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THE IMAGE OF CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE NEWS AND AMONGST CHILDREN'S PROFESSIONALS

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
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ABSTRACT

This research examines portrayals of child protection social workers in New Zealand news reporting and explores how child protection social workers are perceived by their colleagues in the children's workforce. The research set out not only to assess perceptions, but also to gain insight into how they are formed and to consider their implications. To this end, the research also examined children's professionals' perceptions of news coverage and sought to better understand the factors that influence professionals' attitudes towards child protection social workers. Finally, professionals from the children's workforce were asked how helpful they believed referrals to child protection social workers would be for a range of problems.

The study is positioned within a critical realist outlook and uses mixed methodology. The data was sourced using two instruments. Firstly, professionals from the children's workforce in New Zealand were invited to participate in an online survey. Secondly, two years of New Zealand news articles were analysed to assess how child protection social workers were portrayed.

The principle findings of the research have been presented as they relate to five research questions. They underscore the importance of personal and professional relationships, and of academic and professional publications, in influencing children's professionals' perceptions of child protection social workers. They suggest children's professionals tend to view child protection social workers somewhat favourably. On the other hand, news reporting was found to depict child protection social workers more negatively, although only marginally so. Children's professionals appear to largely understand this.

Alongside the more encouraging findings, negative perceptions of specific characteristics of child protection social workers were found to prevail in both news reporting and amongst children's professionals. Perhaps of most concern, the findings identified a troubling lack of confidence in the potential helpfulness of referrals to child protection social workers. An analysis of these findings and themes from the literature indicates that the key perceptions of concern are unlikely to be divorced from substantive issues. Improving the image of child protection social workers in New Zealand will almost certainly require addressing some of the underlying causes of unfavourable perceptions.

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This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named in this document is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Social work has been interested in its image almost since it began to define itself as a profession (Aldridge, 1990; Mawby, Fisher, & Parkin, 1979). Academics have been interested in measuring the prestige of social workers (Bucklew & Parenton, 1962; Kadushin, 1958; Zander, Cohen, & Stotland, 1958), how well the profession is understood (Clearfield, 1977; Condie, Hanson, Lang, Moss, & Kane, 1978) and how social workers are perceived by others (Aldridge, 1990; Aplerin & Benedict, 1985; Ayre, 2001; Bucklew & Parenton, 1962; Clearfield, 1977; Condie et al., 1978; Cooper, 2005; Davies, 2014; Douglas, 2009; Franklin, 1998; Freeman & Valentine, 2004; Goddard & Liddell, 1995; Jones, 2012; LaLiberte, Larson, & Johnston, 2011; LeCroy & Stinson, 2004; Macnamara, 2005; McDevitt, 1996, 1998; McMichael & Irvine, 1984; Mejia, Cheyne, & Dorfman, 2012; Mendes, 2001; Pollak, 1991; Warner, 2013; Zugazaga, Surette, Mendez, & Otto, 2006). This has been coupled with what has at times seemed to be a fascination with social work's negative image in the press (Aldridge, 1990; Ayre, 2001; Franklin, 1998).

There is good reason for the profession to be interested in how social workers are perceived. Promoting a positive social work image is not simply about perceptions, it also has implications for recruitment, the wellbeing of the social work workforce, the development of its programmes and the reach of social work values and principles (Kaufman & Raymond, 1996; Olin, 2013; Tower, 2000). There are also important implications regarding portrayals of social workers in the media. While news reporting plays an important role in holding people to account, unwarranted negative and poorly-informed media coverage can foster misunderstanding of the complexities of child maltreatment (Ayre, 2001; Douglas, 2009; Mendes 2011; Warner, 2013) and has been linked to both the development of counterproductive practice (Ayre, 2001) and the hasty introduction of child protection legislation and policy (Ayre, 2001; Goddard & Liddell, 1995; Mendes, 2000; Munro, 2011; Warner, 2013). It is highly questionable whether such 'policy development by press' (Goddard & Liddell, 1995) best serves the interests of those children it is intended to protect (Goddard & Liddell, 1995; Mendes, 2000; Warner, 2013). It is only recently that public perceptions and media portrayals of social workers in New Zealand have been explored (Beddoe, 2014; Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Stanfield & Beddoe, 2013; Staniforth & Beddoe, 2017; Staniforth, Deane, & Beddoe, 2016; Staniforth, Fouché, & Beddoe, 2014), and there is much that is not yet well understood.

