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Protecting the self: An ethnographic study of emotion management among child protective investigators

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Protecting the Self: An Ethnographic Study of Emotion
Management Among Child Protective Investigators

by

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ABSTRACT

The question that I investigate here is what emotion work is performed by child protective investigators in order to be successful at their work, and how do they manage these emotional challenges within a community of their peers? Many different workers, from airline employees (Hochschild, 1983) to mortuary science students (Cahill, 1999) to 911 operators (Shuler & Sypher, 2000), have been studied to examine strategies and effects of emotion management. Yet scholars do not agree on whether emotion management at work is positive or negative.

For my research, I conducted interviews with ten investigators and observed a night unit of child protective investigators in a Central Florida Sheriff's Office. I observed three different types of strategies, which I discuss in detail: office based strategies, field based strategies, and personal strategies. Office based strategies include group humor, practical support and sharing experiences. Field based strategies include calming down the parent, enlisting the client, and distancing humor. Personal strategies include accentuating importance and blaming the parent. In the conclusion I summarize my research and discuss the finding that both novice and veteran child protective investigators use these strategies. I end with policy recommendations and I stress the importance of building a supportive professional community through further training.

INTRODUCTION

As I watch the two children being removed from the home and escorted to the car I can see a change in their faces. They now realize that they will not be able to stay with their neighbor or their father who is currently in jail. The oldest child (13-year-old female) states to the worker that she does not want to return to the "system". I ask the investigator later and find out that these children had been in the foster care system a few years ago when the father was unable to take care of them. The investigator does not answer the child and instead opens the back door to her car. Both children get in to the backseat and the investigator makes sure that they are buckled in. As we begin our 30-minute ride back to the office, I notice the youngest child (9-year-old boy) putting his hand across the seat to hold hands with his older sister. He looks scared and I overhear his sister telling him that everything will be all right. After five minutes in the car, the children begin to ask questions of the investigator and want explanations for why they could not stay with their neighbor. The investigator ignores some of the questions and tries to answer others without putting a damper on the hope that the children can, or will be reunited with relatives. The investigator and I already know that their grandmother has refused to take them in, but the children believe that she may be their last hope.

This ride felt like an eternity to me, there was crying, pleading, and anger coming from the backseat of that car. All the while the investigator stayed calm in managing the situation. I, on the other hand, felt sick to my stomach and wanted to help those children by any means necessary. I have worked with these types of children before and believed that I was ready for this situation, but this affected me more than I expected. Watching this removal was hands down the hardest thing that I have experienced so far during my data collection. (Fieldnotes VII)

Child Protective Investigators (CPIs) are given the responsibility of guarding society's most valuable resource, its children. These investigators experience many emotions during their workday, including anger, sadness, guilt, depression, happiness, satisfaction, bitterness, tiredness, provocation, uneasiness, hesitation, loneliness, indifference, suspiciousness, helplessness, concern, passion, certainty, security, sympathy, empathy, love, disillusionment, and many more that I will not be able to cover. Some of these

emotions are positive and some are negative, but despite their emotions, investigators must complete their duties. Self-protection is necessary for the investigator in order to complete these duties. They must protect their mental and physical well-being and do so by using strategies to manage emotion they learn and use while being on the job. At times, investigators can be overcome by emotions. Journalist Sherri Ackerman (2007) reports in the Tampa Tribune what can happen when CPI workers become overwhelmed. In the fiscal years ending in 2006 and 2007 in Florida:

- fifty-six child welfare workers were investigated on allegations of falsifying records.

- nineteen Workers were fired after being investigated.

- twenty-four workers resigned before or after being investigated.

CPI workers sometimes must make life and death decisions that, in the end, will lead back to them if anything goes wrong. Additionally, workers are often blamed even if there is no practical way they can do what is expected of them. These workers also have only sixty days to close a file, are overloaded with cases, and continually experience burnout leading to high turnover rates.

In 2006, I realized, based on my wife's work experiences, that many CPIs were leaving their job in my local county. I had often heard that this was a "tough job" and that it took "special" people to do it well. Being a sociology graduate student led me to ask why some people stayed at this job and why some did not. The final event that helped me decide that this would be my topic of research was when my wife failed to make it at this job and finally quit after four months of tears and anger.

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Seeing some of the challenges of this job up close led me to the main question that I would like to investigate here. Which strategies do child protective investigators use to successfully manage the emotional challenges of their job? My interest in this topic also stems from my past and present experience as a social worker. I am currently a drug treatment counselor in the jail system. I have often stated that without techniques of managing emotion I would not be able to cope with the trauma and despair that comes with this type of job. My research investigating CPIs was ethnographic in nature and included interviews and observations. My research purpose was to observe and interview investigators to discover how they manage the emotional challenges of their job.

I conducted my study in a large metropolitan city in Central Florida. The Plantation County Child Protective Investigation Division (CPID) is a division of the Sheriff's Office that, in total, employs over 3,000 workers. Over 100 workers are working in the CPID at any given time; this includes investigators, resource staff, and administration. The CPID was created in 2006 after the Department of Children and Families (DCF), which is a State agency, was forced to give up its child investigation unit in this county. The state had offered money to each county's Sheriff's Office to take over the investigation wing of DCF, and Plantation County decided to take on this burden in 2006. The CPID must maintain strict policies and procedure in order to function, and it requires certification from all of its investigators.

In the following sections, I first review the literature on child protection work and discuss its challenges. Then I review past research on emotion work and begin to frame my study through the lens of previous conceptual approaches. I then move on to describe my method and data, as well as the setting where the research was conducted. Next, I

describe my research findings, focusing on the emotion management strategies CPI

workers utilize in order to cope with their emotions. Finally, I discuss the implications of

my study and lay out future research topics and strategies that could further strengthen

the findings of my study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to situate my research, I will first document some of the challenges of child protection work as they were discussed in past research. I will then detail my research question and my initial assumptions. Finally, I will review the vast research on emotion work, and on strategies of emotion management at work, to make further connections to my study and the work of child protection.

Child Protection Research

Child Protective Investigators most importantly deal with allegations and incidents of child abuse. Child abuse is not a static concept but one that has been constructed over time (Cradock, 2004; Gold et al., 2001). What people see as abuse today would have been considered "discipline" twenty years ago in most cases. This cultural shift adds to the struggle of determining policy and procedures for child protective investigators. The investigators are trained in a classroom to make decisions in an ever changing cultural and legal landscape. Because the signs of abuse are constantly reframed, investigators have to learn to be flexible with how their cases are constructed. In my dealings with investigators there were some who stated they did not care if a child was spanked, yet other investigators were less lenient on a parent spanking a child. Investigators do not make decisions in a vacuum; they are always subjected to the watchful eye of public

opinion and media speculation.   These entities also weigh in on their decision, which

makes their job even more difficult.

Child protective investigators' decisions come under an extreme amount of

pressure and scrutiny from the public and the media (Mennen and O'Keefe, 2005; Smith

and Donovan, 2003). Investigators make the front-page news, or have the lead on the

evening TV news, whenever something goes wrong. As an example, late in 2007 a

Washington DC mother killed her four children and continued to live with the bodies in

her home until she was evicted. When the news media reported this case, they focused

on the contact this woman had with child protective services and on how those services

had failed the children. The following quote from a Washington Post article in January

2008 shows the focus on the investigators by the reporter as well as the mayor.

> The case, with its young victims, ages 5, 6, 11 and 17, has left city officials
> swamped with concerns that the children were lost by the system. Fenty (Mayor
> of Washington DC) called the case record "extremely underwhelming and
> disappointing" and vowed to change procedures and punish or fire employees
> found responsible for letting the family slip through the cracks.

In contrast, very rarely do investigators make the news when they save a child's life or

help a family that is in need. Therefore, investigators hear all about the negative things

they do from other people, but only the investigator and his or her peers know of the good

things that they may accomplish. The media coverage of CPIs often only shows two

extremes of their decision-making process, and both of them are negative. Most

coverage of CPIs is of the investigator either being neglectful or being overly zealous in

their investigations of parents or guardians (Corby, 2003). These two extremes have

been studied in past research (Platt, 2006). The public's opinion of CPI workers often

stems from the media coverage. Consequently, when investigators show up at a family's

doorstep, the family may have already put up its defenses.

Reich (2005) studied the inner workings of the child welfare system and gave an

unprecedented look into the system as a whole. She followed cases from the start of the

investigation, through the removal of the children, to (in some cases) the reunification of

a family. Her research shows the profound effect investigators' decisions have on

children, their families, and on society in general. Decision-making is even more

difficult when, in addition to the challenges of a job, you may witness horrible or

traumatic events. A job like this calls for someone who can manage their emotions and

make solid decisions despite all of the above mentioned pressures and distractions.

With the above factors in place, it is not surprising that a number of people have

conducted research on the impact of burnout and traumatic events on child welfare

workers (Regehr, Hemsworth, Leslie, Howe, and Chau, 2004).   Burnout in the human

service professions is acknowledged as a widespread and almost inevitable phenomenon

(Maslach, 1978). Maslach explains how this happens.

> The intense involvement with clients required of professional staff in various
> human service institutions includes a great deal of emotional stress, and failure to
> cope successfully with such stress can result in the emotional exhaustion
> syndrome of burn-out, in which staff lose all feeling and concern for their clients
> and treat them in detached or even dehumanized ways. (Maslach, 1978, 111)

Maslach also comments on the poor quality of work that human service workers can

exhibit due to emotional exhaustion and detachment from their clients in his book titled

Burnout (1982).

In 2003, the Florida Senate, in an effort to retain investigators and lower their

high turnover rates, passed legislation to form the Protective Investigation Retention

Workgroup (PIRW, 2003). The PIRW returned with an interim report describing the factors involved in the problem of turnover. The PIRW identified the reasons for high turnover among CPI investigators based on research by the Child Welfare Institute, a look at other states' systems for conducting child protective investigations, and holding workgroup meetings during which information was collected. The PIRW report listed high caseload, low salary, bad management, inadequate hiring/training, and lack of services for the clients as the primary reasons for why investigators were leaving.

