identified categories to assess inter-rater percent agreement. Inter-rater agreement was determined by [agreement/(agreement + disagreement)] x 100 = percent of agreement (MacQueen, 2008). Demographic participant information was analyzed using descriptive statistics to develop an understanding of expert panel members.

Round two: survey and implementation. Qualitative data gathered in round one was used to develop round two surveys. Panel members were provided with the list of categories identified in round one including the factors coded under each category. They were then asked to scale the importance of each factor on a Likert-type scale indicating level of

importance from not at all important to very important. Panel members had ten days to complete this survey. On day five, panel members who had not responded received an email thanking them again for participating, and reminding them about the survey and deadline to complete.

Round two: data analysis. Second round data was analyzed using descriptive statistics to identify central tendency (mean) and dispersion of scores as recommended by Powell (2003). This analysis was used to determine which factors would be included in round three. Panel members received round three 10 days following round two survey closing.

Round three: survey and implementation. The third round survey provided panel members with a list of factors based on round two Likert scale scores. Panel members were provided a list of identified factors with a mean of 3.0 or above as calculated from participant ratings provided in round two. During this round panel members were asked to identify and rank order their top six most important factors and help quantify factors identified as important to TOL. For example, if a panelist identified "supervisor support" as an important factor, they were asked to describe supervisor support in behavioral terms, i.e.; "what behaviors would one expect to see when supervisor support is present?"

Round three: Data analysis. Round three data analysis included calculation of Kendall's W to determine the level of agreement between panelists. In addition, text data provided for operational definitions of terms was analyzed to identify key elements. Key concepts were then combined to create a beginning definition reflecting panelists' input.

Reliability and Validity

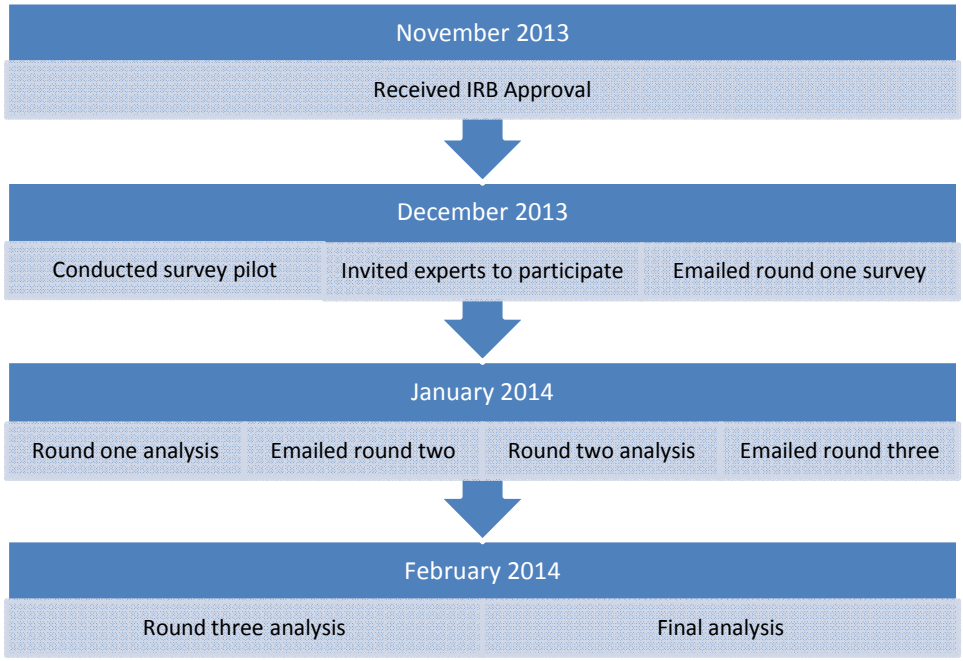
The nature of efforts undertaken to infuse rigor into a study depend on the methodology. Quantitative research depends on objectivity, reliability, and validity to ensure rigor. Qualitative research on the other hand has identified over one hundred sets of qualitative research criteria (Northcote, 2012). The Delphi approach incorporates qualitative and quantitative approaches so it does not lend itself to a standard approach to rigor. Qualitative research, by its nature, does not lend itself to straightforward application of quantitative evaluation criteria. Northcote (2012) likened evaluating qualitative research by quantitative standards to entering a beautiful, perfectly ripe apple into "The Best Orange in the World" contest. Although the apple is excellent, it would be found seriously lacking. Still, research of any kind demands an evaluation of quality of research.

Reliability can be difficult to establish in a Delphi study. However, the Delphi technique should not be viewed as a scientific method for creating new knowledge, but as a process for making the most out of available information, whether it is scientific data or collective wisdom of experts (Murphy et al., 1998). Powell (2003) suggested the collective term *goodness criteria* as appropriate for assessing validity and reliability of Delphi studies while Skulmoski et al. (2007) promoted use of an audit trail to improve methodological rigor and substantiate trustworthiness of Delphi studies. Three strategies were used in this study to address reliability and validity: (a) pilot testing of the round one questionnaire, (b) verification of coding in round one with an independent rater, and (c) maintaining a researcher's audit trail outlining key theoretical and methodological decisions.

Time Line

The time line for implementation of the study is outlined in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Timeline for implementation of study.



Assumptions and Presuppositions

Several assumptions underlie this study. First, it was assumed certain factors can enhance or inhibit TOL for child welfare workers and a structured group process would identify them. A second assumption was that expert panel members have experience with TOL and are able and willing to share opinions. A third assumption was expert panel members are interested in increasing TOL for child welfare workers. A final assumption was increasing TOL rates will result in improved performance for child welfare workers. This study sought to better understand the role of individual, instructional and organizational factors that support TOL for child welfare workers.

Summary

Chapter 3 reviewed methodology and methods for this study. This study sought to structure communication of a panel of child welfare experts to determine what individual, training and organizational factors enhance transfer of learning for child welfare workers.

The intention was to expand understanding of TOL and child welfare training and contributed to professional literature. An increase in understanding TOL in child welfare training could benefit child welfare workers, child welfare organizations and families and children receiving services.

CHAPTER 4

Results

This study was conducted to explore what child welfare experts identify as key factors to enhance transfer of learning (TOL) from child welfare training to child welfare practice. Data were collected using a Delphi approach organized around individual, training, and organizational factors impacting transfer of learning. The study consisted of three rounds with each round building on data from the previous round. Responses were analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. In round one panel members were asked to think about their training experiences and answer a series of questions about factors affecting TOL. In round two panel members were provided a synthesized list of round one responses and they were asked to rate each factor in terms of importance to TOL. In round three, panelists were presented the top rated factors from round two and asked to choose their top six factors and operationalize two of those. Results of this study are presented in this chapter. Expert panel demographics, a summary of data collected in each round of the study, and analysis of data collected are included.

Expert Panel

Invited expert panel members held a position of Child Welfare Chief or were recommended as an expert by another panel member. Following an in-person presentation, 51 experts were identified as possible panel members. An email was sent to all potential panel members inviting them to participate. The invitation outlined the purpose of the study, methodology and estimated time requirements. Of the 51 experts invited, 34 agreed to participate and provided responses to round one of the survey. The mean age of panelists was 47 years (ranging from 29-66) and the mean years of experience in child welfare was 18.4.

Most panelists held a master's degree (79%) and two held a doctorate. The majority of participants were female (74%) and Caucasian (91%). The gender and race composition of this sample is reflective of the geographic area included in the study and the profession of social work. The state of Idaho is 93.8% white (United States Census Bureau, 2012) and 80.3% of social workers are women (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013).

Process

This study was supported by the administration for Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) and the organization contracted to provide training for IDHW. Key supporters verbalized importance of the study and provided access to child welfare employees. The initial study presentation took place in Boise, Idaho at a regularly scheduled program meeting which included Chiefs of Social Work for Child Welfare, Child Welfare Program Specialists, and Central Office personnel. Following a study presentation, experts were invited to participate and identify other experts. An email generated through Qualtrics Research Suite data analysis system was distributed four days later. The email outlined consent to participate and included an electronic link to round one of the survey.

Relying on survey distribution through the Qualtrics system created problems for panelists at IDHW (a majority of panelists). One day after the initial survey distribution it was discovered no recipients at IDHW received the email. Information technology assistance at IDHW and Qualtrics were unable to determine why IDHW email did not accept emails from the Qualtrics system. Ultimately, contact information was downloaded from Qualtrics to a spreadsheet allowing development of a merge document and distribution of emails containing consent, instructions, and a survey link for each expert panelist. This email

problem caused a slight delay and resulted in the closing date for round one of the survey to fall on December 26.

The winter holiday presented a dilemma for survey distribution as vacation time is often schedule during this time of year. Round one of the survey ending December 26 may have contributed to a lack of time for panelists to respond. For each round, the survey link was made available for ten days. A reminder email was sent to non-responding panelists five days after the first email. Ten days were allowed between each round to analyze data.

Inter-scorer Reliability – Round One

Inter-scorer reliability was determined by the researcher and a qualified colleague who both independently coded round one data and compared rates. The researcher began by coding unique responses associated with each question into aggregate categories. For 25% of the unique responses under each question, Observer B assigned each response to an aggregate category. Inter-scorer agreement was determined by [agreements/(agreements+disagreements)] x 100 = percent of agreement. Initial percent of agreement did not meet MacQueen's (2008) suggested threshold of 85% on three of the six questions. Data were further reviewed and coded, identifying problem areas and making revisions resulting in a final agreement of above 92% for each question. Table 3 presents initial and final agreement percentages.

Table 3
Inter-Scorer Reliability Agreement Rates

Research Question Prompt	Initial Coding		Final Coding	
	Agreement/total codes reviewed	Percent of agreement	Agreement/total codes reviewed	Percent of agreement
Individual/Enhance	16/17	94%	17/17	100%
Individual/Inhibit	18/21	86%	20/21	95%
Training/Enhance	18/24	75%	22/24	92%
Training/Inhibit	17/21	81%	20/21	95%
Organizational/Enhance	12/15	80%	15/15	100%
Organizational/Inhibit	22/25	88%	25/25	100%

Round One: Casting a Wide Net

The purpose of round one was to generate a wide variety of expert opinions about what factors impact transfer of learning. At the beginning of round one panelists were provided with an informed consent statement which required confirmation and agreement before accessing the survey. This section was followed by a set of demographic questions including, highest degree, years of experience in child welfare practice, job title, age, gender and ethnic group. Next, panelists were asked to reflect back to trainings they participated in and trainings their supervisees participated in, and answer questions about factors that

enhance or inhibit transfer of learning. Panelists were given the opportunity to provide up to six responses under each prompt.

Thirty-four panelists completed the first round of the Delphi providing 565 unique responses. The semi-structured survey consisted of six prompts organized around three research questions: (1) What *individual learner factors* affect transfer of learning for child welfare workers? (2) What *training factors* affect transfer of learning for child welfare workers? And (3) What *organizational factors* affect transfer of learning for child welfare workers?

An example of the round one survey sent to expert panel members can be found in Appendix C. For each research question, panelist responses were organized into a comprehensive list and responses of a like nature were combined into a single, aggregated response. Coding of unique responses into aggregated responses was checked at this stage by Observer B as suggested by Melpignano and Collins (2003). Discrepancies were evaluated and changes were made based on feedback and discussion with Observer B. Round one produced a total of 190 aggregated responses. Aggregated responses were further combined into categories to organize data into manageable portions for round two, where participants were asked to rate aggregated responses by level of importance. A total of 30 categories were identified.

Individual factors from round one included 25 aggregated responses for factors that inhibit TOL and 36 aggregated responses for factors that enhance TOL. Training factors from round one included 29 aggregated responses for factors inhibiting TOL and 36 aggregated responses for factors enhancing TOL. Finally, organization factors from round one included 34 factors inhibiting TOL and 30 factors enhancing TOL. Unique response rates based on the

original prompt for each category are broken out by aggregated response and category rates for each original prompt. Table 4 presents numbers of unique and aggregated responses for round one.

Table 4
Response Rates for Round One

Prompt	**Unique Responses**	**Aggregated Responses**	**Categories**
Individual factors that Inhibit TOL	86	25	4
Individual factors that Enhance TOL	98	36	4
Training factors that Inhibit TOL	91	29	4
Training factors that Enhance TOL	107	36	8
Organization factors that Inhibit TOL	93	34	4
Organizational factors that Enhance TOL	90	30	6
Total	565	190	30

Round one responses were used as the basis for the round two survey (Skulmoski et al., 2007). However, to make round two survey manageable for the panelists, some items represented on both lists (enhance and inhibit) under each prompt were combined under the enhanced heading. For example, under the individual factors prompt, “not relevant” was identified by panelists under inhibiting factors and “relevant” was identified by panelists under enhancing factors. When round one data was presented in round two, “topic is relevant

to child welfare practice" was listed under individual factors that enhance TOL and dropped from the list of individual factors that inhibit TOL. Thus, for each prompt (individual factors that inhibit/enhance; training factors that inhibit/enhance; organization factors that inhibit/enhance) a list of aggregated responses was developed that included representation of each unique response provided in round one.

Round Two: Narrowing the Focus

In round two of the Delphi, all aggregated responses were organized by original prompt and coded category, and then presented to the expert panel. The round two survey was distributed to all 34 respondents from round one ten days after the closing of round one. A reminder email was sent to all non-responders after five days.

In round two, panelists were asked to rate each aggregated response on a Likert-type scale reflecting their opinion of the level of importance to TOL. The scale choices consisted of four options including, "not at all important," "somewhat important," "very important," and "extremely important." Because the original questions each contained factors that inhibit and enhance TOL, items listed on the "inhibit" list had reverse meaning on the Likert Scale. A rating of "extremely important" on the inhibit list meant the item was "extremely inhibiting." Panelists were also given an opportunity to comment on anything pertaining to the original prompt (for example, individual factors that enhance transfer of learning). Panelists were given 10 days to complete the survey. Twenty-nine experts completed round two.

Likert results. Data collected for round two was analyzed using Microsoft Excel data analysis software. Panelists' ratings of each aggregated item were assigned a value corresponding to the option chosen on the Likert scale. "Not at all important" was assigned a

value of 1, "somewhat important" was assigned a value of 2, "very important" was assigned a value of 3, and "extremely important" was assigned a value of 4. As recommended by Hsu and Sandford (2007) and Melpignano and Collins (2003), descriptive statistics were calculated to determine central tendency and level of dispersion. Items achieving a mean rating of 3.0 or above were captured for inclusion in round three.

Individual learner factors that enhance TOL. Panelists were asked to rate the importance of identified individual learner factors enhancing TOL. Categories determined from round one included: individual trainee characteristics, occurrences approximate to training, trainee disposition, nature or character, and training content. The category *individual trainee characteristics* was defined as qualities or abilities inherent in or demonstrated by the individual trainee. Within this category, motivation to learn, willingness to try something new, ability to generalize, critical thinking skills, interest in the topic and ability to self-reflect were all identified as very important or extremely important. The category, *occurrences approximate to training* was defined as events happening before, during, or soon after training, and included items largely related to supervisor and colleague support and a trainee's opportunity and willingness to apply or practice new learning. Panelists also included "real-world" examples of new concepts as an important factor under this category. The category *trainee disposition, nature, or character* was defined as a trainee's values, expectations, desires, feelings or perceptions and included items that, upon reflection, may have been included in individual trainee characteristics. This category included some new factors such as feeling valued by the agency and desire to serve and ability to empathize with families. These factors are not typically identified in TOL literature. Finally, the category *training content* was defined as ideas or topics included in the training curriculum and

contained factors related to the importance of training topics being relevant to child welfare practice and interesting.

The two highest rated individual factors enhancing TOL were: supervision that reinforces new learning (M=3.76); and support from colleagues, supervisors, and the agency (M=3.69). The third highest rated factor was motivation to learn (M=3.62). Table 5 presents individual factors that enhance transfer of learning with a mean rating of 3.0 or above.

Table 5
Individual Factors from Round Two that Enhance Transfer of Learning

Category	Factor	Mean
Individual Trainee Characteristics	Motivation to learn	3.62
	Willingness to try something new, apply new concepts, make mistakes, examine new perspectives	3.24
	Ability to generalize learning to practice	3.21
	Critical thinking skills	3.17
	Interest in topic	3.10
	Ability to self-reflect	3.10
Occurrences Approximate to Training	Supervision that reinforces new learning	3.76
	Support from colleagues, supervisors, and the agency	3.69
	Real-world examples of application of new concepts	3.59
	Trainee opportunity/ability to apply new learning	3.52
	Trainee's opportunity and willingness to practice new learning	3.45
Trainee Disposition, Nature or Character	Feeling valued by the agency	3.24
	Perception of self as lifelong learner	3.21
	Values such as desire to serve or ability to empathize with families	3.07
Training Content	Topic is relevant to child welfare practice.	3.59
	Topic is interesting	3.07

Individual learner factors that inhibit TOL. Panelists were asked to rate the importance of identified individual learner factors inhibiting TOL. Categories determined

from round one include: systems/environmental issues; relationships; and individual trainee characteristics. The category *systems/environmental issues* was defined as, factors related to practice context that are influenced by the organization or agency. Panelists identified a lack of congruence between training and practice, lack of time to attend training or apply new concepts, distractions that prevent focus at training and a lack of follow-up as important factors under this category. The category *relationships* was defined as contextual elements that include some link between individuals. Lack of supervisor support, lack of commitment to clients and lack of trust in supervisor were identified as inhibiting TOL. The category *individual trainee characteristics* referred to qualities or abilities inherent in, or demonstrated by, the individual trainee. In this category, panelists identified trainees who lack a clear vision of practice, the agency, or professional development or trainees who lack self-reflection skills as inhibiting to TOL.

The individual learner factor with the highest rating for inhibiting TOL was lack of supervisor support with a mean of 3.69. The next highest rated factors were lack of commitment to clients (M=3.52) and lack of congruence between training and practice (M=3.38). Table 6 presents individual factors inhibiting transfer of learning with a mean rating of 3.0 or above.