RESEARCH AIMS

This research seeks to contribute to the emerging literature interested in the image of social workers in New Zealand. Previous studies have provided some insight into public perceptions of social workers in New Zealand (Staniforth et al., 2014), social worker's views about how they are perceived (Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Staniforth et al., 2016) and depictions of social workers in New Zealand news reporting (Staniforth & Beddoe, 2017). Indeed, the issue is so topical that some of the most relevant findings were published during the writing of this thesis (Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Staniforth & Beddoe, 2017; Staniforth et al., 2016).

Despite this, there remain important gaps to understanding social work's image in New Zealand. This research has set out to address some of these. The research examines how professionals in the wider children's workforce perceive child protection social workers, what types of issues they believe child protection social workers are effective in addressing, and seeks to quantify portrayals of child protection social workers in the New Zealand news media. The thesis also explores the beliefs professionals hold about portrayals of child protection social workers in news reporting in order to compare children's professionals' views to the actual themes and narratives found.

The research questions were:

1. What influences do children's professionals think are important in forming their views about child protection social workers?
2. How do children's professionals think child protection social workers are depicted in news reporting?
3. How are child protection social workers depicted in news reporting?
4. How do children's professionals perceive child protection social workers?
5. What types of problems do children's professionals think child protection social workers are helpful in resolving?

All research questions pertain to the New Zealand environment.

THE RESEARCHERS' INTEREST IN THE TOPIC

I worked for Child, Youth and Family (CYF) as a child protection social worker for several years, and I continue to work for Oranga Tamariki in an advisory and policy development role. There has been a prevalent view amongst my colleagues that social workers are subject to 'bad press', and that many professionals do not understand the difficulties and pressures of child protection social work. Sometimes they are considered to have unrealistic expectations or are perceived to be unreasonably critical. This led me to wonder just how unfavourable reporting

about child protection social workers really is, and to consider the extent to which the profession is negatively perceived. It also occurred to me that if the profession really is stigmatised, this would be troubling. After all, child protection social workers have chosen to work in a role devoted to the protection and support of children and young people. How could people undertaking this seemingly noble endeavour have become so poorly thought of?

This master's thesis presented me with an opportunity to test these anecdotes. More importantly, I believed doing so could help child protection social work as a discipline develop and thrive by highlighting substantive issues, identifying image problems or even by posing a challenge to the widely held view amongst social workers that the profession is stigmatised (Hobbs & Evans, 2017). I hoped that the findings of the research would enable social workers, policy makers, educators, researchers and those in leadership positions to better distinguish between problems of substance and problems of perception, and to take informed action to address both accordingly.

My employment at Oranga Tamariki and my past experience as a child protection social worker have posed some challenges as I worked on this research. It is a conflict of interest that my supervisors and I had to manage¹, and I have a vested interest in desiring perceptions of social workers to be accurate and informed. I had to remain vigilant to ensure information I incorporated into the thesis is drawn from the literature, public record or research findings rather than from my personal experiences. Indeed, this forced me to reflect on my assumptions about child protection social workers and contributed to my personal learning experience.

THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH THE RESEARCH WAS CONDUCTED

The research was completed during a period of significant change in New Zealand's wider child protection system. In May 2014, CYF published the Workload and Casework review (Office of the Chief Social Worker, 2014). The paper identified a number of systemic problems in New Zealand's state child protection system and recommended extensive change. CYF began to develop proposals to address the concerns identified in the report under the Modernising CYF project (Ministry of Social Development, 2015). However, the Minister for Social Development at the time, Anne Tolley, determined that the proposed changes did not go far enough. In April 2015, she established the Modernising Child, Youth and Family Expert

¹ The steps taken to manage this conflict of interest are expanded upon in chapter 3 (see page 39)

Advisory Panel (EAP) to oversee the development of a new operating model (Ministry of Social Development, 2015).

The EAP produced an interim report in late 2015 (EAP, 2015), followed by a final report the following year (EAP, 2016). The strategic case set out in the final report proposed a multi-year transformational change programme. The recommendations were endorsed by the New Zealand government over a series of subsequent Cabinet papers (Tolley, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d, 2017).