The above summary of previous work in this area reveals some interesting issues yet it also indicate the need for a better understanding of how child protective investigators successfully cope with the challenges of their job. We need to identify "best practices" in the field and not only focus on structural failures to get a better picture of why some CPIs stay on the job and why others leave. Understanding retention will lead to policy recommendations that might help slow the turnover rate of CPIs.

I originally believed that social support by colleagues was vital for investigators to cope with these challenges. Social support, particularly the support provided by co-workers, has been identified as one of the key protective factors against burnout (Davis-Sacks, Jayaratne, & Chess, 1985). I also decided to compare novice and veteran CPIs to see if there are differences in the use of emotion management strategies based on work experience.

Emotion Work

This section is an overview of the concept of emotion work. Hochschild (1983, 7) defines emotional labor as "management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial

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and bodily display." Hochschild states that when this is done in private she defines it as emotion work or management. (1983, 7) This definition describes what child protective workers do on a daily basis in order to be able to provide services to the community. Hochschild (1983) identifies two types of emotion work typically done in private life that may also be utilized at work, surface and deep acting. Hochschild (1990, 35) describes surface acting as when "the action is in the body language, the put-on sneer, the posed shrug, the controlled sigh". She clarifies that surface acting is when you are deceiving others. However, in deep acting you "deceive" yourself (1983, 33) by changing your very beliefs. Deep acting is described as when the display is a natural result of working on feeling." (33) Hochschild gives an example of airline workers acting as if the airplane cabin was their home to better serve customers. She states that "diplomats and actors do this (surface acting) best, and very small children do it worst (it is part of their charm)." (1983, 33) Workers are often trained to be "genuine" and "honest" when dealing with clients or customers. The difference between surface and deep acting then takes on an important role in the workers' ability to manage emotion. Does the worker understand that they are deceiving others or are they deceiving themselves through emotion management?

Hochschild (1983) believes that companies and institutions had hijacked this private skill of managing emotions in order to make a profit. Hochschild argues that this hijacking of emotion management alienates workers from their feelings when it is a required part of their job. I believe that this alienation can also happen with CPI workers as they manage emotions in order to complete their duties.

One must understand the great effort it takes workers to manage negative and difficult emotions in a way that allows them to live a "normal" life. Fineman (1993, 19) wrote:

> Many professional workers… are paid for their skill in emotion management. The feeling rules are implicit in their professional "discipline" (an apt term) – "rational," "scientific," "caring," "objective." Benign detachment disguises, and defends against, any private feelings of pain, despair, fear, attraction, revulsion or love; feelings which would otherwise interfere with the professional relationship. There are costs if the mask slips – perhaps a feeling of unease between professional and client or, more seriously, expulsion from the professional community for revealing "inappropriate" emotions.

In the above passage, Fineman describes how workers are taught emotion management in certain professions. Without these skills, workers may become outcasts due to an "inappropriate" revealing of personal emotions. As a social worker, I was trained by professors on how to manage my emotions, even to the point of learning how to control crying. There were also lessons on detachment and on the danger of blending the roles of the worker and the client. Without these skills, we were warned, we would not be "good" social workers.

Scholars have studied the emotion management of workers in many different contexts (for an overview see Meanwell, Wolfe, & Hallett, 2008). However, they do not agree on whether these efforts should be considered positive or negative. Many different professionals, from airline employees (Hochschild, 1983), to mortuary science students (Cahill, 1999), to 911 operators (Shuler & Sypher, 2000), to fashion models (Mears & Finlay, 2005) have been studied to examine the strategies and effects of emotion management. Hochschild (1983) generally believes that emotional labor is negative and can lead to alienation of the self. However, Mears and Finlay's (2005) exploration of the

modeling world found that emotion management could help the women achieve goals, such as employment and self-respect, and thus have positive effects. No researcher has answered the question of whether emotion work on the job can be positive and negative at the same time.

In my study of investigators, the emotion work being done can at times be surface acting, but for the veteran workers I theorize that it often includes deep acting as well. In order to maintain a job with difficult emotional challenges, workers have to be able to manage their emotions in deeper ways, not just on the surface.

CPI's deep acting strategies may be similar to the ones used by workers in animal shelters (Arluke, 1998). Arluke discussed the strategies animal workers used when having to euthanize animals. Some of the strategies he found, such as "humor" and "using the patient/owner", are similar to the ones found in Smith & Kleinmans' (1989) study among medical students. They observed and interviewed medical students and found that emotion management was not something that was discussed widely, but that the medical students drew on aspects of their training to gain strategies to manage their emotions with clients. I will make connections between these strategies and the techniques that I found among investigators later in the paper.

In addition to the concepts of surface and deep acting, the concept of "reciprocal emotion management" (Lively, 2000) is relevant here. Lively defines this idea in her study of private law firm employers:

> For example, reciprocal emotion management allows employees to manage their own and others' emotional reactions to the demands of the job including but not limited to the emotional labor that they are required to perform for others (Lively, 2000, 33).

Reciprocal emotion management in her study was demonstrated by paralegals who helped manage the emotion of other paralegals so that their co-workers could help clients and other lawyers. Later, the paralegal who was helped would then reciprocate this management of emotions to another paralegal or the same one that helped them. Lively explains the issue of "caretaking" in her study of paralegals. She describes the telling of horror stories, the use of humor, acting out emotional events, and venting anger as examples of reciprocal emotion management strategies. Again, the concept of "reciprocal emotion management" is relevant for my research of CPIs and will be discussed again later.

Finally, researchers have discussed emotion management that is directed at self and/or others (Meanwell, Wolfe, & Hallett, 2008). Chin (2000) observed sixth graders and their parents as she tutored upper income students in preparation of a private high school entry exam. She found that parents not only manage their own emotions during this process, but that they also manage the emotions of their children. In addition, Cahill & Eggleston (1994) found that wheelchair users manage other people's emotions as much as they manage their own while in public.

While conducting secondary research I found the use of many different methodologies used to research professionals and their emotion work. For example, Waldron (2000) used a questionnaire to gather his data because of the sensitive nature of the information he was trying to obtain from parole officers and support staff. Waldron based his decision on previous studies that demonstrated how questionnaires were better suited for this type of research.

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Miller, Considine, and Garner (2007) conducted a context analysis of two books about working to gather their data. They collected 115 narratives from these texts and then coded emotional descriptions in order to find relevant narratives or stories of "the workplace." These researchers believe that by adding layers to their data collection, including coding the data individually and then again later in a group discussion, they gain more depth in the analysis of the analysis.

Rutman (1996) collected his research through three one-day research workshops with childcare providers. He then led in-group discussions about what their "ideal" care-giving situation would be like. In the second part of the research, the caregivers were asked to submit two written examples of when they had felt powerful or powerless in a situation. Rutman chose this methodology because it promoted opportunities for caregivers to gain strength and power by recognizing shared issues.

In their study of 911 operators, Shuler & Sypher (2000) used a methodology that is similar to the one I chose for my study. They chose to observe 911 operators prior to interviewing them. After the interview, they then listened to taped 911 phone calls and found situations where operators were handling potentially difficult situations. In my study, the opportunity to observe CPI workers prior to interviewing them helped discover possible areas of interest that might not have been discovered otherwise. In the following section, I will discuss my methods and data, as well as some of the difficulties I had in collecting data for this study.

METHODS

My data sets consist of seven field visits and ten individual interviews collected over five

months between October 2007 and February 2008. All names of individuals used here

are pseudonyms. I also changed the names of the site agency, including the county, and

the metropolitan city where the division is located. Since my research question dealt with

how investigators manage their emotions, I chose to perform intensive interviews with a

sample of individual investigators in addition to observations. Interviews allowed me to

collect first person accounts of the work of investigators, while my observations allowed

me to see directly what they actually do. These two methods together allowed for rich

insights because they gave me different perspectives of the CPI workers' emotion

management.

Observations

For my observations, I visited the CPID building seven times between October and

December of 2007. I observed for a total of 15 hours, spending an average of just over

two hours each time. Due to my busy schedule, I decided to observe the CPID night

units during their normal work hours. After two visits, I decided to focus on only one of

the two night units because this unit's schedule best matched my own schedule. This

allowed me to get better access and to conduct in-depth observations during my limited

field research period. The following is a quick description of the night unit that I

observed, which is managed by a woman I call Ms. Jackson. Ms. Jackson is a supervisor

and the highest-ranking person on site at night. Ms. Jackson supervises a team of six regular CPIs, which I called Ms. Dumble, Ms. Darling, Ms. Newsome, Mr. Evans, Mr. Peach, and Mr. Nelson. I chose to observe this unit rather than the other one because this team spent more time in the office interacting and was more frequently available on the nights that I could observe. At the time of my observations, the night unit commenced many cases, but then turned them over to the day unit to follow up and to provide any ongoing case management. However, as of February 2008, all investigators now carry a caseload and no distinction is made in who commences the case and who provides case management.

During two of my visits, I went on ride-alongs with investigators from "my" unit. I happened to ride along with one of my interviewees during my observations, meaning I was able to not only hear about how he managed emotions, but also observe him with his clients. The other five visits I spent observing this team of investigators in their office building. In total, I wrote thirty pages of single spaced fieldnotes. Most of my fieldnotes focus on the interactions between the investigators and on encounters between investigators and clients. In honing my methodological skills, I relied on readings to help me better understand the purpose of field research. I also learned to improve the writing of my fieldnotes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, 1-65). During my observations, I periodically jotted notes on a notepad. After my observations, I would take fifteen minutes in my car to jot further notes and include other details of my visit. I then wrote up my detailed fieldnotes immediately after I arrived at home, relying on my jottings and my memory to recreate the events.