Table 6
Individual Factors that Inhibit Transfer of Learning from Round Two

Category	Factor	Mean
Systems/ Environmental Issues	Lack of congruence between training and practice	3.38
	Lack release time to attend training	3.29
	Lack of time to attend training or apply new concepts	3.28
	Distractions that prevent focus while at training.	3.24
	Lack of follow up following training	3.24
Relationships	Lack of supervisor support	3.69
	Lack of commitment to clients	3.52
	Lack of trust in supervisor	3.28
Individual Trainee Characteristics	Trainee lacks a clear vision of practice, agency or professional development	3.34
	Trainee lacks self-reflection skills	3.07

Training factors that enhance TOL. Panelists were asked to rate the importance of training factors enhancing TOL. Categories determined from round one included: individual trainer characteristics, occurrences approximate to training, curriculum, training approach/delivery, training alignment with practice, training plan, and individual trainee characteristics. The category *individual trainer characteristics* was defined as qualities or abilities inherent in, or demonstrated by the individual trainer. In this category, a trainer who is experienced in child welfare practice and is interesting/exciting/energetic were identified as very important or extremely important. The category *occurrences approximate to training* was defined as events happening before, during or soon after training. Within this category supervisor support, follow-up by supervisor/mentor, opportunities to practice, application of new content, and support from colleagues were rated as important or very important. The category *curriculum* was defined as the content, format and delivery of training. Within this category relevant training topics, adult learning techniques are infused into training approach,

repetition of key concepts, and training grounded in research were identified as very important or extremely important to transfer of learning.

The category *training approach and delivery*, was defined as methods and techniques used in training and delivery. Factors identified as very important or extremely important in this category were training includes examples of application and training uses real-world examples. The category *training alignment with practice* was defined as the extent to which training concepts presented in training reflect actual practice. Within this category, training is relevant to practice and continuity between training and practice were rated by panelists as very or extremely important. The category *training plan* was defined as elements of training constituting training design. Within this category, trainees have opportunities to observe modeling of new concepts, release time from regular job responsibilities and training space is comfortable were rated as 3.0 or above by the expert panel. The final category under training factors enhancing TOL was *individual trainee characteristics* and was defined as qualities or abilities inherent in, or demonstrated by, the individual trainee. This category included critical thinking skills and trainees are committed to changing practice as important.

The two highest rated training factors were: training is relevant to practice; and continuity between training and practice; both with means of 3.66. The third highest rated factor was curriculum is relevant (M=3.62). Follow-up and support were also seen as important under training factors enhancing TOL as reflected in mean scores for supervisor support (M=3.59), follow-up by supervisor/mentor (M=3.48), and support form colleagues (M=3.07). Table 7 presents training factors enhancing transfer of learning with a mean rating of 3.0 or above.

Table 7
Training Factors that Enhance Transfer of Learning from Round Two

Category	Factor	Mean
Individual Trainer Characteristics	Trainer is experienced in child welfare practice	3.38
	Trainer is interesting/exciting/energetic	3.24
	Trainer is organized	3.21
Occurrences Approximate to Training	Supervisor support	3.59
	Follow-up by supervisor/mentor	3.48
	Opportunities to practice	3.41
	Application of new content	3.34
	Support from colleagues	3.07
Curriculum	Curriculum is relevant	3.62
	Adult learning techniques are infused into training approach	3.41
	Repetition of key concepts	3.1
	Training is grounded in research	3.07
Training Approach/Delivery	Training includes examples of application	3.52
	Training uses real-world examples	3.48
Training Alignment with Practice	Training is relevant to practice	3.66
	Continuity between training and practice	3.66
Training Plan	Trainees have opportunities to observe modeling of new concepts	3.41
	Release time from regular job responsibilities	3.31
	Training space is physically comfortable	3.03
Individual Trainee Characteristics	Critical thinking skills	3.28
	Trainees are committed to changing practice	3.21

Training factors that inhibit TOL. Panelists were asked to rate the importance of training factors inhibiting transfer of learning. Categories determined from round one were: training environment; training approach/delivery; and training plan/approach. The category *training environment* was defined as characteristics of the setting where training takes place.

Distractions was the one factor identified as very or extremely important in this category. The category *training approach/delivery* was defined as methods and techniques used in training delivery. Within this category, training does not build in transfer strategies, lack of visual aids and training includes lecture only were identified as very or extremely inhibiting TOL. The category *training plan/approach* was defined as elements of training that constitute training design and planning. Within this category, no clear organizational plan and heavy workload were rated 3.0 or above.

The training factor identified as most inhibiting TOL was distractions with a mean of 3.26. Other items identified as very or extremely inhibiting can be combined under the theme Training Approach/Delivery/Plan and included "training does not build in transfer strategies" (M=3.21), "lack of visual aids" (M=3.1), "training is lecture only" (M=3.0), "no clear organizational training plan" (M=3.31) and a "heavy workload" (M=3.14). Table 8 presents training factors inhibiting transfer of learning with a mean rating of 3.0 or above.

Table 8
Training Factors that Inhibit Transfer of Learning from Round Two

Category	**Factor**	**Mean**
Training Environment	Distractions	3.26
Training Approach/Delivery	Training does not build in transfer strategies	3.21
	Lack of visual aids in training	3.1
	Training includes lecture only	3.0
Training Plan/Approach	There is no clear organizational training plan	3.31
	Heavy workload	3.14

Organizational factors that enhance TOL. For the question concerning organizational factors that enhance TOL, six categories were determined. Categories included: systems/environmental issues; occurrences approximate to training; supervisory

context; follow-up; relationship/trust; and training environment. The category *systems/environmental issues* was defined as elements related to practice context that are influenced by the organization or agency. This category contained six factors with a mean of 3.0 or more. Three factors focused on agency elements such as support and clearly articulated expectations. Two factors focused on continuity between training and practice. A notable factor was expanding learning to external partners. This factor is unique to child welfare because the nature of the profession requires working in partnership with professionals from other disciplines such as law enforcement, education, pediatricians, and foster parents.

The category *occurrences approximate to training* included seven items with a mean of 3.0 or more. Factors included under this category were: opportunities to practice and apply new skills, real world examples, observation of modeling in training and practice, release time from regular job responsibilities, sharing of application success stories, and multiple agency levels involved in training and follow-up.

The category *supervisory context* was defined as elements related to supervisory support, skills or relationships. This category included: agency supporting the supervisor in developing supervisor skills; supervisory support of trainees; follow-up by supervisor; and genuine care between supervisors and colleagues.

The category *follow-up* was defined as events following training. This category included: follow-up with colleagues; follow-up that seeks trainee feedback; and follow-up training to reinforce learning. The category *relationship/trust* was defined as contextual elements that include some link between individuals. Within this category, a trainee feeling valued by supervisor/colleagues/agency, support from colleagues, and trust/trusting relationships were identified as very or extremely important. The final category, *training*

environment was defined as characteristics of the setting where training takes place and contained one factor, training environment free from distractions as important.

The organizational factors enhancing TOL rated as most important were: continuity between training and practice (M=3.76); agency supports supervisors in developing supervisory skills (M=3.72); and supervisory support of trainees (M=3.72). These are commonly identified factors in TOL. However, some new factors were also identified under organizational factors enhancing TOL. Notable factors identified were trust/trusting relationships (M=3.03), genuine care between supervisors and colleagues (M=3.41), and expanding learning to external partners (M=3.14). Table 9 presents organizational factors enhancing transfer of learning with a mean rating of 3.0 or above.

Table 9
Organizational Factors that Enhance Transfer of Learning from Round Two

Category	Factor	Mean
Systems/ Environmental Issues	Continuity between training and practice	3.76
	Agency supports training and new learning	3.55
	The agency clearly articulates expectations	3.45
	New learning reinforces current practice models	3.34
	Agency has elements of an Organizational Learning Culture	3.17
	Expanding learning to external partners	3.14
Occurrences Approximate to Training	Opportunities for application of new learning	3.69
	Real-world examples of how new learning can be used with families	3.59
	Opportunities to practice new skills	3.52
	Observation of modeling during training and in practice	3.28
	Release time from regular job responsibilities	3.24
	Agency promotes sharing of application success stories	3.1
	Multiple agency levels involved in training and follow-up	3.1
Supervisory Context	Agency supports supervisors in developing supervisory skills	3.72
	Supervisory support of trainees	3.72
	Follow-up by supervisor	3.52
	Genuine care between supervisors and colleagues	3.41
Follow-up	Follow-up with colleagues	3.14
	Follow-up that seeks trainee feedback on effectiveness	3.14
	Follow-up training to reinforce learning	3.1
Relationship/ Trust	Trainee feeling valued by supervisor/colleagues/agency	3.59
	Support from colleagues	3.17
	Trust/trusting relationships	3.03
Training Environment	Training environment free from distractions	3.34

Organizational factors that inhibit TOL. Panelists were asked to rate the importance of organizational factors that inhibit TOL. Categories determined from round one included *systems/environmental issues, work context, supervision, and training content*. The category *systems/environmental issues* was defined as elements related to practice context that are influenced by the organization or agency and was the largest category with ten factors. Factors included: too many changes at once, inconsistent message between organization levels and external partners, lack of organizational plan to support new knowledge, external partners with power but no common understanding of child welfare practice, upper management does not participate in training, training upper management but not enough line staff, organization does not articulate a clear vision, closed system, education not valued by the organization, and top-down approach.

The category *work context* was defined as circumstances impacting a trainee's practice. Within in this category: heavy workload, high turnover, no opportunity to practice, limited resources to implement change, and lack of time were identified as very or extremely inhibiting to TOL. The category *supervision* was defined as elements related to supervisory roles or skills. Within this category, supervisor/leadership unaware of training content, and lack of supervisor skill to provide supervision, were rated as important. The category *training content,* defined as ideas or topics contained in the training curriculum, identified topic is not relevant as the only factor with a rating of 3.0 or more.

Organizational factors inhibiting TOL rated highest were supervisor/leadership unaware of training content (M=3.59), lack of supervisor skill to provide supervision (M=3.55), and heavy workload (M=3.55). Table 10 presents organizational factors inhibiting transfer of learning with a mean rating of 3.0 or above.

Table 10
Organizational Factors that Inhibit Transfer of Learning from Round Two

Category	Factor	Mean
Systems/ Environmental Issues	Too many changes at once	3.41
	Inconsistent message between organization levels and external partners	3.38
	Lack of organizational plan to support new knowledge	3.38
	External partners with power but no common understanding of child welfare practice	3.28
	Upper management does not participate in training	3.24
	Training upper management, not enough line staff	3.17
	Organization does not articulate a clear vision	3.14
	Closed system	3.1
	Education not valued by the organization	3.1
	Top-down approach	3
Work Context	Heavy workload	3.55
	High turnover	3.5
	No opportunity to practice (real or perceived)	3.45
	Limited resources to implement change	3.34
	Lack of time	3.28
Supervision	Supervisor/leadership unaware of training content	3.59
	Lack of supervisor skill to provide supervision	3.55
Training Content	Topic is not relevant	3.45

Qualitative outcomes. Round two included an opportunity for panelists to comment or clarify their thoughts or responses. A total of 34 comments were made indicating panelist's engagement in the process. Factors presented in round two were largely composed of a few words such as "ability to self-reflect." Some comments reflected panelists' desire to expand descriptions of factors. For example, one panelist commented, "Readiness to learn may cover this statement. Individual factors may vary day to day or week to week depending on work load demands. One's ability or readiness to learn may be influenced by

preoccupation with work responsibilities or disruptions during training due to work responsibilities." Some comments sought to emphasize what the panelist thought was important beyond assigning a rating. For example, one panelist commented, "Predisposition to being a continuous learner and a capacity to be reflective are critical." Some comments sought to add factors to the list, such as, "I believe 'group think' also inhibits transfer of learning." A comment made on the format of the survey, "These 'inhibiting' items are challenging to rate because of the 'negative' twist" was taken into consideration and in the following round all inhibiting and enhancing items were combined under the corresponding prompt. For example, individual factors inhibiting TOL and individual factors enhancing TOL were combined under individual factors impacting TOL.

Round Three: Ranking and Describing Factors

Round three of the Delphi included factors from round two that achieved a mean rating of 3.0 or above. A rating of 3.0 or above corresponds to a Likert scale rating of "very important" or "extremely important." At this point in the study, categories for some items were changed to achieve a better fit. For example, "trainees are committed to changing practice" was initially identified under "training factors." This factor had a better fit in the "individual factors" question, therefor it was moved in round three. In addition, factors identified as enhancing and inhibiting under each original question were combined into one list of factors impacting TOL under the original question. For example, under individual factors, lack of follow-up following training was originally identified as an inhibiting factor. In round three, follow-up following training was moved to individual factors impacting TOL. Round three contained 16 individual factors, 18 training factors, and 30 organizational factors achieving a mean rating of 3.0 or above from the previous round.

Round three was distributed to the 29 expert panel members who completed round two. The survey was emailed ten days after round two ended and closed ten days later. A reminder email was sent after five days to all panelists who had not yet responded. All 29 panelists completed the round three survey.

In round three panelists were asked to identify the top six factors impacting TOL for each group of individual, training, and organizational factors listed. Panelists ranked factors in order of importance with 1 being most important. Panelists were also asked to choose two factors from each category and provide a behavioral description of those factors. Finally, panel members were given an opportunity to comment on the survey process or any of the data presented so far.

Rank ordered data gathered in round three were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The mean rank of each factor was calculated by averaging the rank assigned by panelists and therefore does not reflect the number of times the item was chosen. Note that a lower mean rank indicates a higher level of importance because items are assigned a number based on rank (1 = most important). Because panelists were asked to choose and rank order their top six factors from a list with 16, 18 and 30 choices respectively, this question yielded two important pieces of data; (1) how many times a factor was chosen for inclusion on a top six list, and (2) the rank order assigned to the chosen top six factors. To capture both pieces of information in one group score, ranks were transformed into scores as outlined by Abeyasekera, Lawson-McDowall and Wilson (2000). Abeyasekera et al. (2000) reported that when specific items being ranked differ between respondents, ranks can be transformed to scores with a zero score for items omitted during ranking. This scoring system results in average scores being representative of the participants as a whole. For this study, all factors

ranked 1 were assigned a score of 6, factors ranked 2 were assigned a score of 5, factors ranked 3 were assigned a score of 4, factors ranked 4 were assigned a score of 3, factors ranked 5 were assigned a score of 2, factors ranked 6 were assigned a score of 1 and factors not chosen were assigned a score of zero. The scores for each factor were summed and averaged to obtain a group score. Tables 12, 13, and 14 display the factor, number of times it was chosen for a top six list, mean rank of that factor, and group score for each item.

Following completion of the study, final analysis was conducted to determine level of agreement between panelists. Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (aka Kendall's W) was calculated to establish level of rater agreement on importance of factors. Kendall's W is a non-parametric statistic used for assessing agreement among raters. The resulting test statistic is between 0, indicating no trend in agreement, and 1, indicating complete agreement. According to guidelines for interpreting Kendall's W provided by Schmidt (1997), statistics for this study indicated weak agreement (W = .352) on importance of individual trainee factors, strong agreement (W = .716) on training factors and moderate agreement (W = .55) on organizational factors. Overall agreement on all factors was moderate to strong (W = .615).

In the qualitative (description) portion of round three, panel members were asked to choose two factors from each category and provide an operationalized definition of each factor. Panelists chose 15 individual factors, 13 training factors, and 22 organizational factors to operationalize. This section produced copious amounts of qualitative data as panelists attempted to clarify meaning they ascribed to specific factors. The qualitative data was analyzed and operational definitions were developed for several factors under each category (individual, training and organizational factors) using key elements identified by the experts.

Ranking individual factor data. The two individual factors chosen most often for inclusion in top six lists were "trainee's motivation to learn" and "trainee opportunity/ability to apply new learning" each having been chosen by 20 panel members. Highest group scores reflected a similar outcome as number of times chosen for a top six list with motivation to learn and trainee opportunity/ability to apply new learning topping the list. All original items were chosen by at least one panel member as a top six factor. Table 11 displays round three mean ranks and group scores for each individual factor impacting TOL.

Table 11
Individual Factors Impacting Transfer of Learning: Mean Rank and Group Scores

Individual Factor	# of Times Chosen	Mean Rank	Group Score
Trainee's motivation to learn	20	3.1	83
Trainee opportunity/ability to apply new learning	20	3.45	77
Critical thinking skills	15	3.0	60
Trainee's willingness to try something new, apply new concepts	12	3.33	46
Trainee is committed to changing practice	13	3.54	45
Trainee's ability to generalize learning to practice	14	4.93	33
Trainee's perception of self as a lifelong learner	7	3.29	26
Follow up following training	10	4.5	25
Trainee's ability to self-reflect	10	4.7	23
Trainee's interest in the topic	5	5.0	19
Trainee's commitment to clients	4	3.25	15
Trainee feeling valued by the agency	6	4.4	13
Trainee's values such as desire to serve or ability to empathize	4	4.0	12
Trainee's trust in supervisor	4	4.66	7

Defining individual factors. The expert panel provided operationalized definitions for 15 different individual factors impacting TOL. Initial analysis of operationalized factors revealed three factors that could be combined into one. Trainee opportunity/ability to apply new learning, trainee's opportunity and willingness to practice, and trainee's willingness to

try something new/apply new concepts, were originally presented as separate items because the terms opportunity, willingness, and ability seemed to imply different concepts. However, in reviewing definitions provided by panelists, common elements emerged. Therefore, these three factors were collapsed into one factor titled, trainee opportunity/willingness/ability to apply new concepts to practice. For purposes of this study, the top three (mean rank and group score) individual factors were chosen for development of an operational definition inclusive of key elements identified by panelists and presented in the next section.

Motivation to learn. The factor, trainee's motivation to learn, received the highest group ranking for individual factors and is commonly identified in TOL literature as important. Seven panelists chose this factor to operationalize. Several key elements were noted by the expert panel. These included: (a) trainee explores concepts taught, (b) trainee explores related literature, (c) trainee is able to verbalize main points of training, (d) trainee verbalizes interest in topic, (e) trainee is curious, (f) trainee verbalizes desire to attend training;, (g) trainee has "can do" attitude, (h) trainee is committed to clients and their work, (i) trainee identifies desired areas of new learning, (j) desired new learning is included in "learning objectives" on annual review, (k) after attending training, trainee gives presentation to peers, (l) trainee is attentive during training, (m) trainee avoids distractions by planning ahead for coverage, and (n) trainee seeks feedback regarding implementation of new skills.

These key elements were combined into a three part description of motivation to learn: Trainees who are motivated to learn demonstrate the following behaviors: (1) trainee demonstrates curiosity by identifying desired areas of new learning by verbalizing interest in topic and desire to attend training. Desired new learning is included as "learning objectives" on annual review, (2) during training trainee is attentive and avoids distractions from regular

job responsibilities by arranging coverage in advance, and (3) following training, trainee is able to verbalize main points of training, explore the concepts taught, expand learning by examining related literature, and seek feedback regarding implementation.