The *Investing in Children Programme* was established in April 2016 to lead the reforms (Ministry of Social Development, 2016a). These have had wide-reaching implications, including the de-coupling of state child protection functions from the Ministry of Social Development, and the merging of Children's Teams and state child protection responsibilities under a new entity established on 1 April 2017: Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children² (Ministry of Social Development, 2016a; Tolley, 2017). Other key developments include:

- the establishment of a Minister for Children
- the adoption of new principles in legislation
- legislated responsibilities on the part of Oranga Tamariki to take into account the views of children and young people
- legislated responsibilities on the part of Oranga Tamariki to develop policies and practices to reduce disparities in outcomes for Māori
- the establishment of the independent advocacy agency for care experienced children and young people *VOYCE Whakarongo Mai*
- a new complaints system
- workforce changes enabling non-social workers to carry out statutory functions
- direction to develop regulations for those responsible for caring for children and young people in the custody of the state or other delegated body
- increasing the age for which state child protection services and youth justice systems are responsible to 18 years
- the pending mandatory registration of social workers
- more enabling information sharing provisions, and

² The new Ministry was named the Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki at the time it was established. Its name was changed to Oranga Tamariki - Ministry for Children by the Labour led Government in January 2018 (Matin, 2018).

- provisions to enable Oranga Tamariki to more easily directly purchase services for children and young people (Social Workers Registration Bill, 2017; Tolley, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2016d, 2017).

Almost all of these developments were signalled while the current research was underway, although the data sourced from the research covers the period prior to most changes being enacted. Undertaking the research during a period of such heightened interest in child protection systems in New Zealand likely impacted the findings. However, this is less a problem than an opportunity. It enabled the researcher to introduce questions that related to key findings from the EAP reports. The timeliness of the research also presents future researchers with a unique opportunity. By repeating elements of the research after the reforms are embedded, the extent to which perceptions of child protection social workers have changed over this period could be measured.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Several key terms are used throughout this thesis. These are briefly explained below to assist the reader and promote clarity.

Child Protection Social Worker

Child protection social worker is used to refer to statutory care and protection social workers. These are social workers who work in child protection roles and are employed by New Zealand's state child protection agency, formally Child, Youth and Family and now the Ministry for Children Oranga Tamariki. Statutory care and protection social workers wield statutory powers granted under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. The statutory powers were formally designated to social workers employed by state child protection services by title. However, with the passing of the *Child, Young Persons and their Families (Advocacy, Workforce and Age Settings) Bill* on 12 December 2016, they are granted as a delegated function of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki generally. The term is not used to refer to social workers employed in youth justice or adoptions roles, nor does it refer to social workers working in non-statutory child protection roles outside of New Zealand's state child protection agency.

Child, Youth and Family

Child, Youth and Family (CYF) was a service line of the Ministry of Social Development, and was the agency responsible for statutory child protection services until it was disestablished when the Ministry of Vulnerable Children was formed on 4 April 2017. Alongside statutory child protection responsibilities, CYF was also responsible for youth justice and adoptions services. This thesis refers to

CYF when referencing New Zealand's state child protection agency during the period in which it existed.

Children's Professionals

Children's professionals refers to professionals in the children's workforce in New Zealand. The children's workforce is made up of children's workers as defined in the Vulnerable Children Act 2014:

Children's worker means a person who works in, or provides a regulated service, and the person's work -

- a) may or does involve regular or overnight contact with a child or children (other than children who are co-workers); and*
- b) takes place without a parent or guardian of the child, or of each child, being present.*

The children's workforce therefore encompasses those professionals in government or government-funded roles who are likely to work alone with children and young people, such as social workers, health professionals, teachers and police officers.

CYF social worker / CYF care and protection social worker

The terms CYF social worker and CYF care and protection social worker are used in some of the research instruments in place of 'care and protection social worker'. A definition was provided in the material when this occurred. For this reason, the results chapter sometimes refers to CYF social worker rather than the preferred term in this thesis, child protection social worker. CYF social worker is also used when discussing some of the literature in order to reflect the terminology of the authors.

Media

Media is used at times during the thesis to refer to all forms of mass communication. This includes television, radio, newspapers, movies and social media. It encompasses, but is more expansive than, news reporting. Some of the literature examined uses 'the media' to refer to news reporting.

Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki

The Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki (MVCOT) became operational on 1 April 2017, replacing the former CYF that had been a service line of the Ministry of Social Development. The former Children's Action Plan Directorate which had overseen Children's Teams also merged with MVCOT. MVCOT changed its name to Oranga Tamariki, Ministry for Children on 18 January 2018.

News reporting / News coverage / News media / The press

This thesis uses the term 'news reporting' to refer to the content of news articles found in newspapers, including online publications, as well as the news content of other news outlets such as radio and television. While this research did not examine the content of news delivered by television or radio, the thesis uses the term 'news reporting' to include news delivered through these outlets unless specifically noted otherwise. 'News media', 'news coverage' and 'the press' are used interchangeably with 'news reporting' in some of the literature and in this thesis.

Oranga Tamariki - Ministry for Children

Oranga Tamariki - Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) is New Zealand's Ministry responsible for state child protection services and is the employer of all statutory child protection social workers in New Zealand. It is also responsible for youth justice and adoption services, and manages Children's Teams throughout New Zealand. It was formed on 18 January 2018 after the former Ministry for Vulnerable Children, Oranga Tamariki changed its name.

Referrals to child protection social workers

'Referrals to child protection social workers' refers to all formal referrals to New Zealand's state child protection agency because of possible concerns about the safety or wellbeing of children or young people. These are also known as 'reports of concern'.

State child protection system

'State child protection system' refers to the wider systems, roles, relationships, organisations, legislative framework, governance and policies under which the state discharges its responsibilities for the care and protection of children and young people. This includes assessment and intervention activities, the operation of children's teams and the care of children and young people in the custody of the state or delegated body.

THESIS STRUCTURE

The thesis is presented in six chapters and supported by additional information contained in appendices.

Chapter One: Introduction

The introduction chapter has outlined the aims of the research, discussed important environmental developments that took place while the research was underway, explained key terms and concepts and outlined the thesis structure. The researcher also reflected on his interest in the topic and his experience of completing the research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The literature review examines the considerable body of work concerned with the image of social workers and where relevant, draws out those findings that relate to the field of child protection. The chapter explores the historically prevalent view within social work that it has a poor media image (Aldridge, 1990; Ayre, 2001; Franklin, 1998) and highlights the changing focus of academic interest over time. Findings from different jurisdictions are compared. Particular emphasis is given to key insights from recent New Zealand-based publications. The chapter also examines what the literature says about why perceptions of social workers matter.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology used in the research and comments on its fit to the epistemology in which the research is situated. The process, limitations and lessons associated with the choice of methodology are discussed. The chapter also considers ethical issues, comments on steps taken to mitigate them and overviews the low risk notification process.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter presents the results of both the content analysis of news articles and online survey. The chapter has been structured according to the research questions and the data collected from the research instruments is presented accordingly. Charts are frequently used to visually depict the data, and are accompanied by comment that draws attention to significant relationships.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The discussion chapter examines the results of the research in relation to the literature. Particular attention is given to synthesising the findings with insights from New Zealand-based research. The chapter assesses how the findings contribute to answering the research questions, and considers possible explanations in cases where there is insufficient evidence to draw conclusions.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The conclusion chapter presents the key findings for each research question and discusses the implications of these for key stakeholders. The chapter also reflects on the limitations of the research and provides a number of recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the literature concerned with the image of social work³. It begins by exploring pioneering works interested in how the discipline is perceived. These were published during a period when researchers were motivated by a desire to determine social work's status compared to other vocations, and to gauge other people's understanding of what social workers do (Bucklew & Parenton, 1962; Clearfield, 1977; Condie et al., 1978; Kadushin, 1958). The chapter then examines more recent research contributing to a deeper understanding of perceptions, alongside a smaller body of literature interested in perceptions of the profession by social workers themselves. The chapter then canvases the literature to assess how social workers are perceived by their professional colleagues, and to better understand how social workers are portrayed in the media. Finally, the discussion examines the literature to consider why the social work profession should be concerned about the image of social workers. Throughout, the discussion is mindful of the relevance of the literature to the field of child protection.

THE IMAGE OF SOCIAL WORK

As social work was establishing itself as a discipline, researchers sought to understand how it was perceived by others. Early work in this field placed much importance in gauging the prestige of social work as measured against other professions (Bucklew & Parenton, 1962; Kadushin, 1958; Zander et al., 1958). While placing such eminence on professional status seems a little archaic, and even contrary to modern social work principles, there was a view at the time that endowing social work with esteem was a matter of importance not only for social workers themselves, but also for recruitment and for the benefit of clients who were considered more likely to engage with roles seen as prestigious (Kadushin, 1958).

