Fostering Engagement by Working Relationally

Supporting Parents and Caregivers Following a Substantiated Child Protection Concern.

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Acknowledgement & Gratitude

xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), & səlilwətał (Tsleil Waututh) peoples

I am deeply grateful to the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), & səlilwətał (Tsleil Waututh) peoples, the rightful stewards of the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory on which I live and work. As an uninvited settler whose ancestors are from Scandinavia, I am committed to working towards reconciliation. This work starts with recognizing that since time immemorial Indigenous peoples have been, currently are, and will continue to be the traditional caretakers of these lands. Being committed to reconciliation also means that I uphold anti-oppression values in my work as a mental health clinician for the Ministry of Children and Family Development and as a student at the University of Victoria.

Executive Summary

One of the most complex challenges that a Child Protection Social Worker can face is when a parent or caregiver they are working with does not respond to intervention addressing a substantiated child protection concern in a way that makes the intervention readily possible to conduct (Mirick, 2012; Rawlings et al., 2021; Sepers et al., 2022). Within this dynamic, a parent or caregiver can be blamed and ascribed labels such as 'uncooperative' (Boutanquoi et al., 2020; Forrester et al., 2012), 'hostile' (Ferguson et al., 2021; Forrester et al., 2008), "very difficult and resistant" (Bogo et al., 2017, p. 710), or the file can be considered to be a 'denial case' (Forrester et al., 2008; Turnell & Essex, 2006). Foundational to this challenge is the predominant belief in Western psychology that the person who is considered as 'responsible' for a problem "must admit responsibility, and gain insight into their problematic behaviour, as the means by which change can occur" (Turnell & Essex, 2006, p. 8).

With this information in mind, Selena Chang, Family Services Team Leader for the North Shore, was interested in alternative ways child protection social workers can conceptualize responses to a substantiated child protection concern in a way that does not blame or stigmatize the parent or caregiver. She also wanted to learn about relational approaches for engaging with parents and caregivers subjected to mandated child protection services.

Methods

A literature review of scholarly articles and non-academic literature was undertaken in February 2023 using JSTOR, PsychInfo, Ebsco: Social Work Abstracts, and Google Scholar. Keywords included "social work" AND "child protection" and the various synonyms of these terms, including "social service work" and "child welfare". Also included was the word "Canad*) to gain primarily Canadian-related literature. In addition, blame-laden terms used to describe parents and caregivers were also added to the search including "resist*", "avoid*", and "hostile". From the search results, the abstracts and conclusions of 48 articles were reviewed and a total of 23 were selected and read in full to address the research questions informing this project. Seven non-academic documents were also chosen, as were three books.

Findings

The lasting impact of colonialism is a key finding in this literature review. In 2022, across British Columbia (BC) there were 22,519 protection reports assessed to have substantiated child protection concerns (MCFD, 2023, n.p.). All reports are not evaluated equally, as evidenced by the over-representation of Indigenous children and youth at the child protection investigation stage (Sinha et al., 2013b) and by the number of Indigenous children and youth in care (Tremblett et al., 2021). Overrepresentation was also observed in the literature review given that the majority of articles containing North American data included information regarding Indigenous people's experiences within the child protection system despite none of the search terms explicitly referencing Indigenous peoples.

The Western psychological lens that purports change is contingent upon admission of wrongdoing is shown to be a barrier to successful child protection intervention (Turnell & Essex, 2006) as it narrows the focus on the abuse and/or neglect prevention instead of focusing on future safety and the well-being of the child or youth, *and* that of their family or caregiving system (Baines, 2011; Oliver & Charles, 2015; Trocme et al., 2023). Incorporating a values-based and relational framework that goes beyond 'right and wrong', such as the APPF "Circle as a Restorative Practice", can support a parent or caregiver to feel respected and heard and can offer an opportunity to be a collaborator within the child protection intervention thus making participation more likely to occur (Saar-Heiman, 2023).

By increasing a social worker's understanding of parent or caregiver responses to child protection intervention outcomes of child protection intervention can improve. A conceptual framework in the literature is *reactance theory* (Mirick, 2012; Seidler et al., 2020), which avoids pathologizing a parent or caregiver by considering 'negative' reactions to child protection intervention (hostility, anger, etc) as healthy human responses to having freedoms restricted. The role of shame is also crucial for a child protection social worker to understand as it inhibits the development of rapport and communication (Walker, 2011). In addition, the parent or caregiver's experience of the power imbalance between them and the child protection social worker is shown to correlate significantly with the development of a working relationship (Forrester, 2008). Evidence points to the effectiveness of specific relationally-focused

programs/approaches including *The Resolutions Approach* (Turnell & Essex, 2006), *Signs of Safety* (Oliver & Charles, 2015; Turnell & Edwards, 1999) and *motivational interviewing* (Hall et al., 2020; Forrester et al., 2012).