Trainee opportunity, willingness, and ability to apply new concepts. The factor trainee opportunity/willingness/ability to apply new concepts to practice was ranked second most important individual factor for TOL by the expert panel. Key elements included: (a) trainee verbalized the skill and when they will apply it, (b) trainee asks for feedback from client, supervisor, colleagues, (c) supervisor support, (d) colleague support, (e) practice experience repeated over time, (f) individual supervision, (g) apply new concepts to specific practice situation, (h) supervisor prompts discussion, (i) collaboration between supervisor/trainee, (j) trainee implements new practice, (k) trainee identifies plan with supervisor, (l) trainee reports outcomes of practice, (m) specific timeline for demonstration, (n) trainee identifies use of new skill, (o) trainee identifies readiness to apply new skill, (p) critical examination of effort to use skill and outcomes, (q) supervisor provides opportunity to practice and receive feedback, and (r) follow up coaching by supervisor/agency leaders.

These key elements were combined into a four part operational definition of the individual factor opportunity/willingness/ability to apply new concepts to practice. Opportunity/willingness/ability to apply new concepts is present when: (a) in collaborative supervision, the supervisor provides opportunities to practice by prompting discussion of trained skills, (b) the trainee verbalizes readiness to practice new skill and identify a plan to apply that includes the new skill, practice situation it will applied to and a specific time line, (c) the trainee implements new practice, reports outcomes to supervisor and colleagues, critically examines their efforts, and seeks feedback from supervisor, colleagues, and clients,

and (d) this process is repeated over time with follow-up coaching provided by the supervisor and/or agency leaders.

Critical thinking skills. The individual factor, critical thinking skills, received a group score of 60 and a group rank of third most important individual factor for TOL. Three panelists chose this factor to operationalize. Key elements identified included: (a) trainee is able to articulate, (b) with supervisors, peers and colleagues, (c) potentially different perspective for all parties, (d) possible outcomes of actions, (e) be willing to accept alternate explanations based on world view/perspective/experience of all parties, (f) understand core practice concepts, (g) apply to real life situations, (h) develop a pattern of engagement which advances practice past what is "required," (i) ask questions that enhance understanding of individual and their environment, and (j) ability to understand meaning behind the processes rather than just completing tasks. These key elements were combined into a two part description of critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills are demonstrated when (a) trainees are able to articulate with supervisors, peers and colleagues potentially different perspectives for all parties. Trainees can anticipate possible outcomes of actions and are willing to accept alternate explanations based on differing world view, perspective and experience of all parties, and (b) trainees develop a pattern of engagement which advances practice past what is "required" and ask questions that enhance understanding of the individual and their environment.

Ranking training factor data. The training factors chosen by panelists for inclusion in their top six list most often were "supervisor follow up and support" and "training curriculum is relevant to practice" with 22 and 20 members choosing each respectively. Each

of the listed factors was chosen at least once. Mean ranks and group scores were calculated for each factor and are displayed in Table 12.

Table 12
Training Factor Mean Rank and Group Scores

Training Factor	# of Times Chosen	Mean Rank	Group Score
Training curriculum is relevant to practice	20	2.45	91
Supervisor follow up and support	22	3.32	81
Training includes examples of real-world application	15	3.47	53
Continuity between training concepts and practice	11	2.27	52
Opportunities to apply and practice new concepts	14	3.43	50
Adult Learning principles are infused into training (visual aids, variety of approaches, acknowledge experience of participants)	12	3.33	44
Trainees have opportunities to observe modeling of new concepts	11	3.73	36
Training builds in transfer strategies	6	2.83	25
Release time from regular job responsibilities	10	4.6	24
Trainer is experienced in child welfare practice	7	4.43	18
Key concepts are reiterated throughout training	6	4.17	17
Observation of modeling during training and practice	6	4.17	17
Training is grounded in research	5	3.6	17
Distractions are minimized	7	4.86	15
Trainer is interesting/exciting/energetic	4	4	12
Training content is interesting	3	3.67	10
There is a clear organizational training plan	2	5	4
Training space is comfortable	1	6	1

Defining training factors. Panelists provided operationalized definitions of 13 different training factors impacting TOL. Initial analysis of operationalized factors revealed two factors that could be combined into one. Training curriculum is relevant to practice and, continuity between training concepts and practice, were originally presented as separate items because the terms relevant and continuity seemed to imply different concepts. However, in reviewing definitions provided by panelists, it was apparent that the concepts are closely

related. Therefore, these two factors were combined into one factor title: training curriculum and practice are reflective of each other. For purposes of this study, the top three (mean rank and group score) training factors were chosen for development of an operational definition inclusive of key elements identified by panelists.

Curriculum is relevant to practice. The top group-scored factor was training curriculum is relevant to practice and was combined with the factor, continuity between training concepts and practice. Key elements were: (a) training received reflects experience in field, (b) practice is consistent across different locations, (c) training aligns with work responsibilities, (d) opportunity to apply new learning to current workload, (e) trainees can verbalize how curriculum is relevant, (f) new learning enhances or impacts daily responsibilities, (g) coach/mentor/supervisor are able to apply concepts to specific cases and ask trainees to do the same, (h) training is informed by practice, and (i) practice is informed by training.

These key elements were combined to develop a definition for the new factor: training curriculum and practice reflect each other. The resulting operationalized definition has three parts: (a) training informs practice and practice informs training so trainees experience congruence between training and practice, (b) training impacts daily work responsibilities so training can be applied to current workload, and (c) coach/mentor/supervisor and trainees, in all geographic locations apply new concepts to specific cases.

Supervisor follow-up and support. The factor, supervisor follow-up and support, received the second highest group score for training factors and is often identified in TOL literature as important. Fifteen panelists chose to operationalize this factor. Several key elements were noted by panelists. These included: (a) trainees can cite examples of

curriculum use, (b) set goals for new learning, define success, assess progress, observe and provide feedback, (c) trainee accompanied in the field by supervisor to perform skill or have it modeled for them, (d) supervisor models and applies concepts to staffings, case-specific issues, and overall practice;, (e) supervisor has trainee apply new concepts to specific cases, (f) supervisors inquire, provide opportunity, encourage behaviors and provide additional learning, (g) trainee and supervisor reflect on training, (h) supervisor identifies and discusses strengths and weaknesses, (i) supervisor discusses ways to integrate new learning into practice, (j) supervisor praises positive outcomes, (k) supervisor reinforces changes, (l) supervisor identifies barriers to change, (m) weekly individual and monthly group supervision that includes review of new concepts, (n) supervisor assigns cases that allow practice of new skills and feedback on performance, and (o) trainee verbalizes new learning and plan to implement.

These key elements were combined into a two part operationalized definition of supervisor follow-up and support. Supervisor follow-up and support is present when: (a) structured weekly and monthly supervision includes supervisors guiding reflective discussion of new concepts, plans for case-specific implementation, observation, feedback and modeling, and (b) supervisors reinforce training with praise for positive outcomes, identification of barriers to change, and additional training opportunities if needed.

Training includes real-world examples. The training factor, training includes examples of real-world application, received a group score of 53 and a group rank of third most important individual factor for TOL. Six panelists chose this factor to operationalize. Some key elements identified included: (a) multiple opportunities to observe skills from the training being modeled by multiple individuals, (b) trainees formally present a case as part of

training, then the trainer and training participants provide feedback on application of training concepts, (c) training includes personal stories or a panel of individuals who have experience with the training concepts, (d) training includes scenarios/case presentations, (e) during and following training, trainees should practice, be observed, and coached on new concepts, and (f) training includes demonstration of application with diverse clientele.

These key elements were combined into a three part operationalized definition of training includes examples of real-world application. Training includes examples of real-world application when, (a) trainees formally present a case as part of training, then the trainer and training participants provide feedback on application of training concepts, (b) during and following training, trainees practice, are observed, and receive coaching, and (c) trainees have multiple opportunities to observe skills from the training modeled by multiple individuals with diverse clientele.

Ranking organizational factors data. The organizational factor chosen by panel members most for their top six was, resources needed to implement change are available, with 12 panelists choosing this factor. Each of the factors on the original list was chosen at least once. Table 13 displays organizational factors, mean ranks and group scores.

Table 13
Organizational Factors Mean Rank and Group Scores

Organizational Factor	# of Times Chosen	Mean Rank	Group Score
Continuity between training and practice	10	2.4	46
Opportunities for application and practice of new learning	11	3	44
Resources needed to implement change are available	12	3.5	42
Agency clearly articulates vision and expectations	10	3.3	37
Agency supports training and new learning	8	2.5	36
Supervisor is aware of training content	8	3.13	31
Training includes upper management and line staff	9	3.89	28
Clear organizational plan to support new knowledge	9	4.11	26
Trainee feeling valued by supervisor/colleagues/agency	6	2.83	25
Follow-up by supervisor and colleagues	9	4.33	24
Agency supports supervisor in developing supervisory skills	5	2.2	24
Supervisor support of trainees	7	3.71	23
Agency has elements of an organizational learning culture	4	2	20
Low staff turnover rates (organizational stability)	6	4.17	17
Release time from regular job responsibilities	6	4.33	16
Message between organizational levels and external partners is consistent	5	4	15
Follow-up seeks trainee feedback	3	2	15
training needs are identified by front line workers (bottom-up)	4	3.5	14
Real-world examples of how new learning can be used with clients	3	2.33	14
Genuine care between supervisors and colleagues	4	4.25	11
Follow-up training to reinforce learning	3	4	9
Training content is relevant	3	4	9
Upper management participates in training	5	5.4	8
Transparency in organization operations	3	4.33	8
Trust and trusting relationships	1	1	6
Agency supports sharing of application success stories	2	4.5	5
Reduced distractions during training	2	5	4
Observation of modeling during training and practice	1	3	4
Including external partners in training efforts	2	5.5	3
Support from colleagues	1	4	3

Defining organizational factors. Panelists provided operationalized definitions of 22 different organizational factors impacting TOL. For purposes of this study, the top three (mean rank and group score) organizational factors were chosen for development of an operational definition inclusive of key elements identified by the expert panel.

Continuity between training and practice. The top group-scored factor was continuity between training and practice. Key elements were: (a) prior to or soon after training the agency will develop a "roll-out" plan that includes dates and logistics on how training will be implemented into practice, (b) a work group or management team is responsible for ensuring "roll-out plan" is implemented, (c) training values and directive reflect the values and directives of the agency, (d) policies and procedures reflect training concepts and application of training is noted in employee evaluation, and (e) there is an observable difference in practice following training.

These key elements were combined to develop a four part operationalized definition of continuity between training and practice. Continuity between training and practice is present when: (a) the agency develops a comprehensive "roll-out plan" with deadlines and evaluation of implementation benchmarks, (b) a work group is assigned to ensure implementation of the comprehensive plan, (c) application of training concepts is integrated into performance evaluation, and (d) there is an observable difference in practice following training.

Opportunities for application and practice. The factor, opportunities for application and practice of new learning, received the second highest group score for organizational factors. Three panelists chose to operationalize this factor. Several key elements were noted by panelists. These included: (a) co-assigning cases so the trainee has a mentor that can observe them and provide feedback, (b) trainers attend smaller staff meetings to continue

discussion of new concepts, and (c) when attending staff meetings, trainer would model application of new concepts to a specific family.

These key elements were combined into a two part operationalized definition of opportunities for application and practice of new learning. Opportunities for application and practice of new learning is present when: (a) cases are co-assigned to a new learner and mentor who can observe and provide feedback, and (b) following training the trainer attends team staffings to reinforce new learning concepts by applying them to specific cases presented by the team.

Resources needed are available. The organizational factor, resources needed to implement change are available, received a group score of 42 and a group rank of third most important organizational factor for TOL. Five panelists chose this factor to operationalize. Some key elements identified included: (a) agency is prepared with new tools such as technology, access to forms, external contracts for services, (b) the agency allows adequate notice of change and time for staff to obtain training prior to expectations of practice change, (c) more staff is available for practice that requires more time, (d) the agency develops an implementation plan to sustain practice changes including consideration of fiscal impact, workforce impact and time needed for workers to become competent, (e) a plan to train new workers, and (f) continuous quality improvement with existing workforce.

These key elements were combined into a four part operationalized definition of resources needed to implement change are available. Resources needed to implement change are available when: (a) the agency develops an implementation plan that includes consideration of current and on-going employee training needs, (b) trainees have access to needed technology, forms and contract services, (c) time requirements for change to occur are

assessed and allowed for, and (d) staffing is increased to allow for more time spent with families.

Summary

The body of literature on transfer of learning is largely focused on corporate settings. Child welfare practice is different from the corporate setting and factors that enhance TOL in corporate settings may not apply equally to child welfare settings. I began this study by casting a wide net to explore what factors experts see as most important for transfer of learning to occur from child welfare training to child welfare practice. Vast amounts of data regarding expert opinion on transfer of learning and child welfare training were gathered. Through a three round Delphi study, data were condensed to a list of individual, training, and organizational factors identified as very or extremely important to transfer of learning.

Many factors identified in this study are commonly found in TOL literature. For example, trainee motivation, supervisor support and relevance are well-known factors that enhance TOL. However, several identified factors were new. For example, a trainee's ability to self-reflect, trainee's commitment to clients, trainee's trust in supervisor, release time from job responsibilities, reduced distractions, agency supports supervisor in developing supervisory skills, and a consistent message between organizational levels and external partners, are all factors previously not identified. These factors will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion of the Findings

The purpose of this study was to explore child welfare expert opinion about factors impacting transfer of learning (TOL) from child welfare training to child welfare practice. Three research questions guided this study: (1) What individual factors enhance TOL? (2) What training design factors enhance TOL? and (3) What organizational factors enhance TOL? Research questions were organized around three categories of factors identified in transfer of learning literature. A three round Delphi approach was used to assist experts in identifying and rating factors impacting transfer of learning, and providing operationalized definitions for select factors. As described by Skulmoski et al. (2007), the Delphi approach is a repetitive, anonymous process with controlled feedback ending with a group statistical response.

The result of this process was a ranked list of individual, training, and organizational factors impacting transfer of learning and operational definitions of several factors. In this study experts identified several TOL factors commonly seen in TOL literature as well as new factors that may be specific to child welfare settings. Research questions are answered in this chapter by (1) presenting TOL factors identified in the study, (2) reviewing key TOL factors identified in the literature and, (3) highlighting new factors specific to child welfare training.

What Individual Factors Enhance Transfer of Learning?

Individual factors are defined as ability, skill, motivation, and personality factors of the trainee (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). A wide variety of individual factors such as cognitive ability, self-efficacy, motivation, and transfer effort have been identified in the literature as important to transfer of learning (Blume et al., 2010; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Holton et al.,

2000). Recent studies with a child welfare training focus also identified important individual factors for TOL. Factors include motivation, personal capacity for transfer, and self-efficacy (Antle et al., 2008; Antle et al., 2009; Curry et al., 2005; Liu & Smith, 2011; Wehrmann et al., 2002).

Summary of findings. Panelists in this study identified a total of 61 individual factors that enhance or inhibit TOL. Each of the 61 factors was rated in terms of importance, 26 factors were rated as very or extremely important to TOL. Final analysis resulted in 13 individual factors identified by panelists as *most* important to TOL for child welfare training. Many of the factors have been well-documented in existing literature. However, several factors were new to TOL discussions. Beyond factors recognized in other studies, several new factors emerged: critical thinking skills, commitment to changing practice, perception of self as a lifelong learner, ability to self-reflect, commitment to clients, feeling valued by the agency, trust in supervisor, and values such as desire to serve or ability to empathize.

Related research. Transfer of learning has been a topic of interest in corporate settings for many years. More recently, several studies have looked specifically at TOL in child welfare settings. Following is brief review of research related to individual factors impacting TOL.

Motivation. Motivation is a well-documented factor impacting TOL in both corporate based and child welfare literature. Training motivation is described as direction, intensity and persistence of effort toward utilizing in a work setting skills and knowledge learned (Holton et al., 2000). Burke and Hutchins (2007) and Blume et al. (2010) conducted recent comprehensive reviews of TOL literature looking for strong, empirical evidence of variables influencing transfer. They reviewed research from a variety of disciplines including

management, HRD, training, adult learning, performance improvement and psychology and found motivation to be a key factor in TOL.

Motivation was also a key finding in Holton et al. (2000) research on the Learning Transfer System Inventory (LTSI), an instrument to measure factors affecting learning transfer. Holton et al. (2000) were interested in developing an instrument that moved beyond measurement of training outcomes to measurement of factors affecting transfer. The authors administered the inventory to 1,616 participants and used exploratory factor analysis to identify eight individual learner constructs, including motivation, as important factors influencing transfer of learning.

Motivation has also been identified as an important factor for TOL in child welfare focused studies (Curry et al., 2005; Liu & Smith, 2011). Curry et al. (2005) completed a longitudinal study with 416 child protective services workers in Ohio who attended training during a three month period of time. Study findings identified participant motivation to attend as an individual factor positively associated with transfer. Liu and Smith (2011) conducted pre-training and follow-up surveys of 92 child welfare workers who attended a series of 13 training workshops. They collected trainee's self-report of perceived training transfer, perceptions of supervisory support and organizational conditions. They found motivation was positively correlated with individual training transfer. Data from the current study indicates motivation as a top-rated individual factor with a group score of 83. Of the 29 panelists completing round three, 20 chose motivation for inclusion as a top six factor.

Motivation and learning are inter-connected elements. Motivation is necessary for learning and learning is necessary to maintain motivation in a difficult work environment (Karasek, 1979). Choosing workers based on personal motivation characteristics provides a

solid foundation for learning and job performance. However, motivation can change over time based on experiences following training. If a child welfare worker attempting to implement new learning is not supported, they lose motivation to transfer learning. Thus, it is important for supervisors and peers to encourage and reinforce use of newly learned skills to maintain motivation levels.

Personal capacity for transfer. Personal capacity for transfer is a factor impacting TOL as determined in previous studies and the current study. Personal capacity for transfer was defined by Holton et al. (2000) as "the extent to which individuals have the time, energy, and mental space in their work lives to make changes required to transfer learning to the job" (p. 344). Several factors with similar meaning emerged in the current study: willingness to try something new, ability to generalize, and opportunity/ability to apply new learning. Child welfare workers must be willing to try new interventions and approaches. This requires a safe environment and supportive colleagues. In addition to willingness, child welfare workers need time and space to make changes. Panelists who operationalized these factors focused on trainees planning with their supervisor when they will try new skills and then being open to feedback on effectiveness of the new approach. Child welfare workers who plan for practice with their supervisors will feel supported and their personal capacity for transfer will increase thereby improving TOL. Final rankings of the three factors were all in the top six individual factors impacting TOL.