Interviews

I used a random sampling technique to recruit ten interviewees out of 98 total investigators working at the division in October 2007. After five random draws and subsequent interviews, I had four veteran workers (who had been working a year or more as a CPI) and one novice worker (who had been working a year or less as a CPI). For the next five interviews, I purposively sampled five investigators in order to better balance my sample. My second sample was selected by randomly choosing 20 investigators from the remaining list and then with the help of my CPID contact, going through the list to select the first four novice investigators and the first veteran investigator for an interview. When one investigator declined to participate in the interview, I moved on to the next appropriate name on the list. This technique gave me a final sample that includes five veteran investigators and five novice investigators.

My sample for this study consists of four male and six female workers. The age of participants ranges between 24 and 50, with eight of the interviewees being Caucasian, one Asian (Indian), and one Hispanic (Puerto Rican). All had college degrees in disciplines ranging from Criminology to Business. Additionally, two investigators had Masters Degrees (Social Work and Criminal Justice). The least amount of experience in child protection was six months (Mr. Newman and Ms. Masters) and the most experience a worker in my sample had was 12 years (Mr. Rocky). The average amount of experience on the job for novice workers was approximately eight months, and for the veteran workers it was five years. See Appendix A for more information on the participants.

I asked participants to sign consent forms and I recorded the interview using a digital recorder. Later I had the interviews fully transcribed by a professional service. Each interview took place at the CPID building in Plantation County where the CPIs worked. The length of the interviews varied, they ranged from twenty-five minutes to one hour and twenty minutes. Each of the interviews was done during work time (with permission of the Major) on paid investigator time, meaning there was no extra effort required.

During each interview, I asked questions about the investigator's background, how the investigator came to work in child protection, and how the investigator managed situations with clients and peers. I especially focused on questions about the difficulties of the job. I also directly asked questions on how the investigator managed situations that arose with challenging clients. In early interviews I focused on whether and how the community of CPIs helped workers manage their emotions, but as the first round of interviews was completed, I realized that this was not the only major source of support for my respondents and changed my questions accordingly. See Appendix B for the final interview schedule.

Prior to my interviews, I reviewed tips on interviewing found in Robert Weiss' book (1994, 61-119). Especially helpful was the section on "markers" found on page seventy-seven. This section helped me ask questions without missing important information that the interviewee may not be open to share immediately. An example of a marker during one of my interviews was when a respondent made a comment about his experience of being in foster care. During this first interview, I missed the chance to ask follow up questions, but after reading the section on markers, I became more aware of

such comments during interviews and tried to follow up with questions that were relevant to the respondents' experiences.

In Weiss' book (1994), I also found helpful information on how to guide respondents to share more information. On pages seventy-five and following, he outlined ways of "obtaining concrete information in the area of inquiry" by using the following forms of development (75-76): extending, filling in detail, identifying actors, making indications explicit. These forms of development allowed me to gather information from the investigator. After completing my interviews and prior to the start of my writing of the thesis, I attempted to make follow up calls to each of my respondents. I was able to contact six of the ten original respondents and those six stated that there had been no major changes in their jobs since we had spoken. Two respondents did not return my calls and two respondents were no longer with the CPID. Both of them were novice investigators and they had resigned in order to take jobs outside of child welfare services. Overall, the interviewing phase of my study was extremely useful due to the depth of data that I was able to collect.

Access

I gained access to my setting, the Plantation County Sheriff's Office Child Protective Investigation Division (CPID) in April 2007. My point of contact was Laura, a general manager within the CPID. She provided me with the entire list of employed investigators and connected me to the supervisors of the night units. I presented my research idea and design to Laura and she brought it to the attention of the head of the CPID, and he wrote a letter of support for my research. This letter along with a formal application enabled

me to receive approval from my university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). I disclosed my research to everyone who I met while conducting fieldwork at CPID, but due to the large total number of investigators, I was not able to disclose it to everyone. This was not a big problem because my observations were conducted at night with a unit that was largely isolated from the rest of the investigators. Everyone within this unit was aware of my research and of the purpose of my observations.

Amanda Coffey (1999, 56) states that, "fieldwork relies upon the establishing and building of relationships with significant others in the field." Coffey thus stresses the importance of personal relationships for the success of any fieldwork. Coffey adds that fieldwork forces you to maintain relationships by managing your emotions, thus engaging in emotional labor. My understanding of the importance of relationships helped me gain access to the night unit. I believe my career and experience as a social worker, and the fact that I was also currently working for the Plantation Sheriff's Office, allowed me a place in their community. I felt like I fitted into this group of investigators and they included me in many of their conversations. However, after a while I sometimes needed to physically remove myself from conversations because I felt like I was becoming too much the focus of the action. Upon returning, I would then redirect my attention to observing their interactions of which I was not the focus.

Throughout the research, I distanced myself several times from certain individuals whom I was observing because I felt that if I came too close to them, it would cause problems for my research. I believed that if I befriended certain investigators, then other investigators would not be as open to me as I hoped. Some investigators that I avoided were viewed as "naysayers" in their CPID unit; they were people who complained about

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everything and appeared to be not well liked by supervisors and other investigators. I quickly found that other investigators gossiped about and pulled pranks on these types of people and realized that I could not be associated with them too closely. Overall, gaining access to the CPID community demanded some patience and work, but once I arrived on site, it felt like the CPID unit I studied accepted me as one of their own, at least temporarily.

Difficulties

I encountered several difficulties during my data collection, including my personal reactions to ride-alongs, scheduling problems, and changes in the structure of the CPID. In the following section, I will discuss these difficulties and my attempts to overcome them.

As indicated in the opening fieldnote, I was not prepared for my emotional reaction to watching children being sheltered during ride-alongs. It caused a knot in my stomach. Even with my years of experience in social work, I did not handle the situation very well. It was a learning experience for me and really helped me understand the emotional challenges of the CPI's job. I had read about the challenges, but seeing them in reality gave me a different perspective of what these investigators deal with on a daily basis. I learned to cope with this issue by talking with people within my support system (professor, wife, parents) about my feelings. I also found myself using some of the same strategies that I would later discover in my research and analysis.

As I read about child protective investigators during the spring of 2007, while preparing for my proposal defense, I learned how overworked these investigators were

and how they often did not have time to finish the requirements of their job. Knowing this, however, it did not dawn on me that this time crunch would make my data collection more difficult. As I began the task of scheduling interviews, I quickly noticed that only three of ten randomly contacted interviewees returned my initial calls. This was my first taste of the difficulties that would follow. After completing those three interviews, I then followed up with the remainder of my first sample and scheduled two more interviews during the first round.

When I showed up for one of my interviews at the CPID building, the investigator was paged, and after a twenty minute wait, my next interviewee, Ms. Parker arrived in the front lobby. After exchanging pleasantries, I moved on to business, but quickly realized that Ms. Parker was distracted. I asked her if everything was all right and she stated that this morning she found out that she needed to be in court this afternoon, but she did not have the paperwork ready. She then asked me if we could do the interview later. I hesitantly agreed and told her I would reschedule. After attempts at rescheduling with Ms. Parker twice failed, I decided to recruit another investigator for my sample.

The approximate situation described above occurred three more times during my research period, and each time the investigator's reason for missing was directly linked to the job. I found that I needed to be more flexible in my scheduling and not take the cancellations as a personal rejection, but to look at it as part of the time management challenges that investigators face on a daily basis. Eventually, I was able to interview ten suitable participants; even though it took me much longer than I had originally planned. As if this challenge was not enough in collecting my data, there were also changes in the

division's structure that both the investigators and I had to deal with during the same time period.

During my research period, there was a major change in how shifts and hours were organized among investigators and supervisors. Many units were reassembled, meaning investigators were moved to different units and different supervisors. This caused many investigators to have even less time, for now they did not only have their cases to deal with, but they also needed to get used to being assigned to a new shift. My research plan called for me to interview five newer CPIs, who often needed more time to adjust to the change. These individuals often did not have any time to devote to the interview and when they did, they appeared distracted or in a hurry. I overcame this challenge by delaying some of my interviews so that investigators could become accustomed to their new posts and then be able to give me the time and attention I needed to complete my data collection.

Data Analysis

After collecting all data, I began coding and analyzing. I first focused on my fieldnotes for a paper that I wrote for a graduate course on ethnography. In this paper, I identified several strategies of emotion management and documented them through my observational data. After writing up those initial findings, I began to code and analyze the ten transcribed interviews. I began with a first detailed reading during which I wrote in the margins what each line or section was conveying to me, whether it seemed important or minute in detail. As Emerson states,

he (the researcher) does so (code) without regard for how or whether ideas and categories will ultimately be used, whether other relevant observations have been made, or how they will fit together. (Emerson, 1995, 151)

After finishing this first round of coding, I began to look for themes in my margin notes. Eventually I started to group corresponding excerpts together. I then used color markers to color-code some major themes and began to cut and paste excerpts into a separate electronic file. Finally, within this file, I ranked data pieces from the best example of the theme to the least clear example. This step helped me later when selecting excerpts for the analysis section of this thesis. The excerpts I chose to discuss in the analysis section represent the best examples of what I observed in the field.

SETTING

The Child Protective Investigation Division (CPID) first began operating in 2006. The

agency began with newly trained and certified investigators whom the Sheriff's Office

hired from other counties and from the dismantled Department of Children and Families

(DCF), the agency that previously managed child protection in Plantation County. The

new division of the Sheriff's Office, CPID, replaced the investigation section of DCF

because of a high turnover of investigators and continued (negative) media coverage of

neglectful investigators. At the beginning of my research, the new unit, CPID had been

operating for about 18 months.