Finally, wraparound supports that address the needs of the family system as a whole (Baines, 2006; Browne et al., 2016; Sepers et al., 2022) and social worker micro-skills such as having open engagement (Rawlings et al., 2021), addressing systemic barriers within the first meeting (Fargion, 2014) and having shared goals with the parent or caregiver (Hall et al., 2020) are also shown to support the development of a positive working relationship. High caseloads limit the time a social worker is able to spend with a parent or caregiver, thus inhibiting the development of the rapport required to have a positive working relationship (Ferguson et al., 2022). Overall, this literature review indicates that building a relationship and continuing to work relationally with a parent or caregiver following child protection involvement is critical to successful child protection intervention.

Recommendations

1. Integrate the APPF "Circle as a Restorative Practice" into regular practice (APPF, 2015);

2. Mandate relational skill building programs as core competency training for MCFD Child Protection Social Workers including *The Resolutions Approach* (Turnell & Essex, 2006), *Signs of Safety* (Turnell & Edwards), *motivational interviewing* (Hall et al., 2020; Forrester et al., 2012) and/or *Emotion Focused Family Therapy* (Lafrance et al., 2020); integrate relational skill building into social work graduate programs/provide extra relational training in practicum placements;

3. Cap caseloads so that social workers have the *time* to build relationships with the parents and caregivers they work with;

4. Provide supervision for social workers *and* team leaders that goes beyond case management; provide training to team leaders to help them support their teams;

5. Resource social workers with the tools to be able to provide intersectoral supports/resources to help eliminate the barriers preventing a parent or caregiver from meeting their child's needs for safety.

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Background

       The role of a child protection social worker is highly complex and social workers are expected to work in partnership with parents and caregivers while, at the same time, being bound to uphold the mandate of the Child, Family and Community Service Act [CFCSA] (Forrester et al., 2008). One of the most complex challenges that a child protection social worker can face within the context of a substantiated child protection concern, is when a parent or caregiver does not respond to intervention in a way that makes the intervention readily possible to conduct (Mirick, 2012; Rawlings et al., 2021; Sepers et al., 2022). This dynamic is frequently referred to as "denial" in the research (Forrester et al., 2008; Turnell & Essex, 2006), and parents or caregivers are often assigned labels such as 'uncooperative' (Boutanquoi et al., 2020; Forrester et al., 2012), 'hostile' (Ferguson et al., 2021; Forrester et al., 2008), and "difficult and resistant" (Bogo et al., 2018, p. 710)[1].

       The CFCSA is a provincial law which outlines the rights and responsibilities of those working within BC's child protection system. It sets out the legal framework for child protection services in the province and the roles and responsibilities of child protection social workers, including the vital role of ensuring the safety and well-being of children and youth. Child protection social workers and parents or caregivers intersect with each other, and with the CFCSA, as illustrated in Figure 1. It is essential to consider that all such interactions are occurring on unceded territories and within the broader context of settler-colonialism as the mandate of the CFCSA is reflective of onging colonial power relations. This detrimental legacy certainly impacts Indigenous children, youth and families whom "often do not have access to culturally safe care, or care that integrates cultural practices and builds on individual and community resilience" (A Pathway to Hope, n.d., p. 7). The larger circles of the social worker and the CFCSA are reflective of the significant power dynamics that a social worker upholding this legislation inherently has over a parent or a caregiver.

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[1] The alternative language used in this literature review has been chosen very deliberately. By saying "does not respond in a way that makes the intervention readily possible to conduct" avoids blaming or stigmatizing the parent or caregiver. This is important because words can and do wound by perpetuating oppression and can impede a positive working relationship from developing between the parent or caregiver and the social worker.