Several factors emerged that were not identified in previous TOL research. These new factors included (1) critical thinking skills; (2) commitment to changing practice; (3) perception of self as a lifelong learner; (4) ability to self-reflect; (5) commitment to clients; (6) feeling valued by the agency; (7) trust in supervisor; and (8) values such as desire to serve

or ability to empathize. Existing literature addresses some of these factors in relation to provision of quality supervision, worker-supervisor relationships, and recruitment/retention of child welfare workers.

Critical thinking. Critical thinking is described by Lietz (2008) as "suspending judgment while collecting and reflecting on data regarding a case. It requires patience and humility as one must be willing to question what seems apparent of the surface" (p. 33). Dulmus and Sowers (2012) included critical thinking as a foundational knowledge requirement for child welfare practice due to the complexity and demanding nature of the work. The State of Arizona implemented a group supervision approach for child welfare workers designed to promote critical thinking skills needed to manage the complexity commonly found in child welfare practice (Lietz, 2008).

Critical thinking is not described in existing literature in relation to TOL. In the current study critical thinking was the third most important individual factor impacting TOL. Of the 29 panelists completing round three of the study, 15 chose critical thinking for inclusion in their top six individual factors. Panelists defining critical thinking described trainees' "ability to verbalize the potentially different perspectives of all parties involved, the possible outcomes of actions taken and willingness to imagine alternate explanations of events based on world view/experiences of parties involved." It is important for child welfare workers to demonstrate empathy and to do that they must be able to see situations from multiple perspectives. Empathy helps child welfare workers build a relationship with their client.

Self-reflection. Self-reflection in child welfare practice is largely associated with supervision outcomes and development of worker resiliency. Self-reflection as it applies to

child welfare practice involves professionals "continually reflecting on their patterns of action, the situation in which they practice, and the case practice knowledge implicit in their practice activities" (Hess, Kanak & Atkins, 2009, p. 17). The literature does not associate self-reflection with TOL. Self-reflection is seen as a key element of coaching for child welfare practice and the Coaching Toolkit (2013) suggests worker performance can be improved by consciously and systematically reflecting on their work performance. Hess et al. (2009) developed a model and framework for child welfare supervision that focused on promoting self-reflection and critical thinking to enhance supervisee's practice. Self-reflection is also promoted by Avinadav, Tullberg, Lorence and Pitman (2011) as part of a strategy to enhance worker resiliency and prevent secondary trauma. Self-reflection results in improving skills in working with children and families, improving ability to communicate and collaborate with co-workers, and understanding how individual's experiences and beliefs influence their work (Avinadav et al., 2011). Child welfare workers who practice self-reflection are able to critically examine their practice and make needed changes. Self-reflection is dependent on a psychologically safe environment where workers can make mistakes and expect support.

The trainee's ability to self-reflect emerged as an important factor for TOL in the current study. Four panelists started the process of articulating the definition of self-reflection. Their input was consistent with existing literature and contained key elements of self-reflection including; (1) identifying challenging practice situations, (2) identifying personal feelings, (3) recognizing personal biases, strengths and challenges, and (3) planning for changes in future practice.

Lifelong learning and commitment to practice. Lifelong learning and commitment to practice are both key elements for child welfare practice. Lifelong learning has many definitions. One definition that fits a variety of settings including child welfare is provided by Jarvis (2009) who described it as "all learning activity undertaken through life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competencies within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective (p. 9). The Social Work Policy Institute (2010) indicated workers who are most prepared for child welfare work and rate highly in professional commitment are most likely to remain on the job. Child welfare practice is deeply rooted in the early history of the social work profession. The National Association of Social Worker's Code of Ethics identifies competence as one of the core principles of social work. The definition of competence states that social workers "continually strive to increase their professional knowledge and skills and to apply them in practice" (NASW Code of Ethics, 2008). In addition, the Council on Social Work Education emphasizes lifelong learning as a needed practice behavior for competency in social work.

Lifelong learning and commitment to changing practice are part of the foundation for social work education and professional expectations but existing literature has not linked these characteristics to TOL. Lifelong learning and commitment to changing practice emerged as key factors to enhance TOL for child welfare workers. Panelists who operationalized lifelong learning and commitment to changing practice focused on trainees seeking new knowledge through professional literature then creating and executing a plan for change. The expectation that continual learning is standard could enhance a worker's motivation to engage actively with training and learning. Child welfare workers who are lifelong learners are likely to actively engage in training and transfer opportunities.

Professional values. Professional values are important to child welfare practice. Simmons (2003) provided a list of required professional values for child welfare practitioners including; protection of children, preservation of families, and respect for families. Existing literature does not address child welfare worker's values that enhance TOL. Desire to serve, empathy for families and commitment to clients emerged as individual characteristics enhancing TOL. Values required for child welfare practice and TOL are similar and highlight the parallel processes between child welfare practice and transfer of learning. Panelists operationalizing these factors described a need for trainees to embrace the Six Principles of Partnership in Family Centered Practice as a minimum requirement. The Six Principles of Partnership are: (1) everyone desires respect, (2) everyone needs to be heard, (3) everyone has strengths, (4) judgments can wait;, (5) partners share power, and (6) partnership is a process (Appalachian Family Innovations, 2003). Child welfare workers who embrace the Six Principles of Partnership and child welfare practice values are more able to manage the demands of the work leaving them with energy and personal resources needed to implement new learning. Panelists highlighted the significance of these values by stating, "when workers do not embrace this model they are frustrated by the work, they resent the families, and they are ultimately a liability to our profession and our agency."

Feeling valued and trusting supervisor. Child welfare workers feeling valued by their agency and trusting their supervisor have not been linked to TOL in current literature, however, they have been linked to retaining highly skilled and educated employees (Dulmus & Sowers, 2012). Being prepared for the difficulty of child welfare work is also positively associated with retention (Zlotnick, DePanfilis, Daining & McDermott-Lane, 2005). Effective transfer of learning results in being prepared for the work. Thus, feeling valued and

trust in supervisors is linked to TOL, which leads to being prepared, leading to retention. Feeling valued by the agency and trust in supervisor were important individual factors for TOL in the current study. These could also be considered from an organizational factors perspective. Supervision and relationships is covered in detail under organizational factors enhancing TOL.

Literature comparison. Some overlap can be found between data from the current study and findings from existing studies. However, new factors emerged in the study. Table 14 provides a visual presentation of factors identified in previous TOL literature and the current study. Studies are grouped by those conducted in corporate settings and those specific to child welfare settings.

Table 14

Comparison of literature on individual factors impacting TOL

	Corporate Setting Studies				Child Welfare Setting Studies				
Individual Factor	Burke & Hutchins (2007)	Blume, Ford, Baldwin, &Huang (2010)	Holton, Bates & Ruona (2000)		Curry, McCarragher & Dellmann-Jenkins (2005)	Wehrmann, Shin & Poertner (2002)	Liu & Smith (2011	Antle, Barbee & Van Zyl (2008)	Current Study
Cognitive ability	*	*							
Self-efficacy	*		*			*			
Pre-training motivation OR motivation OR motivation to transfer	*	*	*		*		*		*
Anxiety/negative affectivity	*								
Open-ness to experience	*								
Perceived utility	*					*			
Career planning	*								
Organizational commitment	*								
Learner readiness			*					*	
Positive/negative personal outcomes			*						
Personal capacity for transfer			*						*
Transfer effort			*						
Resistance			*						
Participant perceived learning					*				
Prior experience with training and application					*				
Content familiarity						*			
Immediate learning								*	
Willingness to try something new									*
Ability to generalize									*
Critical thinking									*
Ability to self-reflect									*
Feeling valued by agency									*
Perception of self as a lifelong learner									*
Desire to serve and ability to empathize									*
Commitment to practice									*
Interest in topic									*
Commitment to clients									*
Trust in supervisor									*

Discussion. While results of the study identified expert opinion and did not empirically test the results, an expanded list of individual factors impacting TOL for child welfare professionals is indicated. The newly identified factors demonstrate that child welfare practice requires professionals to move beyond rote memorization of procedure. These factors highlight the need for attention to relationship issues within the work environment. "Feeling valued by the agency" and "trust in supervisor" are factors that develop over time and point out the importance of relationship and feelings. Other new individual factors focused on child welfare practitioners' perception of themselves and their environment with identification of "commitment to changing practice," "perception of self as a lifelong learner," and "commitment to clients" as factors impacting TOL. Also related to organizational environment is the "ability to self-reflect." Self-reflection requires a safe environment where a practitioner can examine his or her weaknesses and strengths. Other factors address personal/professional values of individuals with "desire to serve and ability to empathize" as desirable characteristics to enhance TOL. Several individual factors appear to be factors that enhance practice, not necessarily TOL. For example, critical thinking, self-reflection and professional values are characteristics needed for effective child welfare practice. Panelists did not apply these concepts directly to TOL instead describing them as behaviors or values related to effective practice. Perhaps effective practice leads to enhanced TOL.

What Training Factors Enhance Transfer of Learning?

Training factors include instructional and design characteristics such as incorporation of learning principles, sequencing and content relevance (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Several training factors impacting TOL are identified in corporate-setting focused studies, and include; learning goals, content relevance, practice and feedback, behavioral modeling, error-

based examples, perceived content validity and transfer design (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Holton et al., 2000) Studies with a child welfare focus also looked at factors impacting TOL and found content relevance, practice and feedback, transfer design, overall transfer potential, application planning, curriculum design, training reinforcement, continuity between training concepts and practice, trainer experienced in child welfare, and trainer is interesting/energetic as important factors (Antle et al., 2009; Curry et al., 2005; Wehrmann et al., 2002).

Summary of findings. Panelists identified a total of 65 training factors that enhance or inhibit TOL. They rated factors in terms of importance resulting in 27 factors identified as very or extremely important to TOL. Final analysis resulted in 11 training factors identified by panelists as most important to TOL for child welfare training. Some of the identified factors have been previously studied. One new training factor identified was supervisor follow up and support.

Related research. Training factors impacting TOL have been studied in both corporate and child welfare settings. Following is a brief review of the literature on training factors impacting TOL.

Content relevance and interest. Consistent with existing literature, factors related to relevance of training content emerged as important to TOL. Factors found in both existing literature and the current study include: (1) content is relevant, (2) continuity between training and practice, and (3) content is interesting and related. These factors refer to the importance of training content being relevant to the transfer task (Burke & Hutchins, 2007) and reflective of job requirements (Holton et al., 2000). Burke and Hutchins (2007) conducted a comprehensive review of TOL literature and found content relevance had a moderate to strong relationship with transfer. Curry et al. (2005) completed a child welfare focused,

longitudinal study and found content relevance was a training factor impacting TOL. Child welfare workers are not likely to value, much less transfer, training that is not directly connected to the work they perform. Child welfare workers perform in demanding, complex situations so training efforts must be directly applicable to their work for transfer to occur. Training concepts that are immediately useable to improve conditions are much more likely to be implemented. Training curriculum relevant to practice was the top-rated training factor in the current study with a group score of 91. Of the 29 panelists completing round three, 20 chose this factor for inclusion as a top six factor.

Behavioral modeling. Behavioral modeling is a factor impacting TOL as determined in previous studies and the current study. Behavioral modeling consists of "observation and reproduction of a sequence of new behaviors to be learned by watching another person engage in that sequence of behaviors" (Bryant & Scott, 1995, p. 495). Burke and Hutchins (2007), in their comprehensive review of TOL literature, identified behavioral modeling as having a moderate to strong relationship with transfer of learning. In a meta-analysis of 117 behavioral modeling studies, Taylor, Russ-Eft and Chan (2005) found training models using both effective and ineffective behavioral demonstrations had greater effect on TOL. Data from the current study indicated observations of modeling new concepts was important during training and practice. For example, child welfare workers need to observe trainers modeling what "judgments can wait" looks like in relation to work with clients. In addition, workers need to observe colleagues practicing "judgments can wait" with co-workers. Behavioral modeling in training and practice encourages transfer of learning.

Planning for transfer. Application planning and transfer design are identified in existing studies as important to TOL (Curry et al., 2005; Holton et al., 2000). Transfer design

is defined as training designed and delivered to give trainees the ability to transfer what they have learned during training to their job (Holton et al., 2000). A closely related factor shown to improve TOL is action planning (Cowan, Goldman & Hook, 2010). Action planning is defined as a particular approach where trainees develop a plan for applying new knowledge when they return to work (Cowan et al., 2010). Panelists in the current study also identified the need for training to "build in transfer strategies." Panelists who started the process of defining this factor focused on actively developing a plan for transfer. They went further to suggest the plan include identification of a specific place and time they would demonstrate new learning or a commitment to look for opportunities to demonstrate new skills. Child welfare workers should develop a plan for transfer before leaving the training environment. The plan should be shared with his or her supervisor and re-visited in supervision, consultation and evaluation meetings.

Trainer characteristics. Factors related to characteristics of the trainer have been identified in both existing literature and the current study. Wehrmann et al. (2002) asserted trainers should be skilled and credible from a trainee's point of view. A trainer being experienced in child welfare, exciting, and energetic are not established as important to TOL in corporate-based studies. However, Wehrmann et al. (2002) completed a study of 254 child welfare workers and determined trainer attributes (including credibility) was significantly correlated with TOL at the $p<.01$ level. Final rankings in the current study indicate child welfare experience, excitement and energy are important trainer characteristics to enhance TOL. Panelists operationalizing the factor trainer is experienced in child welfare discussed the importance of trainers providing accurate information to trainees so there is continuity between concepts taught in training and actual practice. Child welfare work is complex and

not fully appreciated by professionals who have not actually practiced in child welfare. A trainer who has experience in child welfare is important so trainees feel the trainer understands the inherent difficulty of their work.

Adult learning principles. Malcolm Knowles (1973) developed a theory of adult learning he referred to as andragogy. His theory included six adult learning principles: (1) adults are internally motivated and self-directed; (2) adults bring life experiences and knowledge to learning experiences; (3) adults are goal oriented; (4) adults are relevancy oriented; (5) adults are practical; and (6) adult learners like to be respected. These principles are often used as a foundation for adult training programs (Fogarty & Pete, 2004). Adult learning principles emerged in this study as important to TOL. Additionally, several factors emerged that could be included under the term "adult learning principles" as techniques reflecting adult learning principles: (1) training examples are real-world, (2) opportunity to apply/practice, (3) key concepts are reiterated, and (4) training is grounded in research. Panelists choosing to operationalize these factors noted the importance of recognizing trainee's expertise/experience, modeling new concepts, coaching, providing feedback, and using real-life case scenarios. Real world training examples are important because child welfare work is difficult and workers must be prepared to deal with volatile and complex situations. Child welfare clients are often involved involuntarily and the issues being addressed are sensitive (abuse and neglect). Training examples that include clients who are willing participants or have "easy" problems are not appropriate and discount the difficulty inherent in child welfare work. Child welfare training approaches adhering to adult learning principles respect the experience of trainees and help them develop skills relevant to the practice environment.

Release from regular job responsibilities and minimized distractions. Caseload demands were identified in one human services-focused study (Curry & Chandler, 1999) as hindering TOL. Excessive caseloads have been noted as factors related to stress, job burnout, job dissatisfaction, turnover (McCall, 1998), recruitment, and retention (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2006). Several studies have highlighted the discrepancy between actual caseloads and those recommended by the Child Welfare League of America (Yamatani, Engel & Spjeldnes, 2009). Concerns over caseload demands can be exasperated by training demands. In the current study, release from regular job responsibilities and minimized distractions emerged as important to TOL. These concepts refer to a trainee's competing responsibilities at work and to learn during training, resulting in a decreased focus on either. While factors are not commonly reported in corporate-setting training studies, they are identified in training studies specific to human services work (Curry & Chandler, 1999; Delewski, et al, 1986; Mueller, 1985). If caseload demands hinder TOL, it stands to reason that reducing those demands would enhance TOL. Panelists operationalizing these factors focused on a need for trainees to be supported in training with a plan that allows for their regular work responsibilities to be fulfilled while they are in training. In addition, the expectation that trainees will be present and attentive at trainings must be established and reinforced. Time constraints are a known element in child welfare work and training cannot be allowed to simply be added to the demands of the trainees work.

One new factor, supervisor follow-up and support, emerged in the current study as important to TOL. Supervisor follow-up and support is commonly identified as important to TOL but listed under organizational factors. In the current study, supervisor follow-up and support was the second most important training factor.

Supervisor follow-up and support. Supervisor support can be defined as the extent to which workers believe their supervisors offer instrumental (knowledge/skill) and affective (emotional) support (Chenot, Benton, & Hansung, 2009). Several studies have found a positive association between supervisor support and retention in child welfare workers (Chenot et al. 2009; Ellett, Ellis, Westbrook, & Dews, 2007; Jacquet, Clark, Morazes, & Withers, 2008; Nissly, MorBarak, & Levin, 2005; Smith, 2004). Supervisor follow-up and support is commonly identified as a key factor effecting TOL, however, it is normally listed under the category of organizational factors. Panelists in this study communicated the importance of supervisor follow-up and support by including it in both training and organizational categories with high ratings. Under training factors, supervisor follow-up and support was rated second most important factor for TOL. In addition, 15 respondents chose to begin operationalizing this factor. Beginning definitions included use of case examples, goal setting, observation, feedback, modeling application, critical reflection and praise for positive outcomes. In the training category, a discussion of supervisor follow-up and support could be integrated into the training to establish how important it is. Child welfare trainees could be prompted to expect and initiate supervisor follow-up and support. Establishing the expectation that supervisors will follow-up and support trainees increases the chances it will occur thus supporting transfer of learning. Supervisors should integrate goal-setting, modeling and critical reflection into supervisory approaches.

Literature comparison. Training factors impacting TOL identified in the current study support findings in existing literature. Table 15 provides a visual presentation of factors identified in previous TOL literature and the current study. Studies are grouped by those conducted in corporate settings and those specific to child welfare settings.