The requirements and qualifications needed for this job include the ability to work

under stressful conditions and apply crisis intervention techniques. The entire job

description can be seen in detail in Appendix C. The job duties for a child protective

investigator are listed below. The investigator:

- Investigates alleged abuse, neglect, and/or abandonment of children to determine if abusive or unsafe conditions exist and takes appropriate action to ensure the safety of children.
- Interviews children and adults concerning allegations of abuse, neglect and/or abandonment to ascertain the validity of allegations, document living conditions, and determine the need to remove children from an unsafe environment.
- Informs clients of available social service programs to assist them with their needs.
- Conducts follow-up visits to ensure the safety of children is being maintained and support programs are in-place.
- Testifies in court to accurately relate the circumstances of cases investigated.
- Establishes and maintains case management files, to include computer databases, to provide accurate recording and availability of case information. (Plantation County Civil Service Board website, see references)

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CPIs are considered sworn civilian employees and have the authority to remove a child from a parent or guardian; however, they are never allowed to act as a law enforcement agent.

CPIs deal with two types of cases that come in through the Tallahassee Child Abuse Hotline, classified as either "immediate" or "24 hour." Citizens can call the 1-800 Hotline to report abuse and an initial report will be taken in Tallahassee. The report is confidential and forwarded to local units who further investigate all calls. "Immediate" cases have to be commenced as soon as possible, because there appears to be a possible risk to the child. A "24-hour" case can be commenced within 24 hours, as the risk to the child is not considered immediate. As soon as the complaint is logged, the support staff at CPID begins researching background information on the suspected abusers. Driver license records are pulled along with all court documents; such as arrest reports and other documents the staff feels will be relevant to the case. Once the file is created, it is assigned to a CPI. The investigator commences each case by separately interviewing the caregiver and the children. The investigator then reassesses the risk of harm to the child, and with the help of the Attorney Generals Office, may use "probable cause" to shelter at risk children. "Probable cause" consists of certain risks that the child is facing that could have a negative effect. Abuse, drug use, neglect, and past problems can all be viewed as "probable cause" in removing a child from a parent's home.

In total nearly a hundred child protective investigators worked for the CPID at the beginning of my research in Spring 2007. By the spring of 2008, the end of my research, this number had dropped to the mid eighties, meaning many of the positions have been left unfilled. This drop happened because of investigators leaving and not because they

were being forced to leave. Two investigators from my interview sample have already

resigned from their positions. Both of them were novice investigators with respectively

nine months and one year of experience at CPID before leaving.

At the beginning of my research, the CPID consisted of two types of units, the

night units and the day units. The night units consisted of two five-person teams. Night

units did not have to carry cases and would pass their cases onto a day unit investigator

the next morning. The two night units worked separate schedules, except on Tuesdays

when their schedules overlapped. The scheduled hours for the night unit were from 1 pm

to midnight, but often they had to work overtime because of cases that require

"sheltering." The day unit worked from 8 am to 5 pm, but often they also had to work

overtime. As I began my observations of the night unit, I noticed that many of the

investigators from the day units were still at the CPID building at 9 pm when I arrived. I

asked about this during my first few observations and was told that it was part of the job.

If you could not get your work done during the day, investigators would stay late in order

to finish what needed to be done.

Towards the end of my research, the CPID administration made significant

changes to the investigators' shifts in order to gain more coverage and to alleviate some

of the time constraints. As of February 2008, the new schedules for investigators are 8

am-5:30 pm, 11 am-7:30 pm, and 1:30 pm-12 am (midnight), meaning there are now

three shifts instead of two. Now there is no difference between the units, workers are

responsible for the same duties and maintain the same type and amount of files.

The entire division is housed in a building in Plantation County, Florida. As you

enter the CPID building through the front lobby, to the left there are waiting room chairs

and a receptionist's office with thick glass that separates her from the waiting room. There is no receptionist on duty during the night. As you walk to the right, you see interview rooms and then a large door that requires an electronic badge to open. Behind that door, there is a huge office floor with over 100 cubicles filled with desks and computers. Along all the walls are offices of supervisors of the different units. The supervisors all have offices with doors and very nice wooden desks. There are flat screen televisions on each of the walls surrounding the cubicles. Half of the television screens gives information to the investigators (for example "Do not leave drug tests in car, heat ruins testing kits") and the other half is tuned to the news or the weather channel.

All investigators and supervisors wear khaki pants and different color long sleeve shirts with an embroidered Sheriff's star over their heart. The shirts are provided by the Sheriff's Office, but employees must purchase their own khaki pants. The Sheriff's Office also provides a car for each investigator, which the investigator takes home each day. The agency also provides a gas card for all gasoline purchases. Many of the investigators thought that this was one of the best benefits of working for the Sheriff. While at DCF, investigators had to use their own cars and buy their own gas. The investigators are also given laptops and cell phones to use for work purposes. This allows them to conduct work outside the office and at home. However, the ability to work at home can have its drawbacks at times. Overall, the investigators appear to enjoy the new benefits that have been provided through a change in agency.

Emotional Challenges

During the course of my research, I observed and recorded many different emotional

challenges faced by child protective investigators. The following issues are two of the

biggest emotional challenges that child protective investigators need to manage on a daily

basis. The challenges discussed below are case overload and victimization of children.

Case Overload. During my observations and interviews, one topic continued to

resurface: case overload. Many of the investigators I interviewed stated this as one of the

top emotional challenges of working in child protection. In addition, as I stated above, I

observed numerous investigators working overtime late into the night in order to finish

their paperwork.

Mr. Newman explains what he believes is the biggest emotional challenge of his

job in the following excerpt.

> Well, one of the big stressors of this job is the volume. And if you're not
> constantly on top of it your case load is going to grow until you are just
> overwhelmed. If you don't have a lot of organizational skills then it can bite you
> because you're getting a case almost every day. You're getting four to five cases a
> week, if not more. I'll say four to probably… four to seven cases a week. So…
> Yeah, if you're not constantly on top of it… (Mr. Newman, Novice)

In this example, Mr. Newman is explaining that the sheer number of cases are one of the

biggest stressors of his job. He also explains that without organizational skills you will

fall behind because you are getting a new case almost every day. Many of the

investigators echoed his statement about struggling to keep up with the volume of cases

that they receive every week. Many of the investigators that I interacted with expressed a

concern with the abuse hotline investigating all calls. They felt that this put too many cases into the system and overloaded the investigators.

In the next example, I discovered that for some investigators the high caseload could outweigh the stress of dealing with the victimization of children. Ms. Freemantle is explaining the emotional challenges of her job.

> There are my days that probably you could ask ninety percent of the floor and they've seen me cry. Most of it is frustration and stress, especially when we have high case loads roll in. You're getting three cases a day, you just got back from one and you've got to hit it again and go out, six more kids, or what have you. In this job it doesn't tend to be what I've seen in terms of abuse or neglect or you know kids being hurt, it's more just the high intensity, the amount of cases we get, the amount of paperwork that needs to be done, and just the non-stop kind of…
> (Ms. Freemantle, Veteran)

Ms. Freemantle explains that her biggest emotional challenge is due to the stress and frustration of dealing with a high caseload. At the end of her statement, Ms. Freemantle explains that, for her, it isn't the abuse or neglect of children that is the biggest challenge but instead the amount of cases and paperwork they must complete. However, not all of the investigators that I interviewed echo this, many of them stated that the victimization of children was the biggest emotional challenge they faced.

Victimization of Children. Obviously, victimization of children is what investigators are hired to prevent or stop from happening. Seeing abuse and victimization of children is a part of their job, but it also puts a large emotional burden on them which they have to manage.

In the following excerpt from an interview with Mr. Nelson, he discusses his personal experiences with the foster system as well as some of the effects of seeing victimization of children.

> It's [sheltering] very sad. Cause of my personal history. It is very, very sad when that has to happen because I was in foster care and adopted. I was removed from parents and it brought me to this field so another child does not have to go through what I went through, or my sisters went through. A very tough thing to do but you have to. [Pause] It's hard to deal with the emotions at times, especially when you first start out in the field. After a while, nothing fazes you anymore. You can see the nastiest thing and you will just shake your head now and just say I cannot believe …. (Mr. Nelson, Veteran)

Mr. Nelson begins to answer the question by explaining how his personal history led him to this field. He then explains how hard it is to deal with the emotions that come along with seeing the victimization of a child. Investigators listed anger, rage, sadness, fear, and guilt as the emotions they often felt when seeing the firsthand effects of abuse in a family. Mr. Nelson here also describes an effect that happens to many investigators after being in the field for a number of years, detachment. At the end of his quote, he states that after a while you can see the abuse and "just shake your head" because nothing fazes you anymore. The investigator has become detached in order to protect himself or herself. However, in order to do their job investigators must remain somewhat invested in helping the child or family. This also can become a challenge that investigators must manage.

Ms. Nurse explains how seeing the victimization of children makes this job different from many others. In her statement below, she also echoes Mr. Nelson's point of detachment as a side effect of seeing so much abuse.

> Yes, this job is so unlike any other job that's out there. You don't have normal hours, you are dealing with children in potentially dangerous situations, you are

responsible for their safety. My first supervisor said you can't take this home, you got to leave it here and you have got to have your life outside of it. It took me a while because I said no I can't, I'm not done. (Ms. Nurse, Novice)

Ms. Nurse explains that dangerous situations, which might inflict harm on children, are a part of the job that can be very challenging. Her supervisor informed her early on that she needed to learn how to manage this emotional challenge, and she even told her that "she can't take it home." Ms. Nurse explains that detachment from the job was very hard to learn because she initially saw her job as being responsible for the children at all times. In reality, the parents are responsible for their children's safety, but novice investigators often feel they must shoulder the load of being responsible for the safety of children who they may have never met before.

These are but two emotional challenges that child protective investigators face in order to complete their duties. There are others but case overload and victimization of children were the challenges that I heard most often from investigators during my research. Now that I have discussed the primary emotional challenges for the investigator, I turn to the various strategies investigators employ to manage these challenges.