Figure 1

Intersections within Child Protection
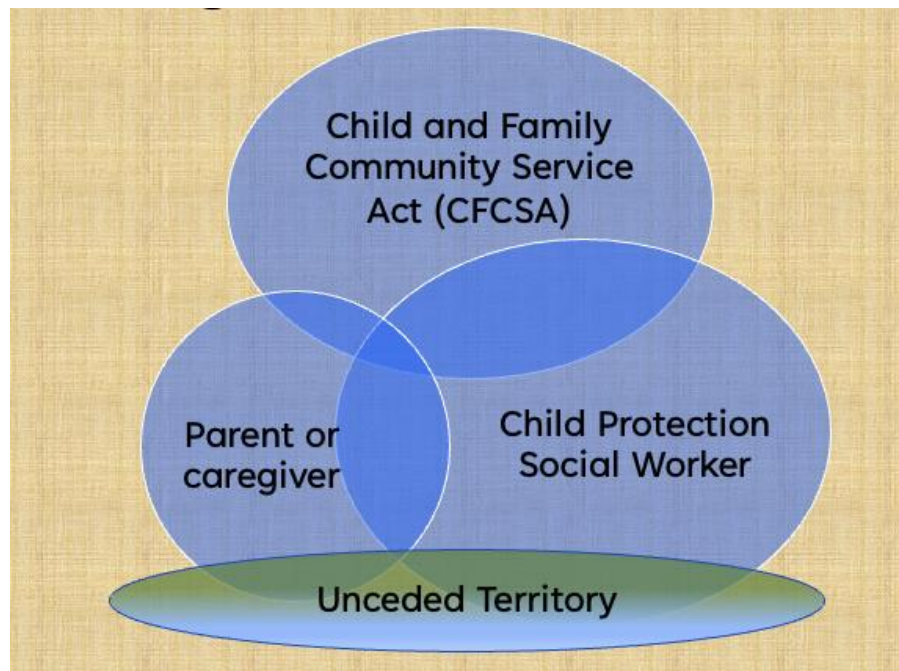
Timeline of Relevant Events

Between 1876 and the present, there have been a number of significant events that shed light on the current state of child protection in BC as can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Intersections within Child Protection
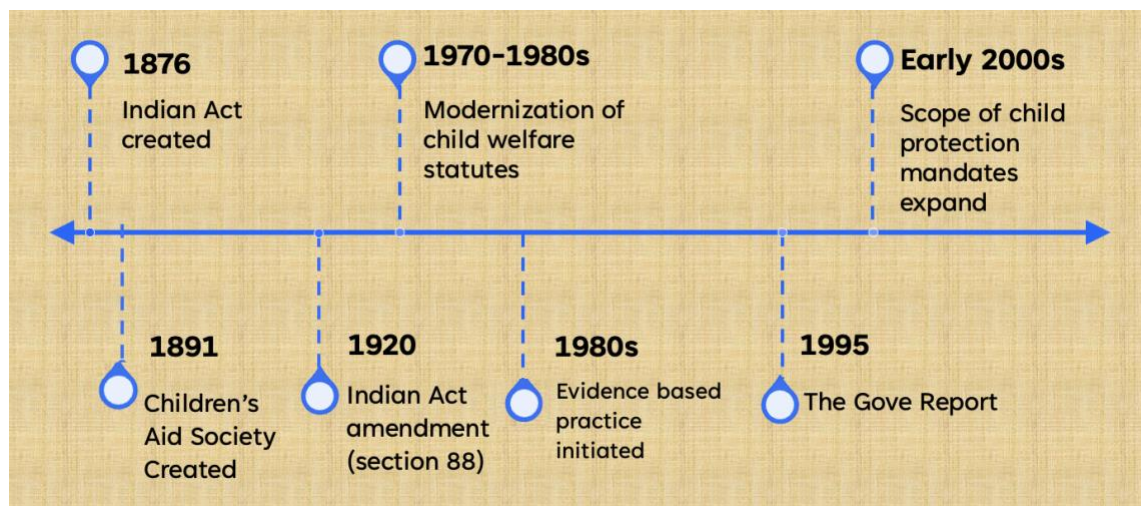
Starting in 1876 when the Indian Act was enacted, the state has been imposing authority over Indigenous people's lives in an official capacity. This Act empowered the residential school system that operated in BC from 1861 to 1984 (Indigenous Child & Family Service Directors [ICFSD], 2023). The objective of residential schools was to eliminate Indigenous identity and replace it with euro-western culture, knowledge and spirituality, weakening familial and cultural linkages, and ultimately committing cultural genocide (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). In 1891 the first child protection organization was created in Canada and, over the next 20 years, a rapid expansion of child welfare services was observed. Eventually, legal mandates gave the state "power to remove children who were victims of abuse or neglect from their homes" (Trocme et al., 2023, p. 97).