Table 15.
Factors identified in TOL literature and the current study

	Corporate Settings		Child Welfare Settings			
Training Factor	Burke & Hutchins (2007)	Holton, Bates & Ruona (2000)	Curry, McCarragher & Dellmann-Jenkins (2005)	Wehrmann, Shin & Poertner (2002)	Curry & Chandler (1999)	Current Study
Learning goals	*					
Content relevance	*		*		*	*
Practice and feedback	*			*		
Behavioral modeling	*					*
Error-based examples	*					
Perceived content validity		*				
Transfer design		*	*			*
Overall transfer potential as measured by TPQ			*			
Application planning			*		*	
Training/organization congruence			*			
Curriculum design				*		
Training reinforcement						
Continuity between training concepts and practice			*			*
Adult learning principles Training examples that are real-world Opportunities to apply and practice new concepts Key concepts reiterated throughout training Training grounded in research					*	*
Release time from regular job responsibilities					*	*
Trainer is experienced in child welfare				*		*
Distractions are minimized					*	*
Trainer is interesting, exciting, energetic				*		*
Supervisor follow-up and support						*

Discussion. Panelists were asked for their opinions and while their opinions are based on experience and expertise, this study did not empirically test training factors identified as important to TOL for child welfare. Emerging factors largely reflected the same factors identified in existing studies. One notable exception is supervisor follow-up and support. This factor is found to be positively identified with a variety of outcomes including retention of workers and improved TOL. Findings are unusual because panelists overwhelmingly included supervisor follow-up and support in training factors and organizational factors.

Supervisor support and follow up should be part of the organizational training plan and trainees should be able to anticipate that it will be part of training efforts.

What Organizational Factors Enhance Transfer of Learning?

Transfer of learning is a complex process often including factors outside the influence of the trainee and the trainer. Characteristics of the context or environment in which training occurs can include supervisory or peer support and opportunities to perform learned behaviors (Baldwin & Ford, 1988). Panelists identified the largest number of factors under the organizational factors category. Many factors are identified as effecting TOL in both corporate and child welfare settings: (a) supervisory, peer and organizational support, (b) opportunity to perform; and (c) supportive work environment. The expert panel identified these same factors and expanded this category by another 22 factors as detailed in Chapter 4.

Summary of findings. Panelists identified 64 organizational factors that enhance or inhibit TOL. Panelists rated those factors in terms of importance and 42 factors were rated as very or extremely important to TOL. Final analysis resulted in 19 organizational factors identified by panel members. Some factors identified were documented in previous studies and some were new. New factors identified included: resources needed to implement change are available; agency clearly articulates vision and expectations; supervisor is aware of training content; training includes upper management and line staff; trainee feels valued by supervisor, colleagues and agency; follow up by supervisor and colleagues; agency supports supervisors in developing supervisory skills; genuine care between supervisors and colleagues; trust and trusting relationships; consistent message between organizational levels and external partners, and; external partners included in training efforts.

Related research. Emerging organizational factors tended to cluster around three themes: (1) supervisor-related factors; (2) agency-related factors; and (3) relationship-related factors. Three factors; (1) resources needed to implement change are available, (2) consistent message between organizational levels and external partners, and (3) external partners included in training efforts, did not fit into any of these categories and are discussed separately.

Supervisor-related factors. Several supervisor-related factors emerged including; (1) supervisor support, (2) supervisor is aware of training content, and (3) follow-up by supervisor.

Supervisor support. A definition of supervisor support as it relates to TOL is the "extent to which supervisors-managers support and reinforce use of training on the job" (Holton et al., 2000, p. 345). A definition focusing on child welfare is "the extent to which workers believe their supervisors offer them instrumental and affective support" (Chenot et al., 2009, p. 134). Ample data is available in both corporate settings (Blume et al., 2010; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Holton et al., 2000) and child welfare settings (Curry et al., 2005; Wehrmann et al., 2002) indicating supervisor support/feedback/incentive to use is important to TOL. Panelists beginning the process of operationalizing "supervisor support" focused on the central role of supervisors stating, "Supervisor support of trainees is one of the elements which reduces fears and encourages confidence when trainee is engaged in transfer of learning into the work place." Comments also reflected the importance of relationship and values; "efforts at change are reinforced by the supervisor and failures are not punished, but debriefed, reconsidered and attempted again."

Follow-up by supervisor. Supervisor follow-up is related to supervisor support and also emerged as a factor in the study. No existing research was found describing supervisor follow-up as a separate factor impacting TOL or child welfare worker retention. It is likely that supervisor follow-up is assumed to be included under the factor supervisor support. However, study panelists operationalizing follow-up by supervisor, focused on anticipatory or proactive behavior by the supervisor beyond providing support. Some panelist comments on follow-up by supervisor included: "regularly scheduled collaborations," "self-reflections on implementation," and "self-assessments of effectiveness." Child welfare supervisors should actively plan for follow-up with trainees by communicating plans to integrate training concepts into regular supervision. Follow-up by supervisors reinforces learning and communicates expectations that new learning will actually be demonstrated in the practice arena.

Supervisor awareness of training content. Supervisor awareness of training content emerged as an important factor for TOL. Washington State recently implemented the Solution-Based Casework model across all child welfare agencies in the state. The team responsible for implementation and evaluation found it necessary for supervisors to be directly involved in training and management of practice to avoid a lack of buy-in, or feelings of disempowerment (Pipkin, Sterrett, Antle & Christensen, 2013). Panelists in the current study expressed that supervisors should "participate in and receive the same training material as the trainee." Supervisors need to be aware of training content so they can encourage and reinforce trainee attempts to transfer learning. Supervisors should attend training sessions then seek opportunities to observe trainees practicing new approaches and provide feedback. Supervisors should also share their own experience with trying new approaches.

Agency-related factors. Agency-related organizational factors emerging in the current study included: (1) top management and organizational support, (2) training/organization congruence, (3) agency clearly articulates vison and expectations, (4) agency supports training and new learning, (5) agency is organizational learning culture, (6) training includes upper management and line staff, (7) agency supports supervisors in developing supervisory skills, (8) resources needed to implement change are available, (9) message between agency levels and external partners is consistent, and (10) external partners included in training efforts.

Organization, top management, and agency support. Perceived organizational support has been defined as "how much the organization values employees' contributions and care about them" (Allen, Armstrong, Reid & Riemenschneider, 2008, p. 557). Organizational support, specifically management support of supervisors, was found to predict learning transfer in a study of 72 supervisors and 331 caseworkers in child welfare (Antle et al., 2008). Top management and organization support for training and application was determined to be significantly correlated with transfer of learning in a longitudinal study of 598 child protection workers (Curry et al., 2005). Pipkin et al. (2013) asserted the importance of senior leadership's active participation in training cannot be overstated. They suggested agency heads: (a) attend initial meetings, (b) read all relevant literature, (c) use senior lines of authority to manage projects, (d) schedule quarterly meetings, and (e) find ways to be personally visible and vocal about the project.

Data from the current study supports this existing literature. Panelists' descriptions of organizational support included upper management and front line staff attending trainings, agency supporting sharing of application success stories, and agency supporting training and

new learning. To establish a culture of organizational support, all levels of workers and management should attend trainings and utilize new learning in the practice setting. When all levels of management use language and demonstrate behaviors learned in training, child welfare workers will perceive organizational support and be encouraged to transfer learning themselves.

Vision, expectations and congruence. Alignment or congruence of values, mission, vision and strategic direction is seen as necessary for defining an organization's purpose (Williams, 2002). Training is part of an organization's strategic direction and should be consistent with its values, mission and vision. Clear articulation of agency vision and expectations, and training/organization congruence emerged as factors impacting TOL. Panelists providing an operationalized definition for these factors described a comprehensive "roll-out plan" that includes: (1) goal identification, (2) articulation of the value of training including how it will benefit clients, practitioners and practice, (3) identification of resources to support training, (4) articulation of how training aligns with organization values, and (5) articulation of desired outcomes. Child welfare workers should be able to identify how training efforts mirror the vision of the agency. Alignment between vision and expectations helps child welfare workers understand how training fits into the larger agency structure. Without alignment child welfare workers may be unlikely to make changes.

Organizational learning culture. "Agency has organizational learning culture," and "agency supports training and new learning," emerged as important organizational factors for TOL. No consensus can be found in the literature on the definition of a learning organization. However, Kerka (1995) identified the following characteristics as representative of the learning organization concept: (a) continuous learning opportunities, (b) use of learning to

reach goals, (c) individual performance is linked with organizational performance, (d) inquiry and dialogue are fostered making it safe for people to share openly and take risks, (e) creative tension is embraced as a source of energy and renewal, and (f) continuous awareness of, and interaction between, organization and environment (Kerka, 1995). Operationalization of a learning culture from the current study included trainee's being accountable for participating in training as both learners and teachers. "Agency support for training and new learning" includes full participation of all organizational levels in training planning, implementation, and evaluation. Including child welfare workers in planning, implementing, and evaluating training aligns with organizational learning culture and promotes TOL. Additionally, all panelists describing agency support for training, noted release time from regular job responsibilities. This factor was covered previously under training factors.

Agency supports supervisors in developing supervisory skills. As discussed earlier, many existing studies have documented the central role of effective supervision in retention of child welfare workers. Support of supervisors addresses the importance of supporting and developing skills for workers in supervisory roles. In 2006, the State of Missouri implemented a plan to concentrate on supervisory training and effectiveness. Authors conducting a study to determine plan effectiveness declared, "the study provides evidence to support the idea that when child welfare administrators identify key change agents and give these agents a voice and permission to be innovative, while providing full support, the working environment for both workers and supervisors improves" (Renner, Porter & Preister, 2009, p. 124).

A framework to support effective child welfare supervision was developed by Hess et al. (2009). Their framework consisted of four organizational components needed to empower

child welfare supervisors: (1) an organizational culture that values and demonstrates support for the vital role supervisors play in ensuring positive outcomes for children, youth and families, (2) a model of supervisory practice that reflects how the organization views the roles, responsibilities and expectations of supervisors, (3) systematic recruitment and retention of individuals who are a "good fit," and (4) a continuum of professional development opportunities for new and experienced supervisors that includes initial and ongoing training, peer support, mentors, and clinical consultation (Hess et al., 2009). To accomplish support for supervisors, child welfare agencies should: (a) assess the level of organizational support for supervisors, and recognize and reward good supervisory work, (b) develop clear job descriptions for supervisors and evaluate performance based on those descriptions, (c) implement pre-screening tools to assess for "fit" with child welfare supervision and encourage supervisors to address stress and burnout proactively, and (d) implement a competency-based, comprehensive, supervisor training continuum to address skill development of emerging, new, and experienced supervisors.

Supervisors are essential to child welfare TOL and they require support to develop skills necessary to assist workers in transferring learning. Panelists identified a potential "disconnect" when supervisors are tasked with helping workers transfer learning but they are unsure themselves about how to accomplish the task, thus highlighting the importance of supporting supervisors in developing a supervisory skill set needed to be effective.

Resources needed to implement change. "Available resources to implement change" was an emerging factor in the current study. Child welfare agencies are historically under-resourced to meet needs of families in crisis. Smith and Donovan (2003) completed a study based on Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy to explore child welfare practice through

interviews with frontline workers. One worker in their study was discussing waiting lists for services and stated, "They're not getting the follow-up with the services that they need. You know, send off a referral and it could be two months before that parent gets in that service because everything's so backed up. And in the meantime, who's working with that parent? Nobody" (Smith & Donovan, 2003, p. 546). In defining needed resources are available, panelists concentrated on a desire for more time to spend collaborating and building relationships with families and development of a comprehensive training plan. Once an investment is made towards training efforts, adequate time and resources are necessary to enhance TOL. For example, assume a child welfare worker is trained in the Six Principles of Partnership. When they return to the office and try to implement the principles, they find it takes additional time to build relationships with families to implement the principles. However, the worker still has the same number of families to serve. To transfer learning from training to practice, child welfare workers must have the needed resources to make the change. Resources can include time, contracts, forms, or services.

Work with external partners. Working with external partners is necessary in child welfare practice. Child welfare practice is unique in that it is part of the safety infrastructure of a community. Child welfare practice is conducted within a community, state, and national environment that place expectations and requirements on the system (Blome, Bennett & Page, 2011). Emerging factors, "consistent message between agency and external partners," and "including external partners in training efforts" focus on child welfare agency's relationship with external partners. External partners for child welfare agencies can include judges, attorneys, juvenile justice systems, Court Appointed Special Advocates, private service providers, foster care providers, and families. Studies have shown that best practices in child

welfare may be compromised by pressures to conform practices to the priorities or agendas of powerful institutions in the organizational environment (Smith & Donovan, 2003). For true interagency collaboration to be successful, partners must operate from common goals and understanding (Barwinski, 2005). These two emerging factors reflect the importance of consistent messaging to external partners and including them in training efforts.

Including external partners in training efforts provides a common language for professionals from different disciplines. Shared training can also begin development of shared values leading to more effective collaboration and TOL opportunities.

Relationship-related factors. Relationship-related factors emerging in this study included: (1) trust and trusting relationships, (2) genuine care between supervisors and colleagues, (3) trainee feels valued by supervisor, colleagues, and agency, and (4) peer support.

Trust and trusting relationships. In child welfare and social work practice, the discussion of building trust largely focuses on developing trust between a worker and the client. It is commonly understood that trust is a necessary element for effective practice (DeBoer & Coady, 2007; DePanfilis & Salus, 2003; Maiter, Palmer & Manji, 2006). Poulin (2010) describes trust as essential to the development of a helping relationship between social work practitioners and clients. He goes further to say that trust is built over time through a series of experiences where clients take a risk and practitioners respond in a trustworthy manner.

Many child welfare agencies adopt a Family Centered Approach (FCA) as recommended by the American Humane Association's Differential Response initiative (Americanhumane.org). The Family Centered approach advocates for parallel processes

which promotes using a strengths-based approach, not just with families (clients), but also with supervisees (Lietz, 2013), and other family serving organizations (Walter & Petr, 2000). A natural extension of this concept would be for the parallel process to include all interactions between workers, supervisors, administrators and agencies across vertical and horizontal interactions. A quote from a family-centered practice training participant indicated that "my partnership at home with my spouse and children has improved" as a result of using the principles at home (Appalachian Family Innovations). Trust and trusting relationships emerged as a factor for TOL. Description of the factor included "discussions containing supportive" language as reflective of a trusting relationship. As child welfare workers implement FCA with co-workers trust and relationships develop creating an environment supportive of TOL.

Genuine care between supervisors and colleagues. This factor is closely related to trust and trusting relationships. Landsman and D'Aunno (2012) asserted that supervisors have an important role in fostering a positive climate and supporting worker's physical, emotional and social resilience to promote staff well-being. Genuine care between supervisors and colleagues could also be examined through the lens of parallel process. Child welfare supervision should model a mutually respectful, collaborative relationship that parallels the worker/client relationship promoted in family-centered practice (Landsman & D'Aunno, 2012). For example, family-centered practice requires child welfare workers actively seek to identify client strengths in addition to addressing problems. To demonstrate genuine care between colleagues, workers should seek to identify strengths in other workers and supervisor should seek to identify strengths in their supervisees. In the current study 4

panelists chose genuine care between supervisors and colleagues for inclusion in their top 6 list. However, no panelists chose this factor for operationalization.

Trainee feels valued by supervisor, colleagues and agency. Feeling valued can be difficult to define because it is a feeling and subject to an individual's perception. However, being valued could be described as having worth or merit. Feeling valued at work has been linked to well-being and performance. An online survey conducted in 2012 by the American Psychological Association found that among employees who reported feeling valued at work, 93 percent were motivated to do their best at work and 88 percent reported feeling engaged. In comparison, those who reported not feeling valued at work had much lower rates of 33 percent and 38 respectively (American Psychological Association, 2012). Feeling valued by supervisors, colleagues, and agency, has not been studied as it relates to TOL, however, social support from peers and supervisors, as part of transfer climate has been found to facilitate TOL (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Feeling valued by supervisor, colleagues and agency was included by six panelists in their top six factors list. Panelists' description of this factor were consistent with existing literature and included, time to learn and train, recognition of progress, encouragement and assistance and overall letting the trainee know he-she is appreciated. Child welfare workers need recognition and encouragement to effectively transfer learning. Developing a program to recognize training accomplishments might include workers earning certificates for completion of training.

Peer support. Peer support behaviors of networking and sharing ideas about course content were found to promote skill transfer six months after training (Hawley & Barnard, 2005). Additionally, Chiaburu and Marinova (2005) found peer support predicted both pre-training motivation and skill transfer while supervisor support was unrelated to either. Liu

and Smith (2011) studied individual and collective efforts for transferring training to child welfare practice and found collective transfer more likely to occur when workers have a positive perception of their co-worker's support for learning. Peer support emerged as important to TOL and included follow up by colleagues, feeling valued by colleagues and genuine care between colleagues. Peer support often occurs organically between colleagues who develop a caring relationship with one another over time. However, creating more formal opportunities for peer support could also be useful for TOL. For example, during training assign trainees to small groups and have group members share their training transfer plans with each other. Develop a follow-up plan for the group to assess their progress.

Literature comparison. Organizational factors emerging in the current study were mostly already identified as important to TOL. However, several factors were not identified before. Table 16 provides a visual presentation of organizational factors identified in previous TOL literature and the current study. Studies are grouped by those conducted in corporate settings and those specific to child welfare settings.

Table 16.
Organizational factors in TOL literature and the current study

	Corporate Setting Studies				Child Welfare Setting Studies				
Organizational Factor	Burke & Hutchins (2007)	Blume, Ford, Baldwin, &Huang (2010)	Holton, Bates & Ruona (2000)		Curry, McCarragher & Dellmann-Jenkins (2005)	Wehrmann, Shin & Poertner (2002)	Liu & Smith (2011	Antle, Barbee & Van Zyl (2008)	Current Study
Transfer climate	*						*		
Supervisory support	*		*		*	*	*		*
Peer support	*		*		*	*	*		*
Opportunity to perform/use	*		*			*		*	*
Supportive work environment		*				*	*		
Supervisor sanctions			*						
Performance			*			*			
Performance coaching			*						
Top management and organizational support					*			*	*

Training/organization congruence					*				*
Pre-training preparation					*				
Supervisor feedback						*			
Supervisor incentive to use						*			
Resources needed to implement change are available									*
Agency clearly articulates vision and expectations									*
Agency supports training and new learning									*
Supervisor is aware of training content									*
Training includes upper management and line staff									*
Trainee feels valued by supervisor, colleagues and agency									*
Follow up by supervisor and colleagues									*
Agency supports supervisors in developing supervisory skills									*
Agency is organizational learning culture									*
Message between organizational levels and external partners is consistent									*
Genuine care between supervisors and colleagues									*
Trust and trusting relationships									*
Agency supports sharing of application success stories									*
Including external partners in training efforts									*

Discussion. Previous and current research is in unanimous agreement about the importance of supervisory and peer support for TOL. Data indicated two additional factors involving supervisors: supervisor is aware of training content; and agency supports supervisor in gaining supervisory skills. Panelists expanded on concepts of supervisor and peer support to identify the importance of supervisors developing supervisory skills. Several other new

organizational factors also emerged as important to TOL and child welfare. Resources needed to implement change are available, was ranked by panelists as the third most important organizational factor. The high ranking of this factor likely reflects the unique nature of child welfare practice. Child welfare is a service providing profession dependent on state and federal budgets to provide needed services. States are mandated to provide child welfare services regardless of resource availability.