STRATEGIES OF MANAGING EMOTION

Despite the challenges of the job, many investigators continue to work as CPIs for many years. Even with extra time and less cases, this job is extremely challenging. In order to function on a daily basis, investigators develop strategies to cope with the emotional difficulties of their job. The three different types of strategies I observed were: office based strategies, field based strategies, and personal strategies. Office based strategies include group humor, practical support and sharing experiences. Field based strategies include calming down the parent, enlisting the client, and distancing humor. Personal strategies include accentuating importance and blaming the parent. All investigators that I observed and interviewed used several of these strategies. In the following, I discuss each category and each individual strategy in more detail.

Office Based Strategies

Waldron (2000) wrote about the importance of work relationships, stating that relationships with coworkers influence our emotions more than the things we do at work. Waldron also believed that "the dynamics of organizational relationships are among the most frequently cited sources of intense emotion" (66). Maintaining relationships and treating others at work with respect takes emotion management. Also, for the worker it is useful to have the understanding that they receive from their coworkers who are in the trenches with them on a daily basis. Having a place to talk about their problems and

receive social support from their peers are ways in which individuals can manage their emotions. Shuler and Sypher's (2000) study of a 911 call center also shows how emotional communication helps in building a supportive community. In the case of my research, the CPID workers are still forming their community due to an influx of new CPIs and the reorganization of units. I now look at three ways in which investigators manage their emotions at the office within the context of their coworkers.

Group Humor. Humor has been found in many studies to be a strategy of managing emotion. Smith and Kleinman (1989), in their research on emotion management strategies of medical students, found that the students used group humor in order to manage embarrassment or physical discomfort. Another example can be found in Cahill and Eggleston's (1994) article on how wheelchair users manage emotions in public encounters. In their research, Cahill and Eggleston found that wheelchair users managed their emotions by using humor with others to disarm possibly embarrassing situations. I have found the same strategy to exist among workers in the CPID. Humor is used to manage bad situations, but also to prepare investigators prior to going out on a new case.

My first experience with humor came on my first day observing the CPID. I was being introduced to many of the investigators and one of them, Mr. Nelson, started to joke about some of his peers. I jotted this down in my fieldnotes and on later visits saw a recurring theme of humor within the unit. During my visits to the CPID, I observed many investigators making numerous jokes and pulling practical jokes on each other before going into the field. I later realized this was how they managed their emotions

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prior to going out on a case. It also became evident that humor was used after their return

to deal with some of the hardships that they encountered during the investigation.

In the following excerpt, the supervisor and Mr. Nelson exchange humorous

comments prior to both Mr. Nelson and I going out on a case.

> Ms. Jackson also told Mr. Nelson to do everything "by the book" because I was
> going to be along. He laughed and states that he "always does everything" by the
> book. He then joked about how people tell him things about their drug use
> without him having to drug test them. I nod and laugh even though I had heard
> this story before. I like Mr. Nelson; he keeps things funny in the unit. (Field Note
> IV)

The example of the use of humor in the above story helps ease tension in the unit about

the cases CPIs receive each night. Mr. Nelson uses exaggeration to keep things light in

the midst of a child abuse allegation. I often observed investigators having similar

humorous exchanges prior to entering the field.

The next example is given to show that humor can take place not only prior to

going out on cases but also at the end of the night in order to lighten up the mood and to

ground people after handling difficult situations.

> When Ms. Dumble returned after a few minutes, she showed me her transfer
> request memo and the memo had the word "declined" scribbled on it. I was
> shocked and asked Ms. Dumble if they had declined her transfer and she laughed
> and stated that Ms. Jackson was just messing around with her. I noticed that Ms.
> Dumble thought that this was funny coming from Ms. Jackson who was her
> supervisor. (Field Note I)

Ms. Dumble had been planning to be transferred to another unit because it would give her

a more suitable schedule. She then received her memo back in her box with the word

"declined" scribbled on it. This case of humor was used to let Ms. Dumble know that her

supervisor cared about her and did not want to see her leave. In addition, Ms. Jackson

used it as a way to lighten the mood because of Ms. Dumble's plan of leaving the night

unit. This use of humor allows the supervisor a chance to connect with her investigators and relate to them even though she may not be on the frontline.

Overall, the CPID unit that I observed used humor on a daily basis. They took time during their shift to play jokes on each other, and they even took time to share funny stories about cases they have worked on. One night, I watched as the supervisor and her unit sat around a computer trying to find out what kind of snake she had seen earlier that day on her porch. The group of CPIs went back and forth between discussions of the snake and discussions of an upcoming case they were going to investigate. Laughter was heard often during my observations, but it was most often used right before someone was leaving for the field. The sense of group humor builds community among investigators, which helps them prepare for and recover from the emotional challenges of their field investigations. This use of humor allows investigators to better brace themselves for what they might encounter once they walk out that door: an angry parent, an abused child, or a violent situation.

Practical Support. Practical support are the things investigators do for each other in order to help each other manage their emotions. This support can come in different ways, but all practical support is done to back up an investigator who needs help. Lively (2000) introduces the term "reciprocal emotion management" in her research of law firms and I observed this concept in action while researching the CPID. Lively concluded that peers helped manage each other's emotions by what she termed "caretaking." Her concept described peers that would help each other in practical ways in order to manage each others' emotions. Colleagues would later help the one person who helped them in order

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to continue the reciprocal exchange of emotion management. This practical support

allows investigators to manage their emotions by gaining support from their peers in very

tangible ways.

On my second night of observing the night unit, I witnessed the following

episode, during which one investigator became overwhelmed with the amount of work

she was getting and another investigator stepped in to help.

> Ms. Newsome - Damn, it looks like I will be sheltering tonight, they arrested the
> father and there are 5 kids that may need to be picked up.
> Ms. Darling - Well, maybe the deputies will find a relative for them to live with
> until the dad is out of jail.
> Ms. Newsome - The dad did not plan for any relatives to take care of them, so
> they will probably need to be sheltered. I'm going to be here until 3:00 am.
> Ms. Darling - I'll help, send me the risk assessment on my computer and I will fill
> it out for you and run some of the past history checks.
> Ms. Newsome - Thanks for the help. I am still hoping that they will not need to
> shelter them.
> After the conversation, Ms. Darling and Ms. Newsome turn to their respective
> computers and begin to type away. After a few minutes, Ms. Newsome comes
> over to Ms. Darling's desk and watches as Ms. Darling types up Ms. Newsome's
> risk assessment. (Field Notes II)

In this excerpt, Ms. Darling sees that Ms. Newsome is overwhelmed, so she helps her

manage her workload by offering to assist with the paperwork. Knowing that she has that

kind of support allows Ms. Newsome to get her work done. She can count on the support

of her peers if she needs to remove the children.

Many of the interviewees stressed how important it was that their peers supported

them during difficult situations.

> I mean it really is like a family, everybody's there to support you if you are ever
> really stressed out and you do not know how to deal with it. (Ms. Masters,
> Novice)

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Here, the interviewee is comparing her unit to a family. Her coworkers are there to support her and help her when she does not know how to deal with her emotions. The idea that she has support, much like in a good family, allows her to manage her emotions when she is in situations that she may not know how to handle.

The following excerpt from an interview indicates the extreme degree of help that some investigators will offer and perform in order to support their peers.

> Mr. Nelson - I was done by about 11:30 pm, then we ended up getting an immediate case out in the western part of the county and I helped a coworker out there to see this mom who was seeing helicopters flying in the sky. She was a mental health issue and in the past, she had fired guns in the house, so... we went there to see what was going on with that case and we had to shelter that baby.
> Interviewer - And that was on your way home?
> Mr. Nelson - That was on my way home.
> Interviewer - You stopped on your way home?
> Mr. Nelson - I stopped to help her out, let her get back and then I called her with the information. I just speeded it up so she would not be here forever. (Mr. Nelson, Veteran)

Mr. Nelson decides that instead of going home he would help his colleague by stopping at the house and gathering the needed information for the other investigator. This allowed the other investigator to go back to the office and begin writing up her case using the information that Mr. Nelson provided. The example further shows how important support is, because many of the investigators described a "good unit" as one in which each investigator supports the other. Although some investigators did complain that not all workers in every unit supported each other in this way, most of the interviewees, and especially the members of the unit that I observed, did share this type of support.

In sum, I observed investigators using practical support not only to get their job done, but also to manage emotions. Many investigators stated during our interviews that having the practical support of their peers made them feel better about their job. Some

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investigators also added that this practical support was more than just removing workload but helped them in managing the stress of working in the field.

Sharing Experiences. Sharing experiences with other investigators is a strategy that most investigators use to manage their emotions on a daily basis. Being able to share and exchange experiences allows investigators to feel understood. Most investigators have been in similar situations or had common types of experiences that allow them to feel connected to one another. Discussing shared experiences allows investigators to manage their emotions by realizing that their peers exactly understand exactly what they are going through.

Below is an excerpt from my interview with Ms. Nurse during which I asked her a question regarding how she managed her emotions at work.

> My coworkers, because we all understand what we are going through and the fact that no one case is the same as another, they are all different and everybody's just as stressed out as the other, they are all overwhelmed and there's a great group of people here, everybody really tries to help out. I try to help others out if I can as well. I have gone crazy, we call it PI breakdowns, it is when you are stressed out to the max, you cannot take one more thing, and you just break down. You start crying and you know you talk it out with whomever and you realize that this is just one of those moments and you go on. (Ms. Nurse, Novice)

Ms. Nurse's example of a PI breakdown is an illustration of sharing experiences. Numerous investigators have gone through a PI breakdown, so they have a common experience (PI breakdowns) they can share and help with, yet people outside of the CPID probably cannot relate to. Sharing common experiences means being able to talk about the experience, vent about it, or just understand that others have gone through this as

well. Investigators do not even have to verbalize their experiences; just knowing that others have gone through the same thing in the past helps them cope.

Some investigators use common types of experiences to vent to each other about what is happening to them during their casework.