In 1920, the Indian Act amendment (section 88) gave provincial/territorial governments the power to enforce child welfare laws on reserve lands increasing the number of Indigenous youth being sent to residential schools and enabling the '60's scoop' wherein children were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in the foster care system (TRCC, 2015). In the 70s and 80s, provinces sought to modernize child welfare statutes and many endeavoured to be less intrusive by offering in-home family supports instead of placing children in care when possible (Trocme et al., 2023). In the 1980s, a new concept called 'evidence-based practice' was initiated by a group of clinical epidemiologists at McMaster University and quickly spread to other allied health professions (Baines, 2011). An evidence-based practice framework argues that professionals should rely on the most recent research findings instead of relying on practice-based knowledge, intuition, and relationships of trust (Baines, 2011). But not all research/' evidence' was, nor is, weighted equally. Random clinical trials and experimental methods are at the top of the rating hierarchy while case, qualitative, and participatory research studies, which are most common in social work research, are discounted as unscientific and non-objective/biased. This bias results in a practice of social work that moves away from the relational aspects of the work and ignores the intuitive, shared, reflexive knowledge learned on the front lines (Baines, 2011).

In 1995, following the tragic death of five-year-old Matthew Vaudreuil, the Gove report critically examined child protection practices in BC. Despite Matthew having contact with

dozens of professionals, concerns about his well-being were not reported. The Gove report outlined that it appeared professionals were "more concerned about minimizing intrusion than responding to alarm signs of serious neglect and abuse" (Trocme, 2023, p. 97). As a result of this inquiry, BC's child protection system was restructured and in the early 2000s there was an expansion of the scope of child protection mandates across Canada that included, for example, witnessing intimate partner violence as a child protection concern and assessing for risk of future potential maltreatment (Trocme et al., 2023). These changes resulted in a sharp increase in child maltreatment investigations province wide. In 1998 there were just over 18 investigations per 1000 children, and in 2008 this number increased to just over 31 per 1000 children, an increase of 72% (MacLaurin et al., 2011).

Research Questions

The proposed research by the project sponsors was distilled into two research questions:

1. How can a child protection social worker conceptualize responses to a substantiated child protection concern in a way that does not blame or stigmatize the parent or caregiver and;

2. What relational approaches can child protection social workers use to engage with this parent or caregiver population?

Methods

This literature review is based on scholarly articles and non-academic literature found through keyword searches on three separate databases (JSTOR, PsychInfo, and Ebsco: Social Work Abstracts) and on Google Scholar. Search terms included "social work" AND "child protection" (plus the various synonyms for these terms such as "social service work", "child welfare" etc.) AND Canad* to gain primarily Canadian-related literature. In addition, blame-

laden terms used to describe parents and caregivers were also added to the search including "resist*", "avoid*", and "denial". When the Canadian literature was exhausted, the term "Canad*" was removed from the search but only literature from countries that have comparable child protection systems to Canada, such as the UK, Australia and the Netherlands, were included in the research. Articles that came up on the first four pages of each database were reviewed and, from these, a total of 48 potential scholarly articles were flagged for further assessment. After reading the abstracts and conclusion of these 48 articles, a total of 23 articles were selected to inform this literature review. In addition, seven non-academic documents and three books were chosen to inform this research.

While conducting the database search, an interesting observation was noted: without including specific search terms such as "Indigenous" nor "First Nations" a significant number of articles still had information related to Indigenous experiences within BC and Canada's child protection system. This finding is important to note as it highlights the omnipresence of the child protection system in the lives of Indigenous children, youth and families and is reflective of the lasting/ongoing legacy of colonialism.

Findings

The findings were organized into three sections. The first section outlines themes found in the literature that speak to both research questions, and the second and third sections examine themes that correlate specifically to research question one and research question two respectively.

Results from the literature review highlights three themes that address both research questions and establishes a fundamental platform/context for subsequent findings.

Dominant Narratives: Observed across the literature is a dominant narrative based in Western psychology that posits that a person who is considered as 'responsible' for a problem must "admit responsibility, and gain insight into their problematic behavior, as the means by which change can occur" (Turnell & Essex, 2006, p. 8). A Google search of this topic

reveals article after article about how important 'admission of wrongdoing' is in the reparative process. Given how entrenched this perspective is in current social work discourse (Baines, 2011), it is challenging to consider what an alternative view might be.