As early as 1947, the United States National Opinion Centre ranked 'government welfare work' as a middle-ranked occupation alongside electricians and machine operators (as cited by Barlow, 1963). Kadushin's (1958) 'vocational hierarchy' research may have been the first to do so specifically from the perspective of

³ A brief description of key research canvassed in the literature review, alongside a brief comment on the main findings is provided in appendix A

social work. He found only a handful of prior studies that featured social work,⁴ and concluded that the profession was still in the process of being positioned. Nonetheless, he noted that based on preliminary findings, it seemed to rank highly in terms of prestige against vocations generally, but remained marginal when compared to other professions.

This position was supported by research undertaken by Bucklew and Parenton (1962). 358 students, 132 of whom were studying social work, were asked to rank a number of vocational roles according to perceived prestige. Social work was ranked last amongst the professions but placed higher than most clerical and trade roles⁵. Bucklew and Parenton sought views on perceived job satisfaction separately. They found that despite participants seeing social work as a low status profession, they largely believed social workers experienced personal fulfilment from the role, primarily as a consequence of helping people. The findings implied that prestige and job satisfaction are different phenomena and should be measured separately.

The prestige of social work was a point of interest for at least one additional study. Clearfield (1977) reviewed 315 questionnaires completed by practicing social workers. On this occasion, the researcher sought to understand how social workers perceived the discipline's image, including its relative prestige as an occupation. Social work was again seen as a low status profession. This was coupled with an overwhelming perception that the public was largely ignorant of and somewhat negatively disposed towards social workers. Nonetheless, the study's participants reported feeling largely valued by clients and colleagues, and were generally satisfied working as social workers. In other words, social workers had a largely positive self-image despite perceiving that the profession lacks prestige, and despite believing members of the public are ignorant of the profession and view it somewhat unfavourably.

Perhaps as a consequence of changing social values, interest in determining social work's place on the 'occupational hierarchy' diminished from the mid-twentieth century. Instead, attention turned to the favourability or otherwise of social work's

⁴ The first such study that named social work may have been Menger's 1932 "The social status of Occupations for Women" (1932, as cited by Kadushin, 1958). Only a summary of Menger's work could be found which contained no details of Menger's findings with respect vocational 'ranking'

⁵ The professions included in the study were social work, doctor, banker, church minister, lawyer, plant executive, teacher, store owner, salesman, plant foreman, secretary, clerical worker and carpenter (Bucklew & Parenton, 1962)

image more generally, and on how well the role was understood by other professionals and members of the public (Condie et al., 1978; McMichael & Irvine, 1984; Olsen & Olsen, 1967; Zander et al., 1958). A United States based survey of 250 households showed that members of the public continued to lack an understanding of what social workers did (Condie et al., 1978). It likewise found that social workers were associated with a number of negative characteristics, such as being nose, having their head in the clouds and being do gooders. However, social workers were also described as idealists, and more positively, as helpers. Despite identifying a largely negative image overall, Condie et al. (1978) concluded that both the public's understanding of social work's role and public perceptions of social workers were improving.

Regrettably, findings by Kaufman and Raymond (1996) nearly two decades later suggest Condie et al.'s (1978) optimism was misplaced, or at best premature. In a similar questionnaire involving 452 members of the public in the United States, Kaufman and Raymond (1996) found that ignorance of the social work profession remained widespread and attitudes towards social workers were predominantly negative. However, the authors did note that those more familiar with what social workers did tended to hold more positive views. Four years later, Tower (2000) published an article that drew on the findings of Kaufman and Raymond (1996) and asserted that the profession's image problem was real and troubling.

The outlook appeared to have improved when public opinion was again surveyed in 2004, this time by a randomised digit telephone survey of 386 households in the United States (LeCroy & Stinson, 2004). In a significant change, respondents were found to have a good understanding of the role of social workers, particularly in the area of child protection. Social workers were also viewed more positively (60%) than negatively (16%). On the other hand, it was only in working with homelessness and domestic violence that social workers were perceived as more valuable than other professionals. While members of the public tended to believe social work was effective at working with child abuse, it was psychologists who were seen as the most effective.