Relationships were also found to be important. The factors: trainee feels valued by supervisor/colleagues/agency; genuine care between supervisors and colleagues; and trust and trusting relationships all speak to panelist's perception of the importance of caring and/or trusting relationships between supervisors, colleagues and the agency.

Two other organizational factors appearing to be unique to child welfare practice contexts are "message between organizational levels and external partners is consistent," and "including external partners in training efforts." Child welfare professionals practice in an environment where collaboration is required and often occurs between service providers with very different perspectives. For example, a child welfare worker is mandated to protect children while simultaneously focusing on strengthening families. Prosecuting attorneys are focused on punishing wrong-doers (parents). Court Appointed Special Advocates focus on what they believe is in the best interest of the child, with no requirement to consider the needs of the parents. Foster parents provide a family setting for children in the state's care and can be harsh judges of caregiver failings. Child welfare professionals are responsible for collaborating with these systems but often find a lack of common perspective and goals. Thus, it becomes essential for external partners to gain some understanding of how child welfare professionals are trained.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore what child welfare experts identify as key factors to enhance transfer of learning from child welfare *training* to child welfare *practice.* While many factors identified were previously documented in other studies, several new factors were discovered.

Collins et al. (2008) offered a conceptual model of child welfare training and identified a gap between individual training outcomes of an increase in knowledge or skills and cluster outcomes of a change in practice (transfer of learning). In the basic logic model presented in Chapter 2, short term outcomes are learning and medium term outcomes are actions. The panelists in this study identified a variety of previously un-studied factors that may affect transfer of learning from training to practice for child welfare workers. A modification of Collins et al.'s (2008) comprehensive model, addressing the gap between increased knowledge and skills and practice change for child welfare professionals, is proposed in Chapter 6. In addition, an expanded logic model for child welfare training is introduced. The expanded model demonstrates that transfer of learning requires consideration at all stages of training development as well as a psychologically safe environment that promotes trusting relationships between colleagues.

CHAPTER 6

Transfer of Learning and Child Welfare Training: Filling the Gap?

"It's all about relationships."
–Jerry John, Retired Child Welfare Supervisor

The original focus of this study to explore factors child welfare experts identify as key to enhancing transfer of learning from child welfare training to child welfare practice; the identified "gap" between learning and action. It seemed transfer of learning happened after learning occurred and before a change in practice. Results from the study showed that the reality is transfer of learning requires a broader approach. Part of this broader approach includes the culture of an organization which must provide the safety needed to make, and learn from, inevitable mistakes as new professional practice approaches are implemented by child welfare workers. Planning for TOL begins with developing trusting relationships and a safe environment, another element included in the broader approach.

Child welfare workers perform job responsibilities in a particularly difficult environment. The decisions they make can result in lives saved, families preserved, and personal growth for those with whom they work. Decisions made by caseworkers can also result in tragedy, families destroyed, and threats to personal safety (Collins et al., 2008). The child welfare profession depends on effective training to enhance the skills of workers and a psychologically safe environment for transfer of learning. Child welfare training must translate to skilled child welfare practice. Enhancing transfer of learning from training to practice is essential for improving outcomes for workers, families, children and communities.

Findings from the present study support the assertion that child welfare settings are unique and require an expanded approach to TOL. The role of child welfare in our communities is too important to leave transfer of learning to chance. This study contributes to

development of effective training strategies for the child welfare profession by proposing addition of several new factors to current training models.

An Agency Seeks to Become a Learning Organization

Consider the following story: *Jessica recently started employment in a child welfare agency as a mid-level supervisor responsible for supervising a regional child welfare program. The state-wide agency was embracing the Learning Organization approach and purchased a book (The Fifth Discipline by Peter Senge) for each manager and supervisor in the state. Trainers were brought in to help the agency in their quest to become a learning organization. During one of the first training sessions, all regional managers and supervisors were brought together and trained on the basic concepts composing a learning organization. One of the concepts, mental models, challenges long-held assumptions of individuals in the organization. As part of the discussion about mental models, the trainer initiated a discussion about taboos and asked participants to identify some taboos in the agency. Jessica, being relatively new to the agency, volunteered to share. She shared her observation that caseload standards outlined in the policy manual were not followed and, indeed, the norm for child welfare caseworkers was to be responsible for higher numbers of families(caseloads) than what the standard called for. Jessica was barely finished speaking when suddenly, the regional director stood up, slamed her hand on the table and yelled, "That's a lie!" Jessica was surprised and backed off stating, "Well, I guess I don't have all the facts…" As the discussion awkwardly moved on, a seasoned supervisor sitting next to Jessica leaned over and whispered, "Well, I guess you found the taboo." Jessica remained quiet for the rest of the training and did not contribute any additional thoughts or observations. When Jessica returned to the office she was overly cautious about sharing*

concerns or asking questions. She was no longer comfortable speaking openly about workplace issues and fearful of the reaction she would get. Not surprisingly, the training she received about learning organizations did not transfer because the culture was not safe for Jessica to try new learning. However, Jessica learned and practiced distance from taboos in her agency.

Findings from this study supported the importance of a psychologically safe environment for learning to occur. Relationships based on trust encourage trainees to practice newly learned behaviors. A safe environment encourages workers at all levels to openly discuss mistakes and new ideas without fear of public embarrassment (Edmondson, 2012). Organizational cultures that are not safe encourage workers to keep quiet and not make waves resulting in stifled creativity and learning (Edmondson, 2012).

Beyond providing learning opportunities, organizations must work to create a safe and open culture that promotes trust so learning can transfer to a change in practice. The term psychological safety refers to a "taken for granted belief about how others will respond when you ask a question, seek feedback, admit a mistake, or propose a possibly wacky idea…this belief comes about when people both trust and respect each other, and it produces a sense of confidence that the group won't embarrass, reject, or punish someone for speaking up" (Edmondson, 2012, p. 119).

Psychological safety is described as crucial in organizations where knowledge keeps changing or workers need to collaborate (Edmondson, 2012). Child welfare is a complex, rapidly changing environment that depend on collaboration. Edmondson reported seven specific benefits of psychological safety in the work place. The first benefit is encouraging speaking up; Jessica learned in training that speaking up was not safe and even upon

returning to the office, she did not speak up for fear of being embarrassed. Operationalization of "supervisor support of trainees" by experts in this study included "failures are not punished, but debriefed, reconsidered and attempted again" encouraging trainees to openly discuss practice. The second benefit of psychological safety is it enables clarity of thought. From a neurological focus, Jessica's brain was not able to maximize its neural processing power for exploration, design or creative expression because it was preoccupied with a fear response. Data indicates supervisor support is one way to reduce trainee fears and encourage confidence. The third benefit of psychological safety is it supports productive conflict. Jessica raised her concerns in an environment that espoused a welcoming of self-expression and productive conflict; however, her statement was attacked and she subsequently stopped interacting. The benefit of an open discussion for individuals and the organization was never realized because Jessica simply disengaged. Observers of the interaction also learned not to openly discuss concerns. Data from the study also highlighted the importance of "critical examination of both positive and negative outcomes of practice change."

The fourth benefit of psychological safety is mitigation of failure. Psychological safety makes it easier to report and discuss errors creating an opportunity for learning. Jessica is unlikely to openly discuss errors she may make because of her experience of an environment that reacts negatively to un-wanted information. Findings from the current study support open sharing of transfer efforts in small supervisory groups. The fifth benefit of psychological safety is promotion of innovation. When individuals feel safe to speak up, they are free to suggest new ideas. Jessica was afraid to express her ideas because of the response she received in training so her ideas went unspoken and the organization had no opportunity to benefit from them. Findings indicated "brainstorming of ideas" was an important factor in

a trainee's willingness to practice. The sixth benefit of psychological safety in the work place relates to the removal of obstacles in order to pursue goals toward achieving performance. Jessica was not able to focus and work on achieving goals because she was preoccupied with self-protection. Data from the current study suggests a safe and supportive environment can be encouraged by all organizational levels participating in training and transfer of learning efforts. The last benefit of psychological safety is increased accountability. Because individuals in a psychologically safe environment are supported in taking risks, they are able to pursue high standards. Jessica was not able to fulfill her full potential at work because she was fearful of taking risks. Results highlighted the importance of an organizational training plan that includes trainees "providing feedback to upper management on the type of support they need to implement new learning effectively." A psychologically safe environment is necessary for trainees and supervisors to develop effective transfer of learning strategies.

Child welfare workers who feel safe to speak up and address conflict are more likely to recognize and take responsibility for practice mistakes. The act of critically evaluating practice means failures serve a valuable purpose of promoting learning. A psychologically safe workplace means child welfare workers are less likely to be defensive and entrenched in their current practice. Admitting mistakes is encouraged and valued as a learning opportunity for the individual and other workers. While psychological safety has not been researched in direct connection to transfer of learning, a wealth of research is available on psychological safety promoting organizational learning which is a closely related concept.

Filling the gap

This study focused on exploring expert opinion regarding TOL. An identified gap between individual project outcomes (increase in knowledge or skills) and cluster outcomes

(change in practice) has been identified in previous studies. Child welfare experts were surveyed about their experiences concerning child welfare training and transfer of learning. They identified several known and new factors impacting TOL for child welfare professionals. Findings help to expand understanding of how individual project outcomes lead to cluster outcomes (transfer of learning). Identified factors were added to Collins et al.'s (2008) model to help fill in the gap. The addition to the existing model includes TOL factors in three categories: individual learner; training; and organizational. Individual learner factors are characteristics inherent in the individual training participant. Training factors are characteristics of instructional design and delivery. Organizational factors are characteristics of the context or environment in which training occurs.

Filling the Gap or Developing an Umbrella?

The original intent of this study was to identify factors impacting TOL from child welfare training to child welfare practice. The focus was on the gap between completing training and changing practice. As expert panelists began exploring factors, it became obvious that TOL does not occur only in the space between training and practice. Transfer of learning needs to be considered *during all stages* of training. An effective TOL strategy requires evaluation and development of desired individual learner factors; a supportive and safe organizational environment; and supervisor support and follow-up. An organization's approach to transfer of learning should resemble an umbrella encompassing the culture of an organization as well as individual, training, and organizational factors.

Results highlighted a need for individual training participants to be ready for learning with critical thinking skills, ability to self-reflect, ability to empathize and practice being a life-long learner. Data also supported the key role relationships play in transfer of learning.

Feeling valued, trust in supervisor, genuine care between supervisors and colleagues, and supervisor support are relationship-related factors that must be established before training begins and carried out after workers have returned to practice. An organizational culture characterized by psychological safety and supportive relationships may enhance transfer of learning.

The Learning Transfer System Inventory (LTSI) was developed by Holton et al. (2000) in an effort to measure the presence of sixteen factors impacting TOL. They recommended utilizing the LTSI as a diagnostic tool helping to determine when an organization is ready for a training intervention and to guide needed pre-training interventions. With this approach, the LTSI is used before engaging in learning efforts to diagnose potential barriers in the transfer system then focus groups help explain findings. Although Holton et al.'s (2000) study was not focused on child welfare training, support for a broader approach to transfer of learning was established.

Authors focusing on child welfare settings also have recommended a broad approach to TOL planning. Curry et al. (1994) asserted TOL needs to be considered before, during, and after training. The Transfer of Training and Adult Learning (TOTAL) model was developed by Curry et al. (1994) as a systematic approach to assessing and intervening in the transfer process. Their approach examines positive and negative transfer forces of trainee, training, and organizational factors before, during, and after training workshops. They asserted that for transfer of training to be successful, it must be considered at every stage of training development.

Study results supported factors being considered from a broader organizational perspective. Effective transfer of learning requires an umbrella approach that creates a safe

environment for training and learning to occur. For example, the factor, genuine care between supervisors and colleagues must be in place long before training begins to have an impact on TOL.

Implications for Model Development

Three research questions were asked: What *individual learner* factors enhance TOL for child welfare workers? What *training* factors enhance TOL for child welfare workers? And, what *organizational* factors enhance TOL for child welfare workers? Expert panelists recruited for the study expressed their interest in the research questions and were active participants in a three round Delphi study to explore TOL factors for child welfare workers. Findings largely supported existing literature for individual, training and organizational factors impacting TOL. In addition, several new factors were identified indicating that factors impacting TOL exist beyond the gap between learning and change in practice. Emerging factors reflected professional social values, supervisor support, supervisor-related factors, agency-related factors, and relationship-related factors. Expansion of the comprehensive conceptual model proposed by Collins, it al. (2008) is indicated.

Professional social work values. Emerging individual factors reflected professional social work values. Not all child welfare workers are social workers, however, "social work values, ethics and best practice ideals infuse caseworker [child welfare] training documents" (Smith & Donovan, 2003, p. 543). The mission of the social work profession is rooted in a set of six core values. Those values are: (1) service, (2) social justice, (3) dignity and worth of the person, (4) importance of human relationships, (5) integrity, and (6) competence (NASW, 2008). The emerging factors, (a) values such as desire to serve and ability to empathize with families, (b) commitment to clients, (c) feeling valued by the agency, and (d)

trust in supervisor are all reflective of the core values of the social work profession. Professional social work values are important to child welfare practice and emergence of value-related factors in this study suggests they may also be important to transfer of learning.

The emerging factors, critical thinking skills, ability to self-reflect, perception of self as a life-long learner and commitment to changing practice are all reflective of social work education. The Council on Social Work Education (2012) has identified 10 core competencies and 42 practice behaviors required for generalist social work practice. Included in those core competencies and practice behaviors are the following: (1) practice personal reflection and self-correction to assure continual professional development, (2) engage in career-long learning, (3) apply critical thinking to inform and communicate professional judgments, (4) continuously discover, appraise, and attend to changing locates, populations, scientific and technological developments, and emerging societal trends to provide relevant services, and (5) use empathy and other interpersonal skills (CSWE, 2012). Core competencies are required for effective social work practice but they may also be helpful in TOL for child welfare workers.

Parallel process indicates that what is good practice for child welfare workers and families is also good practice for workers and supervisors, both horizontally and vertically in the organization hierarchy. The newly identified individual factors listed above have not been examined in regards to transfer of learning. However, they are core values and competencies for effective social work practice, and may also be factors in creating an environment for effective transfer of learning. Social work education and values promote development of supportive relationships with clients to enhance their personal growth and change (Chang, Scott & Decker, 2013). Several studies have shown counseling outcomes are largely

determined by the quality of the worker/client relationship (see for example, Flaskas, 2004). Developing supportive relationships in an organization could lead to professional growth/change for the worker. When workers feel safe to reflect on their practice, identify skill/knowledge gaps and are strongly committed to helping families, transfer of learning is more likely to occur.

Supervisor support. All training factors identified in the current study were previously identified in other studies with the exception of supervisor follow-up and support. The critical role of supervisors in child welfare practice and transfer of learning has been well-documented (Blume et al., 2010; Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Curry et al., 2005; Wehrmann et al., 2002). However, supervisor support is usually addressed under organizational factors in TOL studies. It appears the role of supervisors is so critical it should be considered with training *and* organizational factors. Instead of waiting until training is completed, emphasizing the role of supervisors earlier in the training process could enhance transfer of learning. Factors involving supervisor roles is addressed in organizational factors but is also included here to emphasize its importance.

Supervisor-related organizational factors. Supervisor-related factors have been previously studied and found to be important to employee retention (Curry, 2005) and TOL (Blume et al., 2010). The current study reinforces the important role of supervisors and adds detail about previously unstudied supervisor activities that might be beneficial to TOL. For example, the factor trainer is aware of training content indicates that if supervisors are not aware of training content they will not be able to follow-up, support, or offer feedback to trainees. Without support from supervisors that is aligned with training received, trainees will not view training efforts as important and will not change their practice. Additionally, the

factor, agency supports supervisors in developing supervisory skills highlights the importance of developing supervisors for their very important role in TOL. The importance of the supervisor in TOL has been well-documented and developing supervisor's skills enhances their ability to play a vital role in TOL.

Agency-related organizational factors. Agency-related factors emerging in the study included resources needed to implement change are available, and external partners are included in training efforts. Resources needed to implement change are available was ranked as the third most important organizational factor reflecting the practice environment for child welfare workers who are often asked to do difficult jobs without needed resources. The practice environment for child welfare workers also requires extensive work with external partners and panelists indicated working to include those partners in training was important. Child welfare workers and external agencies need a common mission and values to collaborate effectively. Including external partners in training efforts would be useful in developing shared knowledge, skills and values and increase opportunities for effective collaboration.