A counterpoint to this dominant narrative can be found in Eastern culture wherein a more "holistic mode of causation is adapted" (Alberstein et al., 2021, p. 133) and whereby the primary focus is on consequences rather than on the culpable act. This viewpoint values collective aspects such as collaboration, understanding, and mutual respect. The Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework [APPF] *Circle as a Restorative Practice* as seen in Figure 3 is a poignant and important example of an Indigenous and holistic approach that demonstrates that blame and responsibility are not essential components to healing. The circle encourages the gathering of broader community supports, focuses heavily on 'listening to hear instead of listening to respond', supports the creation of security, belonging *and* well-being, and is a reminder of the importance of continually maintaining the Circle's strength (APPF, 2015) throughout the child protection process.

Figure 3

The APPF "Circle as a Restorative Practice"
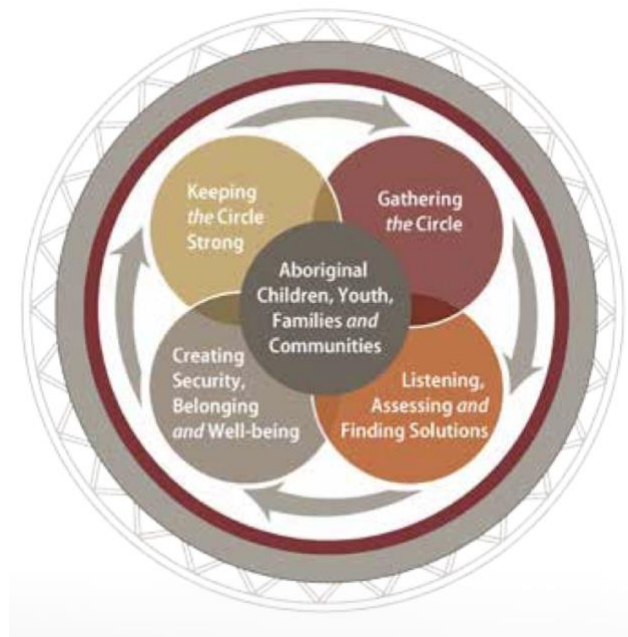
(APPF, 2015, p. 17).

Ongoing Impacts of Colonization: The second theme is that the impacts of colonization are still observed within BC's child protection system and experienced by children, youth and families receiving services. Indigenous children, youth and families are dramatically over-represented across the Canadian child welfare system (Trocme, 2023) especially at the investigation stage of the child protection process (Sinha et al., 2013b; Tremblett et al., 2021). In BC, 68 percent of children and youth in care are First Nations, Metis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous despite this population only making up 10 per cent of the total number of children and youth in the province (RCY, 2022).

Data collected as part of the First Nations/Canadian Incident Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect in 2019 examined household risk factors such as running out of money for necessities and unsafe housing conditions during child protection investigations. The data highlighted that a disproportionate number of household risk factors were cited for Indigenous children and youth living both on and off reserve compared to risk factors mentioned for non-Indigenous children and youth (Joh-Carnella et al., 2021). This is important to critically examine because studies also show that rates of neglect are more frequently substantiated for Indigenous families compared to non-Indigenous families (Sinha et al., 2013a). This could indicates that Indigenous parents and caregivers may be considered to be neglectful when the actual challenge is that they do not have access to adequate resources cite source or move Sinha et al here and no need to include in sentence before.

Relational Impacts of Risk Averse Practice: BC's child protection system is just that, a child *protection* system as there tends to be a greater focus on the safety of a child or youth as opposed to the *welfare* of the child or youth *and* their family as a whole/caregiving network (Trocme, 2015)[2]. The third theme observed in the literature is that when a child protection social worker focuses heavily on abuse or neglect prevention, their relational skills can be negatively impacted as the focus becomes the promotion of safety as opposed to establishing trust and working towards family wellbeing. The fear of making a mistake or

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[2] The differences between a child protection model and a child welfare model can be seen in Appendix A

missing signs of abuse may lead to the worker being overly guarded in their interactions with a parent or caregiver (Baines, 2011). As a result, parents and caregivers may feel that the social worker is not approachable nor understanding. In addition, the sheer amount of time spent on monitoring safety and risk management, plus high caseloads, means that there can be little time to invest in developing a working relationship between the child protection social worker and the parent or caregiver (cite?).