In another study published in 2004, the United States National Association of Social Workers (NASW) reported a similarly optimistic trend (National Association of Social Workers, 2004). NASW found that focus groups made up of members of the public held generally positive views about social workers. NASW supported a subsequent 2008 study by Dennison, Poole, and Qaqish (2007) that again examined perceptions of social workers. The participant sample was quite specific: undergraduate students enrolled in liberal arts courses at a North Carolina university. Congruent with the findings of Kaufman and Raymond (1996), they

found that affiliation with social workers was correlated to both a greater understanding of the profession and a more favourable outlook. They also observed that there was a general view that social workers were underpaid.

In New Zealand, a possible lack of confidence in social workers was identified in a survey conducted by the Social Workers Registration Board in 2007 (SWRB, 2011, as cited in Hobbs and Evans, 2017). The survey found that people have less confidence in social workers than psychologists or counsellors. However, a more recent New Zealand-based study indicates that opinion has become more favourable. Staniforth et al. (2014) surveyed 386 households using a random telephone survey and employed a quota-based system to reflect national demographics. They found that social work was well understood and respondents had largely favourable views of social workers, particularly in terms of associating the role with "helping". Moreover, many of those surveyed considered the profession both stressful and underpaid.

SOCIAL WORKERS' PERCEPTIONS OF HOW THE PROFESSION IS PERCEIVED

Surprisingly, while there is a reasonable body of literature exploring perceptions of social workers by others, less attention has been given to how social workers see themselves. Fortunately, the limited body of research in this field includes studies conducted in New Zealand. Staniforth et al. (2016) replicated much of the methodology used in Staniforth et al. (2014), but this time they asked social workers how they thought they were perceived by members of the public and portrayed in the media. Firstly, they found social workers overwhelmingly believed they were portrayed poorly in the media: 88.6% of social workers believed the profession was "not very well presented" or "presented very badly" (p. 20). They found that social workers largely, and incorrectly (Staniforth et al., 2014), believed perceptions would be dominated by associations with CYF. They also reported that participants tended to believe social work's public image was negative despite Staniforth et al. (2014) finding this not to be the case in an earlier study. Staniforth et al. (2016) note that although social workers were inclined to see the profession as stigmatised, most were nonetheless proud to be social workers.

In another New Zealand study, Hobbs and Evans (2017) explored social workers' perceptions of themselves and the profession. They found that participants largely believed the profession was stigmatised, and many believed social workers were marginalised by professionals they worked with. However, they also comment that social workers in New Zealand may believe they are seen more negatively by the public than is actually the case.

Similar dynamics have been observed in the research undertaken by NASW (National Association of Social Workers, 2004). Using focus groups, NASW elicited the views of both members of the public and practicing social workers to ascertain how positively or negatively social workers were perceived. Despite members of the public being aware of negative news coverage, they had largely favourable views of social workers. However, the feedback from social workers showed that they believed social work had a negative public image.

Zugazaga *et al.* (2006) built on this research by surveying 665 practicing social workers, this time seeking their views on how they believed social work was portrayed in both the news and entertainment media. As with the 2004 NASW study, Zugazaga *et al.* (2006) found that social workers largely believed the profession was portrayed negatively in the media. A more striking illustration can be found in the United Kingdom (UK). The 2014 Guardian Social Lives survey found that only 3% of social workers believed the profession had a positive public image (Smith, 2014a). In fact, a very recent UK survey of 2502 people found that more than half had a positive impression of social work (McCulloch, Webb, & Clarke, 2017).

PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORKERS AMONGST PROFESSIONALS

While research specifically interested in how groups of professionals view social workers exists, it is limited, mostly dated, set outside of the New Zealand context, and often relies on students rather than professionals themselves. Academics initially focused on other professional's perceptions of social work's role and vocational prestige. These studies quickly established the existence of disagreement and conflict between social workers and other professionals regarding the responsibilities of social work, particularly in the fields of health and juvenile justice (Banta & Fox, 1972; Brennan & Khinduka, 1971; Olsen & Olsen, 1967; Smith, 1970). In all cases, social workers considered their role more encompassing than their professional colleagues did (Banta & Fox, 1972; Brennan & Khinduka, 1971; Olsen & Olsen, 1967). Perhaps this is not surprising. In its formative years, social work encroached on activities traditionally undertaken by other professions, and there was much internal debate on the definition and conceptual framework of social work (Murdach, 1981). Although some conflict remains, this ambiguity has diminished as social work has become more established (Cowles & Lefcowitz, 1992; Davis, Baldry, Milosevic, & Walsh, 2004; Davis, Milosevic, Baldry, & Walsh, 2005; Egan & Kadushin, 1995; Taylor, 2006).