> CPIs will be like "I can't believe what happened today" or whatever to each other and will vent and use each other to vent off each other. (Ms. Darling, Veteran)

The venting that Ms. Darling is speaking of is the verbalizing of a common type of experience with another investigator. Here Ms. Darling discusses how investigators "vent off each other" in order to deal with the fieldwork and difficulties they experienced during the day.

In contrast, there are many people who do not share in these types of experience, and many investigators struggle to gather empathy from these people in their lives. In the example below Ms. Masters explains how her boyfriend cannot relate to the type of work that she does and how this affects her.

> It's such a rough job. And… And sometimes I feel like he doesn't understand how rough it is, so it kind of makes it harder. I mean he doesn't, you know, understand the stress level. He doesn't… You know he'll compare it to his work, and it's not like I'm trying to say my job is better or my job is more difficult, but there's a big difference when you're responsible for people's lives versus doing what he does (business). I mean, it's just… It's a different kind of feeling. It's like a constant weight you have on your shoulders that you're just hoping nothing happens. (Ms. Masters, Novice)

This example provides a stark contrast to the feeling of support that investigators described in the first two examples. In this excerpt, Ms. Masters explains that her boyfriend cannot relate to her type of job, because he does not have the sort of experiences that she shares with her peers. Things like being yelled at by a parent, receiving threatening voicemails, and removing a child from a home are experiences that

her boyfriend is not able to understand. These difficult experiences allow investigators to

connect with each other. However, they also help them deal with their emotions by

understanding that there is someone else who has to deal with similar emotions also.

The above strategies can be observed when investigators are in the office and

have their peers around to deal with their emotions. However, many times, investigators

must deal with challenges without their peers being around. When investigators are in

the field, they often have to manage feelings of anger, guilt, sadness, and grief quickly in

order to complete their tasks. The next section therefore focuses on how investigators

manage their emotions while interacting with clients in the field.

Field Based Strategies

In the field, their clients are both children and parents, and investigators must be able to

interact with both in order to complete their case. One of the biggest challenges

investigators experience is dealing with clients, especially parents that are being

investigated. In Chin's (2000) research of parents and children, she observed how

parents managed the emotions of their children in order for them to succeed on a high

school preparatory test. In a similar manner, investigators manage the parents' emotions

in order to succeed at their own job. Investigators manage the emotions of parents in

order to gain the cooperation and assistance they need to complete their tasks. Managing

the emotions of the parent allows the investigator to indirectly manage their own

emotions. This point was made repeatedly in my interviews with investigators. When I

asked them how they managed their own emotions in the field, many responded by

describing the following strategies. The strategies I discuss are calming down the parent, enlisting the client, and distancing humor.

Calming Down the Parent. When investigators knock on a door to begin an investigation, the parents are often upset and agitated about the accusations. Calming down the parent is essentially an attempt by investigators to de-escalate the situation with the parent. They attempt to do this in different ways, but the overall goal is to keep the parent from escalating the situation.

In the following example, Ms. Nurse explains how she usually deals with an upset parent during a normal investigation.

> I usually just try to calm them down and always try to have them look at the positive point. The fact that my explanation to her was to think of this as your last chance, your lucky day, I just try to have them to look at the positive. They want to know who the person is who reported them, I cannot tell them that just that there is someone out there who is trying to look out for the safety of your child and just wants to make sure that your child's safe. Sometimes that works and sometimes it does not. They start throwing names out of who they think it is but for the most part, I just console them. I talk to them, as I would want them to talk to me. Usually it works. (Ms. Nurse, Novice)

In the above example, Ms. Nurse, reassures the parent that there are positive sides to this investigation and uses that reassurance as a way to calm down the client. At the end of her statement, she describes how she treats the parents with respect in order to gain their cooperation.

The outcome of calming down the parent is useful in itself, but it also helps in furthering the investigation. By managing the parent's emotions, the investigator can

build a rapport with the parents that, as we see in the next example, can help with the investigation.

> I mean I had one woman who was extremely upset to see me; you know, cursing me out, everything else. However, once I pointed out that I was not there to accuse her of anything and this began to calm her down. I mean, now she is perfectly fine with me, she is cooperating one hundred percent. (Ms. Masters, Novice)

In this example, the investigator has managed a client who was upset and cursed her out, and calmed her down by de-escalating the situation and by building a productive relationship. Even though the investigator may be upset, Ms. Masters keeps a professional demeanor in order to accomplish her job. By calming down the parent she has also managed her own emotions. Now the investigator has a parent who is cooperating "one hundred percent" with the investigation and is no longer an obstacle. Therefore, the investigator can complete the case with less hassle and thus keep his or her caseload manageable.

In the final example, an investigator, Ms. Gunn, shares a story about a client who was not angry but instead overcome with sadness. Ms. Gunn manages the emotion of the client in a different way than we have seen above.

> When we told her we were sheltering the kids, she lost it to the point where she collapsed on the ground and was very emotional, obviously. I could tell she loved her kids. I could tell she would not do anything intentionally to hurt her kids. Unfortunately, the circumstances led to us having to do this. However, we assured her that… Or I assured her… I sat down with her. I literally sat with her on a curb for about twenty minutes and talked to her and told her that we're going to do everything we can to make…make things right. Not to make this right, but to make things right. Help her learn to make better choices, better decisions, get her in a little bit better place both physically and mentally, that type of thing. (Ms. Gunn, Novice)

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Here, Ms. Gunn actually describes taking the time to sit on the curb with her client to give her a bigger picture of what is happening. She points out to the mother that she can make changes in her life that can help her and her children. In this case, the client is not upset at the investigator, but upset about what is happening to her children. Ms. Gunn handles this by not only calming the client down, but also reassuring her of changes that can be made in order to get to a "better place."

Investigators routinely stated during my interviews that their ability to de-escalate a parent allowed them to manage their own emotions and to get their work done more easily. Overall, the strategy of calming down the parent allows the worker to maintain a professional stature and gain cooperation with the parent. It also allows the investigator to manage any anger or empathy they feel towards the parent in an appropriate way.

Enlisting the Client. Investigators who use enlisting the client as a strategy are trying to make the client a part of the solution to the problem in order to manage their own emotions. In order to do this, investigators try to gain the cooperation of the client.

In my first example, Ms. Masters shows how an investigator stresses the importance of the parent cooperating. Her explanation is in response to an interview question about how she manages the emotion of her clients.

> Well, I kind of just pretty much tried to talk to her (the parent) and told her, look, I know you are upset but you know I have to do this. This is part of my job. We always tell them it is just allegations. It does not mean that we are accusing you, that you are a bad parent or that you are doing this. We are here to prove whether it is true. So the sooner you cooperate with me and give me the information I need, the sooner we can get this taken care of. (Ms. Masters, Novice)

The investigator tells the parent that without her cooperation this is going to take longer to investigate. In this case, Ms. Masters is attempting to gain the cooperation of the client in order to gain access to further information. This allows Ms. Masters to manage the anger of the parent, while she also manages her own emotions of anger and guilt. She is not accusing the parent; she is only there to help, but only if they cooperate.

The next example of this strategy again uses the parents as a way to manage the emotion of the situation but here the investigator is also trying to manage the emotions of the children. Ms. Agent "works up" the parent and uses her to help smooth out the situation for the children. By gaining the help of the parent, investigators no longer feel that they are doing something "bad" and therefore are managing their emotions as well. In the following example, Ms. Agent answered a question about how she handles the emotions of a child and a parent when she is going to remove the child. This was her response when asked for an example of what she would say to a parent.

> I want to ask you for a big favor. I want you to be strong for me and I want you to call your kids over here and let them know. Help them pack and let them know because it is less traumatizing for the children. Let them know that they are going to go away for a while. I usually try a relative, try to stay with a relative, that they are going to go away for a while, that they are going to stay with uncle whatever and until you get better in the meantime you're going to work on your case plan. You are going to get a job, a place for the kids, you are going to stay off drugs, and you are going to do better. While the kids are not here, you are going to get better, so you can get these kids back. (Ms. Agent, Veteran)

The investigator stresses the importance of the parent reassuring the child, but also stresses the importance of the parent getting their life back on track by following a strict case plan. Therefore, the investigator is managing the feelings of the client by enlisting him or her to help in correcting the problem.

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In the following example, the same investigator, Ms. Agent, describes using the same strategy, however this time with a child directly.

> Okay, this is what I do, before we even get in the car, when we start packing. I say I want you to listen I have something that I have to tell you and then they come in and like face me and then I say and they are like crying and all upset. I say that I do not want you to be upset; I know that you are because you are going to be away from your mom, but you are still going to be seeing your mommy. You are still going to have visits with your mommy and your mommy and your daddy need to get better. While they get better, you can come back with them and you are going to stay with uncle whatever and do you like him, and they say yes, I like the uncle. I said okay, I am going to go talk to him right now and see when I can take you to his house. (Ms. Agent, Veteran)

Here the investigator is trying to enlist the child into the removal, even asking if they want to stay with their uncle. Despite the fact that the child's opinion does not matter in most investigations, the investigator uses this strategy to involve the child and give him or her sense of control in a difficult situation. The investigator is telling the child that he or she is helping the parent get better by giving them some time. This enlists the child in a common goal, the unification of the family in a better place in the future. By doing this, investigators are also managing their own emotions of guilt and sympathy. Most of my respondents stated that when they could enlist a parent or a child in handling a case it allowed them to feel better about what they had to do.

Distancing Humor. In the section in which I discussed office based strategies I gave examples of the use of humor among investigators with the goal of connecting with each other and dealing with the pressures of the job. However, in the following examples, I will describe how humor is used to deal with clients who are upset with the investigators.

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Investigators use this strategy to distance themselves from the reality of the situation, similar to the medical students in Smith and Kleinmans' article (1989).

In the first example, Ms. Freemantle is answering a question about clients being upset with her.