In regards to research question one, the literature highlights conceptualizations of parent or caregiver responses to child protection intervention that avoids blaming or stigmatizing the parent or caregiver.

Question 1

How to conceptualize responses to a substantiated child protection concern in a way that does not pathologize the parent or caregiver?

Alternative Lens: The first theme is related to *reactance theory* which normalizes what is frequently referred to in the literature as 'resistant' behaviours such as anger, arguing, and defensiveness, and reframes these responses as 'reactance' – a healthy reaction to having personal freedoms restricted (Mirick, 2012). Reactance represents a motivational drive that is shared by all humans. Unfortunately, within the child protection system, reactance is frequently considered to be a sign that parents or caregivers are not ready or motivated to change (Mirick, 2012). In this context, Indigenous peoples and people of colour are more vulnerable to experiencing reactance as a result of previous losses of personal freedom rooted in their everyday experiences of systemic oppression and racism (Mirick, 2012). A Canadian study that looked at the intersection of reactance and gender found that male participants who experience low self-esteem tended to score higher on reactance scales. These results highlight the importance of social workers considering the different factors that can be at play when working with parents or caregivers who demonstrate reactance (Seidler et al., 2020).

Given the historical context of the child welfare system in BC and reflecting on the lasting impact of the residential school system and the 60's scoop, child protection involvement today can produce notions of fear for Indigenous parents and caregivers. As such, reactance can

be seen to be a very *healthy* and *rational* response to child protection involvement and, in some cases, it may demonstrate a parent or caregiver's ability to recognize potential risk and to protect their child.

      Power Imbalances: The second theme references the power imbalance between a child protection social worker and a parent or caregiver. One author uses the terms *power with* (a productive use of power) and *power over* (an oppressive use of power) when describing the ways in which social workers manage this power differential (Saar-Heiman, 2023). This scholar found that when parents perceive "child protection professionals as using power 'over' them as a form of control, they were more likely to either openly oppose them or simulate cooperation. Conversely, when parents felt that power was used 'with' them, they tended to collaborate" (Saar-Heiman, 2023, p. 2). In another study that analysed parent-professional interviews, it was found that professional's viewpoints carry more weight than those of parents as decisions are most often reflective of a social worker's perspective. The authors posit that the "position of dominance is not related to professional desire to dominate but rather is determined by the processes in which the practises are enshrined" (Boutanquoi et al., 2020, p. 113).

      Shame: The third theme is related to the impact that shame has on the relationship between the child protection social worker and the parent or caregiver. One author posits that parents and caregivers involved in child protection investigations tend to come from the most vulnerable sections of society, many with traumatic life histories, pre-existing shame, and a lack of trust in authority figures (Walker, 2011). When child protection social work becomes involved, this is likely to increase the sense of shame for some parents or caregivers and can leave them vulnerable to feeling misunderstood and not listen to. Thus, the problems that people who have trauma histories and/or ongoing experiences of trauma have communicating may not be because they are being resistant, oppositional, or difficult. Instead, it may be that shame has "impaired their capacity to communicate openly and honestly" (Walker, 2011, p. 460).

      Next section addressed question two. To better understand the findings, it is important to provide the working definition of relational approaches used in this report:

Relational approaches emphasize that healthy human development is correlated with the ability to build relationships and, as such, growth (i.e. change) occurs *within* relationships, *not apart* from them (Baines, 2011).

Question 2

What are relational approaches for engaging with this parent or caregiver population?

Relation-Heavy Approaches: There are two predominant relation-heavy approaches currently in practice today, *Signs of Safety* and *Working with 'Denied' Child Abuse: The Resolutions Approach*. Both of the official manuals for these approaches, as seen in Figure 4, are co-authored by Andrew Turnell, who has been advocating for the use of relational-focused approaches in social work since the 1990's. In addition, *Motivational Interviewing* is shown to be effective when working with parents or caregivers within a child protection context.