A pioneering study that looked beyond prestige and role definition was undertaken in the United States by Folkins, Wieselberg, and Spensley (1981). Conducted in a mental health setting, Folkins et al. (1981) asked participants to select descriptors

from a list of adjectives that they believed applied to typical psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers. There was a high degree of consistency in the results⁶ and all professions were viewed largely favourably. Social workers were considered active and enthusiastic by psychiatrists; and active, capable, conscientious, cooperative, dependable, friendly, helpful, honest and sincere by psychologists. The only description applied to social workers that could be interpreted negatively was conventional.

A decade later, Koeske, Koeske, and Mallinger (1993) set out to measure professionals' perceptions of social work, psychology, psychiatry and nursing interventions. Hypothetical scenarios were developed by the researchers representing a range of mental health issues. Using questionnaires, the researchers sought the views of 101 professionals in relation to the perceived warmth, help and expertise clients would receive from each profession. Participants were then asked whether they would make a referral to each professional group. The findings painted quite a different picture to those of Folkins et al. (1981). Koeske et al. (1993) found that social work services were the least favoured referral choice, particularly by psychiatrists. Some professionals harboured concerns about the effectiveness of social work interventions, and psychiatrists and psychologists rated social workers lower than other professions in perceived expertise. The only positive finding for social workers was that they were viewed as warmer than other professionals. However, Ronald (2000) questions the benefit of this stereotype. He stresses that while social work may be seen as warm, this is tied to perceptions of being less intelligent.

Strikingly similar themes and discrepancies have emerged from research undertaken with students. The fact that participants in these studies were not practicing professionals is an important distinction, although it is suggested here that the findings remain relevant. McMichael and Irvine (1984) surveyed 186 teaching students and 98 social work students in Scotland. They asked students to rate each other across 19 characteristics using questionnaires supported by a small number of qualitative interviews. They found that student teachers had a largely positive view of social work students, particularly in relation to being helpful, sympathetic, concerned, friendly, vital, useful, competent and conscientious. Although student teachers had mixed views of social work students in some areas, no attribute was rated poorly.

⁶ One exception to the consistency was that social workers chose less positive adjectives for psychiatrists than other professionals did (Folkins et al., 1981).

The following year in the United States, Aplerin and Benedict (1985) undertook a comparable study with 180 students of psychology, psychiatry and social work.⁷ On this occasion, perceptions of social workers were more mixed: they were seen as warm, easy to relate to, cheerful, sociable and energetic, but not very intelligent. Participants also indicated that of the three professions, they would be least likely to seek help from social workers for personal problems. The findings of Aplerin and Benedict (1985) are therefore congruent with those of Koeske et al. (1993). Professionals or students viewed social workers as having strong interpersonal skills but questioned their effectiveness and competence. However, they are somewhat in conflict with Folkins et al. (1981) and McMichael and Irvine (1984), both of whom reported favourable views of social worker's competence and capability by peers.

A further study was undertaken with social work, medical and nursing students in the UK by Pietroni (1991). Pietroni ran a series of seminars involving nursing, medical and social work students over a two-year period. During the seminars, students were divided into groups according to their major, and were asked to ascribe adjectives to each student group. Social work students were commonly described by their peers as left wing, nosey, self-opinionated, intellectual, lesbians, caring, overworked, guardian readers and vegetarians.

PORTRAYALS OF SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE MEDIA

Interest in media portrayals of social work has been motivated in part by mounting concern over perceived hostility towards social workers in the press, particularly in the UK (Aldridge, 1990; Mawby et al., 1979). In the 1970s, prominent UK social work publications *Community Care* and *Social Work Today* began to raise alarm at what they viewed as a proliferation of misinformed and melodramatic reporting on child abuse (Aldridge, 1990). Not only were individuals the subject of criticism, the profession of social work itself was seen to be on trial (Andrews, 1974;1976, as cited in Maybe et al., 1979). By the 1980s, concern had reached such heights in the UK that social work bodies came to believe the profession had a uniquely poor image in the media (Aldridge, 1990).