> I have not had a huge amount [of clients upset with her]. As you can probably tell, I use humor to fight off many things. So I really do enjoy when people say we manage it, you know you have helped me. It does make me feel good. However, on the opposite end, I do get aggravated when I am called a "bitch" or whatever they want to call me. I tend to make a joke of it. I will laugh it off and try to think it is funny. It does bother me. I do not want people to think I am an ass when I go out to their house. (Ms. Freemantle, Veteran)

Ms. Freemantle is very aware of her strategy of using humor to diffuse difficult situations. She also refers to the situation as "bothering" and describes how using humor can make her feel better about it. Notice though the last statement Ms. Freemantle makes, which is the worry that the client will see her in a negative way. She feels a need to manage how clients see her and uses jokes or funny retorts as a way to do that. By using humor, the investigator manages her own emotions and is able to maintain a professional, positive exterior that can influence how a parent may see her.

In the second example, we see an investigator, Ms. Gunn, who actually uses distancing humor in an interaction with a client in order to refute the parent's claim. When asked to give an example of an irate parent, she responded with the following excerpt.

> I recently had a grandmother who stood on her porch and screamed. At the top of her lungs, something to the effect of you know do I look like a crack head, or whatever. She screamed at me "Well I'm not rich like you and I don't"… You know … "My house isn't as clean and nice as yours." I am like going, "oh, you do not know". Heh…(laughter) (Ms. Gunn, Novice)

Her response to the client that her house is not as clean as she might think allows the investigator to manage her immediate guilt of being accused of superiority. Investigators often stated they were accused by parents because of their job status they were superior. Both of the above examples show how distancing humor can be used to manage feelings of anger and guilt in interactions. In the cases that I observed, this strategy was interactive in nature. This sort of humor was expressed to parents, officers, and even me in order to help investigators manage any feelings that could lead to inappropriate behavior.

In sum, the investigators in the field do not always have peer support and then resort to using the strategies discussed above. I believe that they use these strategies to manage their own emotions by managing the emotions of others. This group of strategies is similar to the one found in Lively's article in which she introduced the idea of "reciprocal emotion management." By calming down the parent, enlisting the client, and using distancing humor investigators are easing the challenges of their job and therefore managing their own emotions. Next, I discuss personal strategies that are not directly found in the field or in the office, but instead found in the ways in which investigators frame handle challenges on their own, often away from work.

Personal Strategies

The final set of strategies that I found in my research was a group of personal techniques that include accentuating importance and blaming the parent. These strategies are used by investigators to detach themselves from the responsibility of removing children from their families. Personal strategies used by investigators help to manage the guilt, anger,

doubt, and other feelings that occur when they are removing children and breaking up families. This group of strategies is a type of "deep acting" (Hochschild, 1983). They are not strategies investigators employ in specific contexts and situations, but instead become part of their general beliefs and justifications that allow them to do their job.

Accentuating Importance. Many of the investigators explained to me that despite the challenges of the job, they continue to do the work because it can change lives. This thinking is very similar to a strategy discussed in a study of how medical students managed their emotions (Smith and Kleinman, 1989). By focusing on the bigger goal of helping children, investigators manage to deal with the negative aspects of their work.

In the following interview excerpt, Ms. Freemantle explains how she deals with those negative aspects.

> We can make a difference if it is done the right way. If everybody can work together and do it the right way, we can make a difference in some of these kids' lives. To see the kids come in and actually smile and be happy with us, you know with people they do not know and it makes me feel like, okay, maybe there is a reason why we brought them here. You know there is a reason why we took them from where they are and stuff like that, so… I do like the kids. (Ms. Freemantle, Veteran)

In this example, Ms. Freemantle is looking at the larger picture of what she does for a living. She takes cues from the children and feels like she is doing the right thing. Accentuating importance reinforces her belief that what she is doing is valid. This allows the investigator to feel like they are doing the right thing, even if they may feel guilty about breaking up families, at least temporarily. Investigators reported feeling guilty at times because of the disturbance that an investigation can cause for a family. Also, when

they remove children they feel guilty because the child is displaced and may end up in a worse situation (foster care).

The next example is similar in that it describes a positive response from a child but takes the strategy of accentuating importance one step further. Mr. Rocky explains what happens sometimes when he is sheltering a child.

> When out on a case, [I am]saving the life of a child or children. I picked up a case and was driving back to the office, there are many times kids have asked me can you take me home. (Mr. Rocky, Veteran)

Mr. Rocky explains how a child asking to go home with him lets him know that he has made the right choice and probably saved this child's life. Many investigators who I interviewed stated that when a child seems happy it expresses to them that they are doing the right thing. Accentuating importance, or the ability to deflect the negative and focus on positive aspects of the work, can be seen throughout the interviews that I conducted.

Ms. Gunn who is answering my question "how do you manage the challenges of your job" gave the next example. She deeply believes that her job is important and argues that investigators are just human and can make mistakes.

> The fact that I know that what we do is important. To me it is…I will not say it is THE most important job in the world, it is absolutely one of the most important jobs in the world. The fact that we do it for their betterment, um… we make mistakes. We are human. You know, we do remove kids and maybe something else could have been done or something like that but I know, I know, I know, I know in my heart and in my head that we do, what we do for those children. There are days that I have to go walk around the block. I go to the gym and I will beat the heck out of a punching bag, or whatever. But because I know that is why we do what we do, [that] is how I get through it. (Ms. Gunn, Novice)

Here, Ms. Gunn, a novice, discusses the importance of her job in a way that is similar to the previous examples. She states that in her heart and in her head she knows that what she and her colleagues are doing for potentially abused children is in their best interest.

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My final example shows that investigators not only think about the importance of the job, but also about its rewards. Ms. Master says:

> I would say you know the good things just…as I said, the people that I get to work with. I mean it's nice to see when you actually get to help families because every now and then you know you get…you get to help families, you see the positive you know impact you had on their lives so that's nice. It is rewarding. (Ms. Masters, Novice)

Notice in the example that Ms. Masters is accentuating the importance of the job, but also that she feels that it is rewarding when she has an impact on a child's or a family's life. Accentuating importance is a way for investigators to manage the negative aspects of their job by not focusing on cases that may not have "happy endings." This last example shows how an investigator may handle dozens of negative cases a month but manages to best remember a couple of good cases. Stressing the importance of those cases allows them to manage their emotions in a way that allows them to continue their work. In sum, the strategy of accentuating importance allows investigators to believe their job is important and therefore convinces them that what they are doing is right. This allows the investigator to look past the guilt, anger, sadness, and other emotions that he or she is dealing with on a day-to-day basis. The belief that the parent is at fault is another strategy investigators employ to manage the emotional challenges.

Blaming the Parent. "Blaming the parent" is a strategy of managing emotion that I understood after reading Arluke's (1994) article *Managing Emotions in an Animal Shelter*. In his study, Arluke describes animal shelter workers who blame the owners for their pets' deaths when the workers have to euthanize them. I found a similar strategy

among child protection investigators. At times, they seem to blame the parent in order to manage their own negative emotions when having to take children away.

In the example below, Ms. Freemantle is answering my question regarding how she deals with upset children.

> Yeah. I use the same line for every child that I take into care. It is just 'Your mom or your dad has something they need to work on. They cannot work on it with you there. They cannot focus on it with you there. It is not because they do not love you. It is not because they do not want you. It's because they have to fix that so it's safe for you.' (Ms. Freemantle, Veteran)

Ms. Freemantle describes a situation in which a child is upset because they are being removed from the home. Ms. Freemantle manages her own emotion about the removal by blaming the parent for the situation. This allows the investigator to remove herself from the blame, because the removal is not her fault. The investigator instead focuses on the problem with the parent even though she is the one who is removing the child from the home.

The next example illustrates Mr. Rocky's opinion of why children are found in bad situations.

> The poor judgment of the people, like a mom, the mother meeting somebody on the street, and letting that person into the house, not even checking the background history, don't even know the last names of the people, it's sickening you know. I do not know why people do that. (Mr. Rocky, Veteran)

Mr. Rocky is blaming the mother for meeting a man on the street and bringing him into her home without getting to know him better. The investigator feels that this endangers the child. Therefore, if the investigator has to remove the child, then the blame can be put on the parent based on their poor decision-making. Again, this allows the investigator to justify the decision to remove the child, and explains why it is okay to

investigate families based on hotline calls. If it is the parent's poor decisions that cause

this to happen, then I do not have to feel any guilt about removing the child or about

breaking up the family.

Mr. Newman, a novice investigator, stated during his interview that he feels no

sympathy for the parent but instead emphasized that he gets upset at them. He describes

a case in which he had no sympathy for a mother who was using drugs and now wanted a

second chance with her child. This type of thinking allows Mr. Newman to distance

himself from the situation and turn the focus and blame on the parent.

My final example in this section illustrates just how far this blame can go. It

depicts Ms. Freemantle's frustration with an upset parent about a removal.

> The mom of the infants finally showed up. She had been picked up from work
> and came down. I was sheltering the children. I did not shelter the older kids,
> they had a father that was not offending and safe, and so they went with him. I
> did shelter the babies and mom just kept …got really sobby and weepy and 'We
> didn't do anything and we didn't know.' I just… I got very frustrated with her.
> You should know. It is your job to know. These are your kids. (Ms. Freemantle,
> Veteran)

Ms. Freemantle explains how frustrated she was with a mother who she had been trying

to help but was unable to get any cooperation from in the past. This rationalization is a

perfect strategy to manage the investigator's emotions upon having to remove a child

because the parents "force" the CPI investigator's actions. This is like the pet shelter

worker that does not want to euthanize any animals (Arluke, 1998). This strategy allows

the investigator to personally detach from the responsibility of the child's removal. In

addition, in the example, Ms. Freemantle expresses her frustration by stating that the

mother "should know" how to take care of her kids and that it is the mother's "job" to

know. This rationalization allows her to place the cause of the problems squarely on the back of the mother.