Figure 4

Relational Approaches Commonly Used in BC's Social Worker Practice
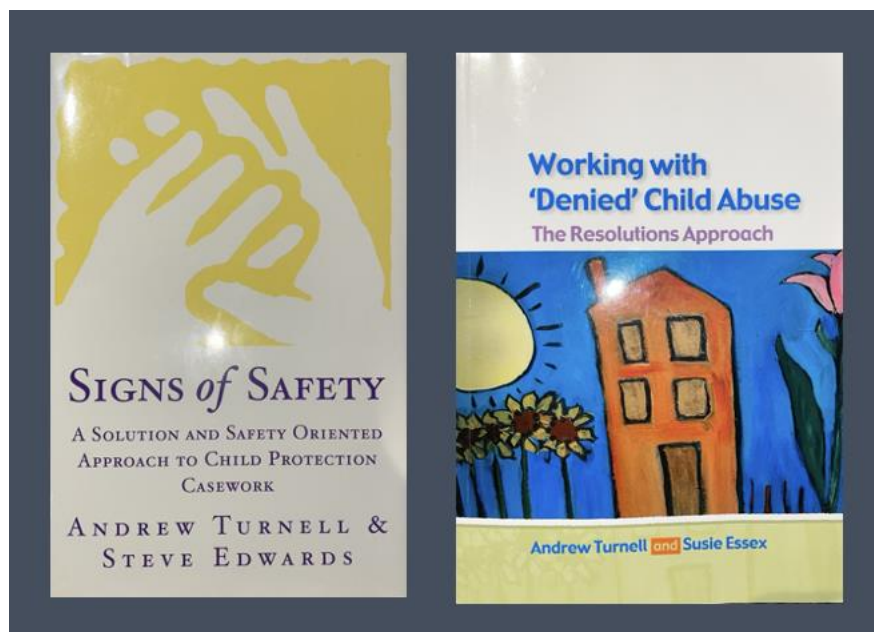
Signs of Safety is the most prevalent and well-researched strengths-based child protection model (Oliver & Charles, 2015). This model sees child protection practice as

fundamentally problematic and proposes a relationship-grounded, strength-based approach that maintains a rigorous focus on the seriousness of the child protection concerns but is fundamentally organized around future safety (Turnell & Edwards, 2006). This approach avoids the requirement of a parent or caregiver admitting wrongdoing and instead focusing on future safety, not on past disputes.

A second approach commonly used in current social work practice is outlined in the book, *Working with 'Denied' Child Abuse: The Resolutions Approach*. The creators/authors of the *Resolutions Approach* consider 'denial', as they call it, not simply something inherent in the makeup of the parent or caregiver who is the focus of the child protection concern but a construct that is reified through the interactions between a parent or caregiver and the child protection system (Turnell & Essex, 2006). Similar to *Signs of Safety*, this approach also focusses on future safety. To implement the *Resolutions Approach* requires a shift in professional thinking and practice, and aspires to build a constructive working relationship between a social worker and the parents or caregivers. A recent scoping review of the *Resolutions Approach* highlights how parents experience more control over their situation and perceive the method to be transparent, improving cooperation between families and professionals (Sepers et al., 2022).

Beyond the work of Turnell and associates, *Motivational Interviewing* is also considered to be an effective approach within the realm of child protection social work as a collaborative conversation style for strengthening a person's own motivation and commitment for change (Forrester et al., 2008). *Motivational Interviewing* allows a parent or caregiver to "voice skepticism about allegations, consider both the positives *and* negatives of engaging in services and making behavioral changes, and help[s] the [parent or caregiver] determine… what kind of changes are consistent with their own personal goals and values" (Hall et al., 2020, p. 264). A number of critical child protection social worker micro-skills are also associated with positive client outcomes.

Importance of the first contact. The first contact appears to have significant impact on future relations between a child protection social worker and the parent or caregiver with whom they are working (Baines, 2011). One author suggests that, in addition to (or instead

of, if appropriate) conducting the traditional risk or intake assessment at the first meeting, a social worker "considers people's circumstance as deficiencies that must be corrected" (Fargion, 2014, p. 30). When a child protection social worker strives to learn what barriers are inhibiting the parent or caregiver from reducing risk of harm to the child or youth in their care on their own, and providing the resources to eliminate said parent-identified barriers, the relationship between a social worker and a parent or caregiver is shown to improve (Saar-Heiman, 2023). Examples include facilitating connection of a parent or caregiver to housing resources, legal support, income assistance, or respite. Social workers who initially demonstrate awareness that a client is experiencing systemic barriers and strives to meet those needs can result in an increased collaborative relationship and future work together.