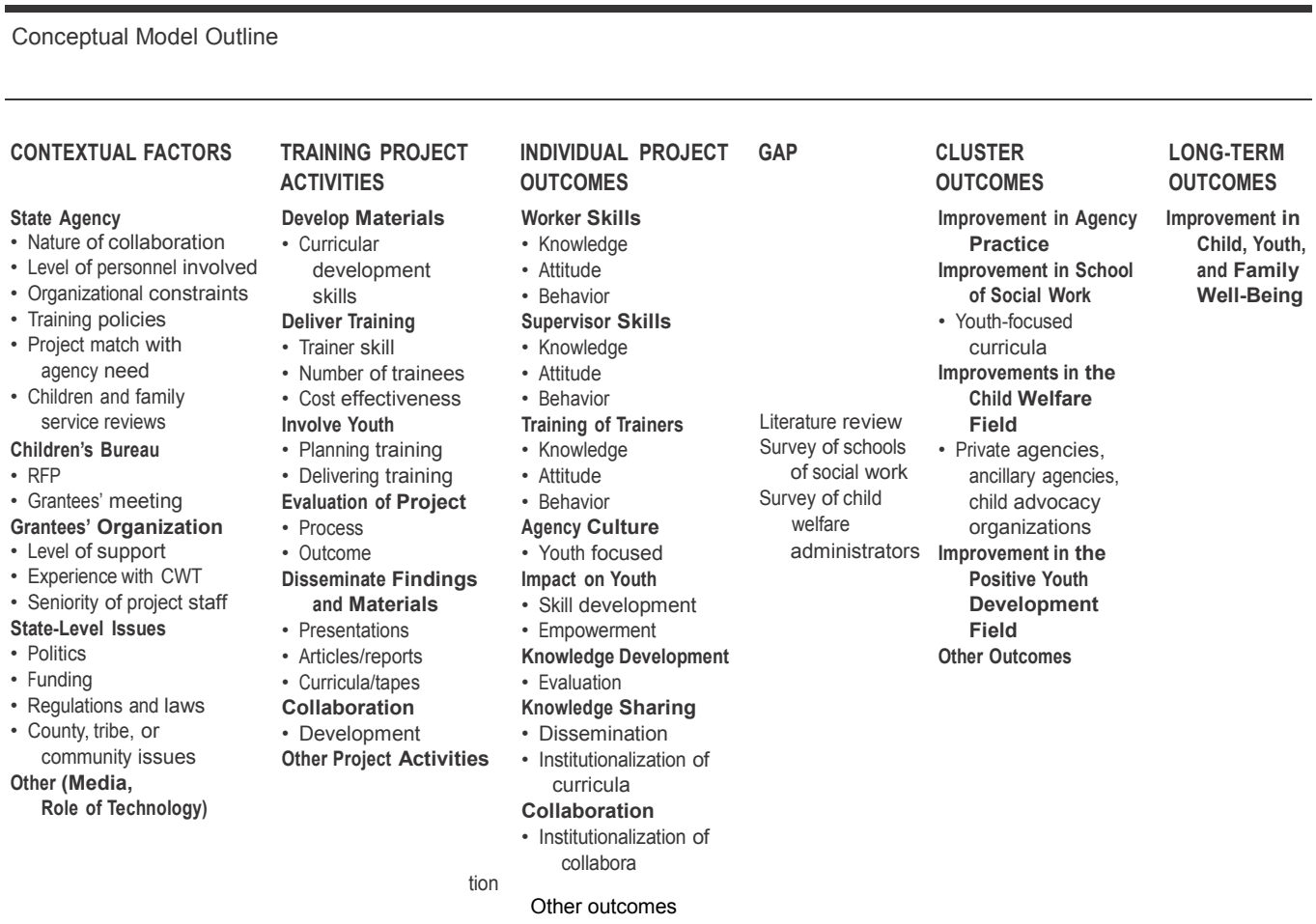
Relationship-related organizational factors. Also included in organizational factors was a group of factors reflecting relationship issues. Findings indicated the importance for child welfare workers to feel valued by supervisor/colleagues/agency, genuine care between supervisors and colleagues, and trust and trusting relationships to enhance TOL. The importance of relationship issues is not surprising given the education and values serving as the foundation of child welfare practice. Child welfare workers are trained to develop helping relationships with clients to effectively encourage change. Child welfare workers who experience supportive relationships with their agency, supervisor and peers are likewise able

to reflect on their practice and make practice changes. From an organizational learning perspective, this kind of work environment constitutes psychological safety.

Results support findings from previous studies focused on both corporate and human-service settings. In addition, results indicate further exploration of unique child welfare factors could result in more effective training efforts. Specifically, attention to relationship issues at the organization, supervisor, and practitioner levels would benefit TOL. Relationship-related factors identified form the foundation for organizational culture. An organizational culture where workers are safe to be critical thinkers, reflect on their practice, and receive support from supervisors and colleagues enhances TOL.

Expanding the comprehensive conceptual model. Child welfare training has no widely accepted model of TOL specific to the profession. However, Collins et al. (2008) offered a Comprehensive Conceptual Model for planning and evaluating child welfare training projects. Collins et al. (2008) designed the comprehensive conceptual model as part of a national evaluation project. A draft of the model was developed by a project team through a series of discussions over a 6 month period. The model was presented to a larger group of project representatives and their feedback was used to strengthen and clarify the model. The researchers identified a gap between Individual Project Outcomes and Cluster Outcomes reflecting successful project outcomes do not necessarily transfer to longer-term impacts. This gap, in part, represents transfer of learning where learning in one context impacts performance in another (Perkins, 1992). The Comprehensive Conceptual Model developed by Collins et al. is presented in Figure 5.

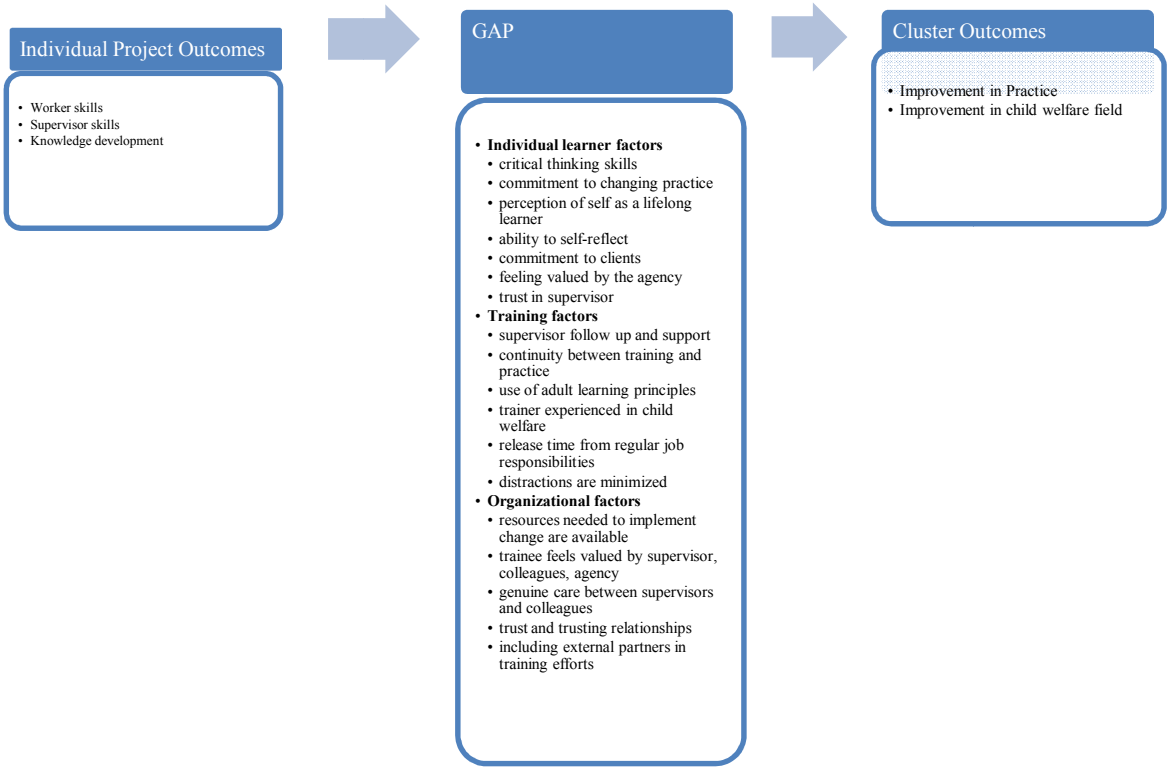
Figure 5. Comprehensive Conceptual Model. Collins, M.E., Amodeo, M. & Clay, C. (2008). Planning and evaluating child welfare training projects: Working toward a comprehensive conceptual model. Child Welfare League of America. Reprinted with permission from Mary Collins.



Collins et al. (2008) acknowledged the gap in their model and suggested the following to expand understanding of the underlying linkage between individual project outcomes and cluster outcomes: literature review, survey of schools of social work, and survey of child welfare administrators. This study contributes to a greater understanding of the identified gap in Collins et al.'s model. While Collins et al. (2008) conceptualized a gap between individual project outcomes and cluster outcomes, the narrative accompanying the model addressed contextual factors that impact transfer of learning from individual to cluster outcomes. As the

current study demonstrates, transfer of learning is greatly impacted by the organizational environment so a model reflecting consideration of TOL factors at all stages of training development would be more useful. Figure 6 outlines transfer of learning factors helping to fill in the gap identified in the comprehensive conceptual model proposed by Collins et al. (2008).

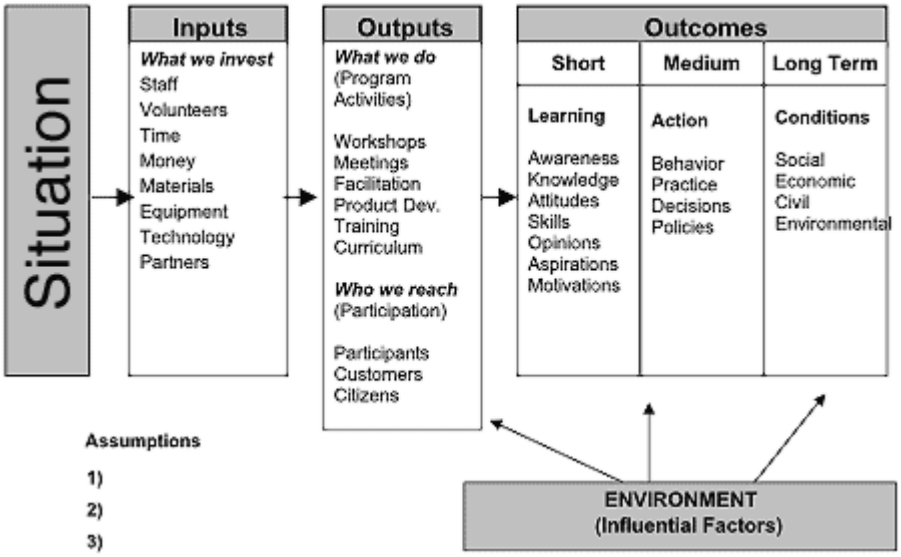
Figure 6. Factors in the Identified Gap



Expanding a basic logic model. The comprehensive conceptual model presented by Collins et al. (2008) reinforces the idea that TOL occurs between training and change in practice. This approach to TOL will never be effective because TOL is a complex process that begins before training is planned and requires a psychologically safe organizational culture. Developing such a culture takes time and effort before, during and after training.

What occurs in "the gap" can help TOL but a more comprehensive, "umbrella" approach is necessary. A basic logic model can be applied to show how a broad approach to TOL can be conceived. Logic models offer a visual representation of the process a program goes through from resource allocation to final outcomes (Millar et al., 2001). Logic models serve as a planning and evaluation tool (Arnold, 2002) helping to make explicit the assumptions that resource allocation will result in certain outputs and then expected outcomes. A basic logic model is presented in figure 7.

Figure 7. Basic Logic Model



Inputs. In a logic model, inputs refers to "what we invest" and can include staff, volunteers, time, money, material, equipment, and technology. The current study, coupled with existing literature, identifies individual trainee factors that enhance transfer of learning. These factors should be considered at the "inputs" stage of the logic model. Individual factors may be present in trainees already or they may be developed. Either way, an assessment of individual factors is necessary to determine if trainees are ready to begin the training process

with what they need to transfer training. Individual factors to be considered include: (a) motivation, (b) personal capacity for transfer, (c) willingness to try something new, (d) ability to generalize, (e) critical thinking skills, (f) ability to self-reflect, (g) perception of self as a lifelong learner, (h) desire to serve and ability to empathize, (i) commitment to changing practice, (j) interest in the topic, and (k) commitment to clients.

Outputs. The outputs stage of a logic model refers to "what we do" or program activities and "who we reach." These activities include workshops, meetings, and training curriculum. Who we reach includes participants, customers, and citizens. Training factors identified in the current study and existing literature as enhancing TOL include: (a) relevant content, (b) practice and feedback, (c) behavioral modeling, (d) real-world training examples, (e) continuity between training concepts and practice, (f) adult learning principles, (g) release time from regular job responsibilities, (h) trainer is experienced in child welfare, (i) training is grounded in research, (j) distractions are minimized, (k) trainer is interesting, exciting, and energetic, and (l) training content is interesting. Trainers and training programs should assessed prior to implementation determining if these factors are present in the training plan.

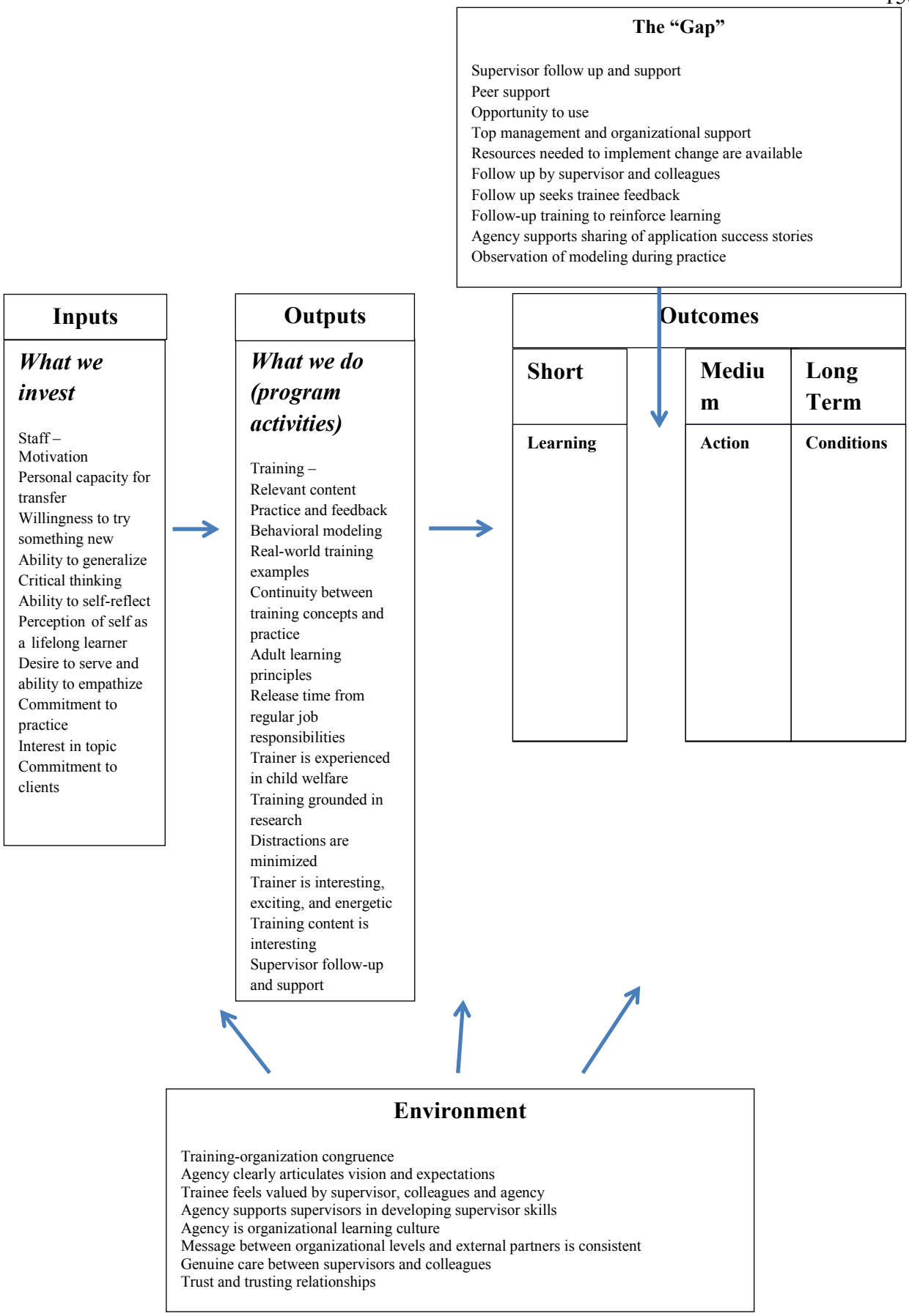
Outcomes. In the logic model used for this study, "outcomes" are divided into three sections: short term outcomes (learning); medium term outcomes (action); and long term outcomes (conditions). The gap identified in Collins et al. (2008) comprehensive conceptual model occurs between short term outcomes of learning and medium term outcomes of action. The focus of transfer of learning is to get learning occurring in training transferred to actions in practice. Factors impacting this gap include: (a) supervisor follow-up and support, (b) peer support, (c) opportunity to use, (d) top management and organizational support, (e) resources needed to implement change are available, (f) follow-up by supervisor and colleagues, (g)

follow-up seeks trainee feedback, (h) follow-up training to reinforce learning, and (i) observation of modeling during practice. Implementation of these factors primarily takes place after training and before a change in practice, but to be most effective, these factors need to be assessed and planned for before training takes place.

Environment. Impacting all the elements of the logic model is the "environment." The environment consists of factors influencing all aspects of the logic model. Environment factors impacting TOL include: (a) training-organization congruence, (b) agency clearly articulates vision and expectation, (c) trainee feels valued by supervisor, colleagues and agency, (d) agency supports supervisors in developing supervisor skills, (e) agency is an organizational learning culture, (f) message between organizational levels and external partners is consistent, (g) genuine care between supervisors and colleagues, and (h) trust and trusting relationships. Assessment for presence of these factors in an organization could help to develop a training plan designed to enhance TOL.

Placement of identified factors in the logic model illustrates planning for TOL requires an umbrella approach. TOL factors should be considered at all stages in the learning and training process. Indeed, creation of a psychologically safe environment is necessary for effective TOL. Transfer of learning strategies should be considered when hiring and developing staff, when developing training curriculum, when developing supervisors, and when developing organization-wide training plans. Figure 8 shows findings from the study integrated into a basic logic model.

Figure 8, TOL for Child Welfare Training: Logic Model


The "Gap"
Supervisor follow up and support
Peer support
Opportunity to use
Top management and organizational support
Resources needed to implement change are available
Follow up by supervisor and colleagues
Follow up seeks trainee feedback
Follow-up training to reinforce learning
Agency supports sharing of application success stories
Observation of modeling during practice
Inputs
What we invest
Staff – Motivation
Personal capacity for transfer
Willingness to try something new
Ability to generalize
Critical thinking
Ability to self-reflect
Perception of self as a lifelong learner
Desire to serve and ability to empathize
Commitment to practice
Interest in topic
Commitment to clients
Outputs
What we do (program activities)
Training –
Relevant content
Practice and feedback
Behavioral modeling
Real-world training examples
Continuity between training concepts and practice
Adult learning principles
Release time from regular job responsibilities
Trainer is experienced in child welfare
Training grounded in research
Distractions are minimized
Trainer is interesting, exciting, and energetic
Training content is interesting
Supervisor follow-up and support
Outcomes
Short
Learning
Mediu m
Action
Long Term
Conditions
Environment
Training-organization congruence
Agency clearly articulates vision and expectations
Trainee feels valued by supervisor, colleagues and agency
Agency supports supervisors in developing supervisor skills
Agency is organizational learning culture
Message between organizational levels and external partners is consistent
Genuine care between supervisors and colleagues
Trust and trusting relationships

Implications for Research

The focus of this study was exploring individual, training and organizational factors impacting TOL for child welfare workers. Many Delphi studies seek consensus, however, consensus was not a goal of this study. Because TOL specific to child welfare training has not been widely studied, the goal was to generate and explore expert opinion. Recommendations for future research include:

1. A follow up study that included a focus group with the intent of moving toward consensus would be helpful in narrowing a list of factors that could then be studied in more detail.
2. Follow through of operationalizing identified factors was begun in this study. Further exploration to develop definitions of factors would be helpful as additional studies are developed to evaluate actual impact on TOL of identified factors. It is important that as factors are identified and studied a shared definition is used.
3. Study factors identified in this study for actual impact on TOL. Ultimately, the result of a Delphi study is an opinion. While it represents an educated opinion, it is an opinion nonetheless. Future studies need to determine if opinions expressed by panelists in this study are reflective of TOL in child welfare settings.
4. This study covered one state-wide geography and could benefit from a larger population sample. Future studies could look at national or international samples for expand understanding of TOL and child welfare training in a variety of locations.