In conclusion, investigators manage the emotional challenges of their job through the strategies I described in this analysis. Whether they are in the office, in the field, or on their own, investigators have strategies to stay on the job and to deal with their feelings. First, I examined the role of peers in the investigators' office based strategies for managing emotion. I found that that practical support and group humor were two activities that allowed investigators to manage their emotions in a productive way. I also found that sharing experiences was a powerful way of coping with the frustrations associated with being an investigator. Second, I examined the role of clients in the investigators' field based strategies of managing emotion. I found that calming down the parent and enlisting the client were two ways in which investigators manage the emotions of others, as well as their own. I also found that investigators distanced themselves from emotions such as anger by using humor as a strategy in the field. Finally, I examined the role of self in the investigators' personal strategy of managing emotion. I found that in order to deal with emotions such as guilt, anger and sadness investigators often reminded themselves of the larger purpose of their work. Investigators also blame the parent for what they have to do to the children who often resist separation, even from clearly abusive parents. I believe that these last strategies are a form of "deep acting" similar to what Hochschild (1983)discovered people do in their personal lives.

My analysis includes examples of solitary and interactive emotion management strategies that allow investigators to maintain their professional demeanor and complete their duties. My examples also describe forms of "surface" and "deep" acting. Finally,

my analysis provided examples of "reciprocal emotion management" (Lively, 2000) thus

highlighting another concept that has been developed in previous research in this area.

DISCUSSION

Child protective investigators have a very important responsibility. Their job is to protect children from parents and guardians who do not treat them well, or who might even abuse them. While fulfilling this duty, investigators face numerous challenges. These challenges include case overload, victimization of children, feelings of anger, guilt, depression, anxiety, and many more. Investigators have developed a range of strategies to help overcome these challenges.

My primary research question was to discover how child protective investigators manage the emotions associated with their job. My initial idea was that veteran investigators know and use strategies which novice investigators not yet know how to use. However, I found that both novice and veteran investigators use similar strategies. I believe that novice investigators learn these strategies during the mentoring stage of training, which occurs after they have completed the classroom training. During the mentoring stage, novice investigators are paired with a veteran investigator and work on several cases together. During this phase, some of the strategies are passed down knowingly and unknowingly to the novice investigator. If the newcomers are able to implement them successfully in their work then they are likely to become veteran investigators. I did not find any noticeable differences in my interviews or my observations regarding strategies used by veteran and novice. Therefore, I believe I have found strategies that senior investigators have adapted and already successfully passed down to novice investigators.

I originally hypothesized that investigators mainly manage their emotions through a network of their peers. I was correct in finding office-based strategies, but I also found other important areas and strategies of managing feelings. Field based strategy and personal strategy were two strategies that I did not anticipate to find when I wrote my original proposal. However, the use of field based and personal strategies is very important for an investigator's ability to manage his or her emotions. Since investigators do not always have access to their peers, these other strategies are part of how they manage their work on a daily basis. I believe that investigators are managing the emotion of their clients in order to manage their own emotions. All of my respondents answered the question of how they managed the emotions of their job by describing how they de-escalated a situation, or they calmed down a client, in order to manage their own emotions. This management style allows investigators to remain professional and appropriate even though the situation may be difficult.

As explained, my research is limited to the Plantation County CPID. This study cannot be used to draw conclusions about other CPI Divisions in the State of Florida or in the U.S. However, the strategies I found could be further investigated to find out how they are implemented and passed down in other CPI units, and in different institutional and regional contexts.

My research combined interviews and observations with investigators in the office and in the field. My goal was to better understand the experiences of investigators and to understand how many of them managed to continue to work in this demanding job. If I could go back and change something about my research, I would try to observe all of my respondents in the field prior to interviewing them. This would allow me to observe

first hand some of the strategies before asking investigators about what they do and about how they view their work. Seeing some of my respondents in the field was useful, but I believe observing all respondents would have given me clearer picture earlier in my analysis.

Further research should explore the long-term emotional effects of being an investigator. It would be interesting to investigate any long-range emotional problems veteran investigators may experience due to performing high amounts of emotion work on the job. Three of my respondents reported having nightmares about their job since becoming child protective investigators. Other effects such as depression, anxiety, marital problems, and health problems would also need to be investigated more closely in veteran investigators. In addition, we need to learn more about how mentoring and training can play a role in making investigators successful in performing their job duties. We need to focus more clearly on the training aspects of CPIs. Many of my respondents reported that their state certification did not prepare them for the challenges associated with completing cases. Studies on the value of classroom training versus in the field mentoring could be fruitful avenues of future research.

Overall, the Plantation CPID provides a needed service for the county, and despite the many numerous challenges, the division continues to train new investigators monthly. I believe that in order to alleviate some of the existing CPID turnover the Plantation County Sheriff's Office should focus more strongly on training and support. Adding more time to the mentoring process would allow veteran investigators to spend more time with novice investigators and this would help them with passing along the different strategies found in this study. The need for more administrative support for investigators

was a recurring topic in my interviews as well. Investigators often felt that, outside of their unit, there was little support from the administration. The importance of community for investigators is undoubtedly seen in the strategies discovered in this research. Therefore, administrators should place more emphasis on exercises and strategies that build community in order to retain more workers and improve outcomes. These and other policy changes would help investigators in managing their emotions and therefore help them do their job, which is needed very much to keep our community and children safe. There are many problems in the child protection system, however without investigators and their strategies of staying on the job many more children would suffer.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: *Overview of Participants*

Participants	Gender	Age	Race or Ethnicity	Major in College	Time as Investigator	Novice or Veteran
Mr. Newman	Male	38	Caucasian	History	6 months	Novice
Ms. Masters	Female	24	Caucasian	Criminology	6 months	Novice
Ms. Gunn	Female	37	Caucasian	Criminology	8 months	Novice
Mr. Innes	Male	30	Caucasian	Criminal Justice	9 months	Novice
Ms. Nurse	Female	27	Caucasian	Criminal Justice	1 year	Novice
Ms. Agent	Female	45	Hispanic (Puerto Rican)	Business	2 years and 4 months	Veteran
Ms. Darling	Female	25	Caucasian	Sociology	2 years and 6 months	Veteran
Ms. Freemantle	Female	33	Caucasian	Criminal Justice (MA)	3 years	Veteran
Mr. Nelson	Male	40	Caucasian	Criminal Justice	6 years	Veteran
Mr. Rocky	Male	50	Asian (Indian)	Social Work (MSW)	12 years	Veteran

Appendix B: *Interview Guideline*

Background

Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? (i.e. where and how you grew up and about your work history)
        What is your age?
        What is your race/ethnicity?
        What type of degree/education do you have?
        What kind of work did you do before starting this job?

Job

How did you hear about this job?
Can you tell me the story of how you got this job?
What did you expect from this job in the beginning?
        Is the job different from what you expected?
        If yes, how so?
What do you like about this job?
What do you dislike/what is difficult?
        Can you give me some examples of good/bad things about this job?
What exactly is your job about, what do you do?
        Can you walk me through a typical day at work?
        What did you do yesterday? (from start to finish) (Last week if yesterday was not typical)
        What was easy/difficult, what did you like/dislike about your work yesterday?

Emotions and Relationships

How are your interactions with clients? (parents/children/foster parents)
        Do you ever have any problems?
        Do they ever become upset?
        What do you do in these situations?
        Where did you learn these techniques?
        How does that make you feel?
How is your relationship with other PI's?
        Do you ever have any problems?
        Do they ever become upset?
        What do you do in these situations?
        Where did you learn these techniques?
        How does that make you feel?
How is your relationship with supervisors?
        Do you ever have any problems?
What do you do to relax after work is over?

Miscellaneous

What are your future plans, career wise?
      Any specific plans?
Is there anything else you would like to share about your work?
Do you have any questions about my study?
Is there anything you would like to know about me?

Appendix C: *Child Protective Investigator Job Description*

Knowledge Skills and Abilities:

- Considerable knowledge of the theories and practices used in child protection and family support.
- Working knowledge of federal, state and local laws governing child protection.
- Working knowledge of professional ethics related to child protection investigations.
- Working knowledge of federal, state, county and community social service programs available for child protection and family support.
- Working knowledge of investigative techniques.
- Working knowledge of court procedures related to child protection proceedings.
- Ability to collect, organize, and evaluate information and develop logical conclusions.
- Ability to interview children and adults to determine the validity of allegations.
- Ability to apply crisis intervention techniques.
- Ability to maintain composure during court testimony and cross examination.
- Ability to work effectively with others.
- Ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
- Ability to work under stressful conditions.
- Ability to handle confidential information.
- Ability to work nights, weekends and holidays.
- Ability to use a computer and related software.
- Ability to safely operate a motor vehicle.

Minimum Qualifications:

Graduation from an accredited four year degree granting college or university; and
One year of experience investigating child abuse allegations; assessing client's needs and eligibility for social services, community services, legal or medical services; or counseling clients; and Possession of a valid State of Florida Child Protection Professional Certification; and Possession of a valid Driver License.

OR

An Associate's Degree from an accredited college or university; and
Two years of experience investigating child abuse allegations; assessing client's needs and eligibility for social services, community services, legal or medical services; or counseling clients; and
Possession of a valid State of Florida Child Protection Professional Certification; and
Possession of a valid Driver License.

OR

Graduation from high school or possession of a GED Certificate; and
Four years of experience investigating child abuse allegations; assessing client's needs and eligibility for social services, community services, legal or medical services; or counseling clients; andPossession of a valid State of Florida Child Protection Professional Certification; and Possession of a valid Driver License.

OR

Successful completion of the Sheriff's Office Training Program; and Possession of a valid State of Florida Child Protection Professional Certification; and
Possession of a valid Driver License.

(Plantation County Civil Service Board Website, 2008)