Importance of open engagement and shared goals. Engagement in child protection services refers to the mutuality that exists when child protection social workers and parents or caregivers have "shared goals, and understanding of what is required to achieve them, and the functional ability to communicate about progress towards those goals" (Hall et al., 2020, p. 263). It is widely understood that parents and caregivers who cannot be engaged in child protection services are at high risk of adverse outcomes. Similar outcomes are seen in dynamics when a parent or caregiver is not easily able to contact their child protection social worker (Hall et al., 2020). Engagement on both the part of the parent or caregiver and the child protection social worker is correlated with fewer out of home placements and reduced risk of "subsequent child maltreatment, even up to five years later" (Hall et al., 2020, p. 263).

Importance of practice confidence. Authors of a Canadian study posit that confidence in practice plays a signifant role in positive social work intervention outcomes. In this research, social workers who demonstrated low confidence became overwhelmed by emotion in the context of a parent or caregiver's emotional state, impairing their ability to perform their work as objectively as possible (Bogo et al., 2017). On the opposite end of the spectrum, social worker overconfidence was shown to lead to diagnostic error. The authors of this study posit that the 'right' amount of confidence is evidenced by three themes: "emotional self-regulation; the acquisition and application of knowledge; and relational skills which are the intersection of knowledge and emotional regulation" (Bogo et al., 2017, p. 701).

Recommendations

Overall, this literature review indicates the importance of social workers having the time and skills to build a relationship, and work relationally with a parent or caregiver following a substantiated child protection concern. Recommendations based on the findings include the following:

1. Integrate the Aboriginal Policy Practice Framework's "Circle as a Restorative Practice" with each family system with whom a child protection social worker is working. This circle encourages the gathering of wider community supports, focuses heavily on listening to hear instead of listening to respond, supports the creation of security, belonging and well-being, and is a reminder to continually maintain the circle's strength throughout the child protection process. In addition, encourage social workers to review current files in the context of the Aboriginal Policy and Practice Framework to encourage circle gathering, deep listening, de-centring self as the expert of what a parent or caregiver needs.

2. Integrate/mandate relational skills as a core component of the competency training that all child protection social workers and supervisors are required to take. Examples of this are *The Resolutions Approach* (Turnell & Essex, 2006), *Signs of Safety* (Turnell & Edwards), *motivational interviewing* (Hall et al., 2020; Forrester et al., 2012). Within the child and youth mental health stream there are also excellent trainings that offer a deep focus on relational skill building, namely *Emotion Focused Family Therapy* (Lafrance et al., 2020). This training focuses heavily on validation of another person's experience despite the other person's presentation. It is important that these training opportunities include *simulation based learning* opportunities wherein trainees practice role plays with a pretend parent or caregiver who is exhibiting reactance as outlined in Rawlings et al. (2021). It would also be beneficial if relational skills training became a core competency within social work graduate programs and an evaluation criterion of social worker trainees completing practicum placements within MCFD child protection.

3. Social workers' caseloads do not often allow them the time to invest in the development of solid relationships with the parents and caregivers they work with (Ferguson et al., 2022).

Reducing the amount of files each social worker has will allow time to implement relational practices. This will require the hiring of new social workers needs to take place given the current shortage of social workers in the province of British Columbia.

4. Practitioners and managers need to be provided with supervision that goes beyond case management and enables them to recognize how they are thinking and feeling about the parents and caregivers they are working with, and identifying the effects that fear, anxiety and frustration have on their engagement with those they work with and;

5. Often it takes time to provide families with resources. These barriers include waitlists, costs, getting approval from higher-ups/supervisors?, etc. If social workers were resourced with the tools to be able to quickly provide supports and resources to help eliminate the barriers that are preventing a parent or caregiver from meeting their child's needs for safety, this would likely help improve the well-being of the child or youth in addition to supporting a positive relationship between the social worker and the parent or caregiver.

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Appendix A

Differences Between a Child Protection Model and a Child Welfare Model

Child protection model	Child welfare model
Best interests of the child are narrowly focused on protection	Best interests of the child are broadly defined to include the welfare of the family
Law-led rather than discretion-led	Discretion-based
Assessment based on standardized tools	Assessment based on interaction between family and social workers
Aims at objectivity	Acknowledges different perspectives
Centred on difficulties and problems	Considers difficulties as well as strengths and resources
Treats difficulties as signals of risk	Seeks to understand difficulties in order to find ways to provide support
Restricts professionals' discretionary powers	Enhances professional strength
Less readiness to intervene	More readiness to intervene
Individual rather than community oriented	Community oriented
Remedial rather than preventive	Preventive rather than remedial

(Fargion, 2014, p. 25)