Implications for Practice

Expert opinion was utilized in this study to identify important factors for TOL and child welfare training and was supported by multiple parties including central office

personnel, training providers, and supervisors. This study has direct implications for practice as child welfare agencies seek to develop effective training programs. Recommendations for practice are organized by individual learners, training, the "gap" and environmental or organizational factors.

Individual learner recommendations. Individual learner factors are characteristics, qualities or abilities inherent in or demonstrated by the individual trainee. Several individual learner factors were identified in this study as key to TOL in child welfare training. Recommendations include:

1. Design employee interview process to determine presence of desired factors. For example, one of the factors identified as important was, ability to self-reflect. An interview question to determine if an individual has this characteristic might be, "Can you provide an example of a time you reflected on your practice? What prompted the reflection? What was the outcome?"
2. Assess current staff for desired characteristics and develop a plan to help staff acquire or improve as needed.
3. Design a plan to develop an organizational culture where desired characteristics are encouraged with modeling and support. Ultimately, even if an individual worker has a skill they will not use it if the culture is not safe. Self-reflection involves risk taking by acknowledging less-than-perfect performance. If self-reflection results in negative personal consequences, workers will not self-reflect, even if they are capable of doing so.

Training recommendations. Training factors include instructional and design characteristics such as incorporation of learning principles, content relevance and trainer

characteristics. Release time and reduced distractions are two essential training factors for TOL and child welfare training. Recommendations for this factor include:

1. Develop a method for coverage of responsibilities while workers are attending training. For example, dedicated "roving" workers could function at the office for workers attending training. The roving worker would be the only person able to interrupt the worker attending training.

2. Trainers should insist trainees turn phone and laptops off, with the exception of responding to emergencies. Supervisors attending training must also model this behavior. Develop a culture where the expectation is full presence at trainings.

3. Assure desired training factors are included in contract language with organizations providing training. Trainers would be required to develop a training approach inclusive of those factors. For example, trainers could be required to use behavioral modeling in their presentations.

Factors in the "gap." The "gap" referred to here is the space between short term outcomes of learning and medium term outcomes of action. Important factors in this space are dominated by support and follow up. Recommendations include:

1. Develop a supervisor education course designed to assist supervisors in acquiring or enhancing identified factors important to TOL. This would be helpful to individual supervisors and would also begin development of a culture where support from agency, supervisors and peers is the norm.

2. Ensure opportunity to use new learning and supervisor support by including evaluation of new learning goals in annual review process.

3. Realistically identify and acknowledge what resources are needed for implementation of new learning.

Environment or organizational recommendations. This group of factors can be difficult to measure and develop. However, it is especially important because it impacts every aspect of learning/training in an organization. If an organizational culture does not support development of desired characteristics, they will not be present. Recommendations include:

1. Agency development and communication of a comprehensive training plan including visions and expectations.
2. Develop a comprehensive program to help supervisors understand and develop a psychologically safe organizational environment.
3. Work to develop a culture of trust and caring. Model desired behaviors at all levels of the organization. For example, have supervisors demonstrate self-reflection using an actual practice situation from their experience.

Conclusion

This study originally sought to illuminate the gap between training and change in practice to enhance transfer of learning for child welfare workers. The data do not support such a limited lens on transfer of learning. While actual transfer of learning occurs in the gap between training and change in practice, successful transfer requires development of a culture conducive TOL. Findings indicate TOL is impacted by every component of an organization. Individual learners have (or can develop) characteristics that encourage or inhibit transferring learning. Training elements also enhance or inhibit transfer of learning and must be considered. However, the most important component is relationships among colleagues and supervisors. Trusting and supportive relationships develop in the context of a psychologically

safe work culture and have a dramatic effect on TOL. Child welfare workers who feel valued, supported, and safe are more able and likely to transfer learning from training to practice.

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APPENDIX A

Script for Chief Presentation

This script will be used to introduce the research project to the Chiefs of Social Work (expert panel). This presentation will take place at a regularly scheduled Chief meeting. The purpose is to: (1) inform potential members of the expert panel of the purpose of the research (2) inform participants of the time commitment anticipated (3) obtain contact information for other potential panel members (4) generate excitement for the opportunity to lend participant's expert knowledge to an important topic.

Thank you for allowing me to come and present my research project to you today. I recognize that you are all very busy but my hope is that you will agree this is an important topic, worth researching. Your expert opinion is essential to the success of this project.

Statement of the Problem

Training for child welfare workers is often seen as the solution to a variety of issues including CFSR Program Improvement Plans and recruitment and retention efforts. Millions of dollars are spent annually on child welfare training programs and it is essential that those expenditures result in improved knowledge, skills and attitudes for child welfare workers. Child welfare training is not just about effective learning, it is about effective practice. For effective practice, training must transfer to the work environment. Transfer of Learning is defined as occurring when learning in one context impacts performance in another context. Many child welfare training efforts are not evaluated beyond reaction/satisfaction surveys of participants so the extent of transfer is unknown.

Although extensive research has been conducted regarding transfer of learning (TOL) in corporate settings, limited research is available in regards to measuring outcomes of child welfare training. The demanding nature of child welfare work requires a unique set of skills

and abilities and training is often relied upon to help child welfare workers develop needed skills. The core technology of child welfare practice resides within the worker and his or her ability to engage, assess, provide counsel, plan, evaluate, and make decisions. If training does not translate into good decision making, results could have serious and long-lasting negative impacts on families and children. For training to be effective, it must transfer from the training room to the work arena. You guys are child welfare experts and are in a unique position to identify factors that help improve learning transfer for child welfare workers.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to explore what child welfare experts identify as key factors to enhance transfer of learning from child welfare training to child welfare practice. Specifically, the following research questions will be addressed:

Research Question 1. What individual learner characteristics enhance transfer of learning for child welfare workers?

Research Question 2. What training characteristics enhance transfer of learning for child welfare workers?

Research Question 3. What environmental characteristics enhance transfer of learning for child welfare workers?

Methodology and Time Commitment

The study will utilize the Delphi Method. Delphi is a method for structuring a group communication process using a series of surveys interspersed with feedback from the researcher. The process will include three rounds. The first round will ask open-ended questions linked to the research questions. Responses will be analyzed for themes, and consolidated into a list. The second round will distribute the analyzed list to the expert panel and they will be asked to rate items on the list in terms of importance. The rankings will be

analyzed and the analysis will be distributed for a third round to the expert panel. In the third round the experts will be asked to comment on the degree of their agreement with the final, rank ordered items and provide behavioral descriptions of the items. Data collection will be via Qualtrics survey research software. You will receive an email with a link to the survey which is completed and submitted electronically. Based on a previous pilot study it is anticipated that all three rounds of the study will take a total of 40 minutes to complete.

You are the Experts

The rigor of this study is closely related to the expert panel. Chiefs of Child Welfare are identified as experts based on their job description and minimum qualifications. You have all participated in training and supervised workers who participate in training. Your expert opinion is central to this study. However, I recognize that many experts within the field of child welfare do not currently occupy the position of Chief. Therefore, I am requesting that each of you identify one or two child welfare practitioners within your program whom you consider to be experts based on education, experience or special training. Please provide me with their contact information and I will invite them to participate.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this study.

APPENDIX B

Email to the expert panel

Thank you again for your participation in this important research. Your expert opinion is central to this study, and your participation is appreciated. This study will explore what child welfare experts identify as key factors to enhance transfer of learning from child welfare training to child welfare practice.

Please click on the link below and complete the survey. This round of the study is estimated to take 15 minutes to complete. Remember, participants who complete all three rounds of the study will be entered into a drawing to receive a Kindle Fire.

APPENDIX C

Round One Survey

Pilot Project TOL

Q7 The University of Idaho Institutional Review Board has approved this project. Transfer of Learning (TOL) is defined as occurring when learning in one context impacts performance in another context. The purpose of this study is to explore what child welfare experts identify as key factors to enhance transfer of learning from child welfare training to child welfare practice. You have been identified as an expert in child welfare practice and your participation is key to this research project. You will be asked to complete a series of three surveys. The study should take approximately 40 minutes, in total. There are no or minimal risks associated with this project. You benefit from this project by helping us understand what experts identify as factors that promote transfer of learning for child welfare training. This study will contribute to the gap in literature related to child welfare training and TOL; expand understanding of job specific aspects of TOL; and lead to development of a checklist to be used by child welfare trainers and supervisors as they attempt to train and maintain a competent work force. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study. Only the researcher will be able to connect specific responses to participants. No reported data will be associated with a specific participant. All data will be maintained in a password protected electronic file within Qualtrics' electronic research program. As a token of appreciation for your time and expertise, participants completing all three rounds of the study will be entered into a drawing to win a Kindle Fire electronic reader. If you have questions about the study you can ask the investigator at a time you feel is appropriate.

Investigator Faculty Sponsor

Kateri Ray
University of Idaho
Department of Education
Moscow, ID 83844-0000
Ph. 208-884-1111

Laura Holyoke
University of Idaho
Department of Education
Moscow, ID 83844-1234
Ph. 208-885-0000

During the course of this study, you may stop at any time with no penalty. Are you over 18 years old, understand this consent, and agree to its contents? Clicking on yes below indicates consent to participate in the described study.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q11 Which group best describes you?

- Hispanic or Latino/Latina (1)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (2)
- Asian (3)
- Black or African American (4)
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (5)
- White (6)

Q2 Please indicate the years of experience you have in child welfare practice.

Q9 What is your current age?

Q1 Please indicate your highest degree

- Bachelor of Social Work (1)
- Master of Social Work (2)
- Other (3) _____

Q10 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

Q8 What is your present job title?

- Chief of Social Work (1)
- Social Worker III (2)
- Social Worker II (3)
- Social Worker I (4)
- Other (5) _____

Q12 Transfer of Learning is when something learned in one context is used in another context. Example: A worker is trained on motivational interviewing techniques and the next time he/she has a resistant client he/she uses techniques he/she learned in training to engage the client in treatment. Individual learner factors are characteristics inherent in the individual training participant. Example: A trainee's internal motivation to learn. Training

factors are characteristics of instructional design and delivery. Example: The specific curriculum used by trainers. Organizational factors are characteristics of the context or environment in which training occurs. Example: Topics presented in training are also discussed in employee meetings. Given those descriptions and reflecting back to trainings you have participated in and/or trainings your supervisees have participated in, please respond to the following questions:

Q13 What individual learner factors enhanced transfer of learning to the work place?

- Click to write Choice 1 (1) _____
- Click to write Choice 2 (2) _____
- Click to write Choice 3 (3) _____
- Click to write Choice 4 (4) _____
- Click to write Choice 5 (5) _____
- Click to write Choice 6 (6) _____

Q14 What individual learner factors inhibited transfer learning to the work place?

- Click to write Choice 1 (1) _____
- Click to write Choice 2 (2) _____
- Click to write Choice 3 (3) _____
- Click to write Choice 4 (4) _____
- Click to write Choice 5 (5) _____
- Click to write Choice 6 (6) _____

Q15 What training factors enhanced transfer learning to the work place?

- Click to write Choice 1 (1) _____
- Click to write Choice 2 (2) _____
- Click to write Choice 3 (3) _____
- Click to write Choice 4 (4) _____
- Click to write Choice 5 (5) _____
- Click to write Choice 6 (6) _____

Q16 What training factors inhibited transfer learning to the work place?

- Click to write Choice 1 (1) _____
- Click to write Choice 2 (2) _____
- Click to write Choice 3 (3) _____
- Click to write Choice 4 (4) _____
- Click to write Choice 5 (5) _____
- Click to write Choice 6 (6) _____

Q17 What organizational factors enhanced transfer learning to the work place?

- Click to write Choice 1 (1) _____
- Click to write Choice 2 (2) _____
- Click to write Choice 3 (3) _____
- Click to write Choice 4 (4) _____
- Click to write Choice 5 (5) _____
- Click to write Choice 6 (6) _____

Q18 What organizational factors inhibited transfer learning to the work place?

- Click to write Choice 1 (1) _____
- Click to write Choice 2 (2) _____
- Click to write Choice 3 (3) _____
- Click to write Choice 4 (4) _____
- Click to write Choice 5 (5) _____
- Click to write Choice 6 (6) _____

Q19 Thank you for your participation in this survey. Your expertise is central to this study. Remember that completion of all three rounds qualifies you for entry into a drawing to win a Kindle Fire electronic reader. Following analysis of Round one data, you will receive an email with an electronic link to complete the following round. Thank you again for your participation.

APPENDIX D

Permission Letter from Informing Science Institute

Kateri P. Ray

From: Eli Cohen <elicohen@informingscience.org>
Sent: Saturday, May 24, 2014 8:56 AM
To: Kateri P. Ray
Subject: RE: Request to Copy

Kateri,

You have permission, although in the future you should mention how you wish to use the paper in your dissertation and its full citation. I found the paper at http://www.jite.org/documents/Vol6/JITEv6p001-021Skulmoski212.pdf . Be sure to cite the paper properly, including the URL at which you accessed it. If you will be reprinting the entire article, be sure to include the original copyright notice, as shown on the first page of the paper.

Prof. dr Eli COHEN
Executive Director
Informing Science Institute
Publisher of the journal

-----Original Message-----
From: Kateri P. Ray [mailto:kpray@lcsc.edu]
Sent: Friday, May 23, 2014 9:46 PM
To: publisher@informingscience.org
Subject: Request to Copy

Hello,

I am working on my dissertation looking at transfer of learning through the lens of a logic model. I am requesting permission to use a re-print of the Typical Delphi Process model from Skulmoski, Hartman and Krahn's The Delphi Method for Graduate Research (2007). The (working) title of my dissertation is An Exploration of Factors Impacting Child Welfare Training and Transfer of Learning: A Delphi Study.

Thank you in advance for considering my request.

Kateri Ray, Doctoral Candidate
University of Idaho=

APPENDIX E

Permission Letter from Purdue University

Kateri P. Ray

From: Laura Hoelscher <joe-ed@joe.org>
Sent: Thursday, June 19, 2014 3:05 AM
To: Kateri P. Ray
Subject: Re:

Importance: High

Dear Ms. Ray,

As the editor of the *Journal of Extension* (*JOE*), I am very glad to grant you permission to use the article you cite as you have described. That's one of the things that *JOE* is "there for," after all.

We do ask that you credit *JOE*, the article, and the authors of the article.

Sincerely,

Laura Hoelscher

--

Laura Hoelscher, Ph.D.
Editor, *Journal of Extension*
E-Mail: <joe-ed@joe.org>
Fax: (765) 496-1117
Department of Agricultural Communication
Purdue University
615 W. State Street
West Lafayette, IN 47907

On 6/18/14 10:12 PM, "Kateri P. Ray" <kpray@lcsc.edu> wrote:

Hello,

I am working on my dissertation looking at transfer of learning through the lens of a logic model. The title of my dissertation is: Exploring Factors Impacting Transfer of Learning for Child Welfare Training: A Delphi Study.

I am requesting permission to use a re-print of Arnold's (2002) logic model located in

Arnold, M. E. (2002). Be "logical" about program evaluation: Begin with learning assessment. Extension Journal, 40(3).

Thank you in advance for considering my request.

Kateri Ray, Doctoral Candidate
University of Idaho

APPENDIX F

Permission Letter from Mary E. Collins

Kateri P. Ray

From: Collins, Mary E <mcollins@bu.edu>
Sent: Thursday, June 26, 2014 9:18 AM
To: Kateri P. Ray
Subject: RE: Comprehensive Conceptual Model

Hi Kateri -- Thank you for your interest in our work. I don't think special permission is needed. You simply need to cite the article where it appears.

Your dissertation sounds interesting. Best of luck as you complete your Ph.D.

Mary

From: Kateri P. Ray [kpray@lcsc.edu]
Sent: Thursday, June 26, 2014 11:57 AM
To: Collins, Mary E
Subject: Comprehensive Conceptual Model

Hello Dr. Collins,

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Idaho. I am completing my dissertation entitled "Exploring Factors Impacting Transfer of Learning for Child Welfare Training: A Delphi Study."

I am writing to requests permission to copy your conceptual model outline from:

Collins, M. E., Amodeo, M. & Clay, C. (2008). Planning and evaluating child welfare training projects: Working toward a comprehensive conceptual model. Child Welfare, 87(5), 69-86.

I completed a Delphi study of child welfare experts in Idaho and my findings apply directly to the "gap" identified in your model. I have written to the Child Welfare League of America requesting permission to use, but have not heard back from them. I am hoping you may be able to assist or direct me to someone who can.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Kateri Ray, LCSW
Doctoral Candidate
University of Idaho, Education

APPENDIX G

Approval Letter from University of Idaho

University of Idaho

November 8, 2013

Office of Research Assurances
Institutional Review Board
875 Perimeter Drive, MS 3010
Moscow ID 83844-3010

Phone: 208-885-6162
Fax: 208-885-5752
irb@uidaho.edu

To: Laura Holyoke
Cc: Kateri Picard Ray

From: Traci Craig, PhD
Chair, University of Idaho Institutional Review Board
University Research Office
Moscow, ID 83844-3010

Title: 'An Exploration of Factors Impacting Child Welfare Training and Transfer of Learning: A Delphi Study'

Project: 13-266

Approved: 11/07/13
Expires: 11/06/14

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Idaho, I am pleased to inform you that the protocol for the above-named research project is approved as offering no significant risk to human subjects.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of this memo. Should there be significant changes in the protocol for this project, it will be necessary for you to resubmit the protocol for review by the Committee.

Traci Craig

Traci Craig