While UK newspapers certainly did publish articles throughout the 1970s that were sensationalist, misrepresentative of child protection issues and/or critical of social workers (Aldridge, 1990; Mawby et al., 1979; Nava, 1988), the extent to which such reporting dominated the news landscape was not tested empirically for some

⁷ Aplerin and Benedict (1985) did not report the numbers of students for each discipline,

years. It was not until 1979 that Mawby and colleagues set out to determine whether social workers were indeed portrayed unfavourably. They also wanted to understand whether media portrayals of social work differed by context, type of article and by newspaper. Their approach involved developing and testing a number of hypotheses, such as 'in general, social work will get bad press'. News articles reporting on two high profile child abuse cases across eight mainstream newspapers were reviewed, accompanied by an analysis of non-case specific articles they termed 'day to day coverage of social work'. While Mawby et al. (1979) do not explicitly limit their interest to child protection social work, the sources reviewed effectively meant that any findings could only be applied to this field.

Mawby et al.'s (1979) findings challenged the simple contention that news reporting was hostile towards social workers. They found that articles reporting on child abuse cases did indeed tend to be critical, but "not excessively so" (p. 170). Conversely, articles about 'day to day social work' were slightly more favourable towards social workers than not. Some newspapers were shown to be disproportionately critical and sensationalist in their reporting, although Mawby et al. (1979) pointed out these publications tended to frame all reporting along dramatic lines. Mawby et al. (1979) also showed that different types of articles were more likely to be favourable than others. For example, 'human interest' articles were likely to present social workers favourably, while reporting on specific child abuse cases usually depicted social workers more negatively. Perhaps Mawby et al.'s (1979) most significant contribution was to emphasise the need to account for context, type of article and newspaper when seeking to understand social work's image in the media.

In 1990, Meryl Aldridge examined news coverage of social workers in the UK and reviewed existing social work discourse commenting on social work stories in the media. While she questioned whether the vocation was portrayed as negatively as most social work literature suggested, she certainly found news coverage of social workers to be largely critical, particularly in the field of child protection. It was later in the decade however, with the publication of a significant piece of research by Franklin (1998), that it appeared concerns over hostility in the UK press were confirmed. Following a content analysis of over 2000 articles across nine major newspapers, Franklin reported that only 30 articles, less than 2%, could be deemed to depict social workers in a positive light.

Although no subsequent studies appear to have identified media hostility towards social workers quite on the scale found by Franklin (1998), they have all but substantiated that social workers are portrayed negatively in the UK press (Ayre,

2001; Lombard, 2009; Reid & Misener, 2001; Warner, 2013). Ayre's review of three decades of news articles showed that reporting remained largely critical of child protection authorities and social workers following a significant case of child maltreatment. Lombard (2009) subsequently completed a content analysis of 346 newspaper articles across 13 major newspapers. Social workers were portrayed negatively 50% of the time, and positively in only 8% of cases.

In what may be the first cross-national study in the field, Reid and Misener (2001) set out to compare the image of social workers in the United States media with their counterparts in the UK. In doing so, they provided further evidence of negative media coverage in the UK. On the other hand, social workers were found to be treated more favourable in United States news reporting. The researchers catalogued 399 news articles from UK and US news sources, and conducted an analysis based on role, field of practice, country and type of story. Child protection social workers in both countries received the most negative press coverage, particularly when their role was seen as 'monitoring' and the story tagged as a 'scandal'. Unsurprisingly, when these themes converged, social workers were usually portrayed negatively. However, the most important single correlation to a positive news story was the country of origin. In the United States, just over half of the news accounts about child protection social workers were deemed positive, a significant contrast to the poor media portrayals of social workers found in the UK. Reid and Misener (2001) speculated that the higher average qualifications, greater proportion of non-government employed child protection social workers, and better social work professional organisation in the United States likely contributed to the discrepancy.

Australia

Mendes (2000), Riggs, King, Delfabbro, and Augoustinos (2009) and Cordoba (2017) have explored media reporting of child protection social work, albeit with slightly different focus. Riggs et al. (2009) were primarily interested in the themes present in news accounts about foster children and foster parents, particularly in the proportions of positive and negative coverage of both social workers and families. Over the period 2005 – 2007, they found only 22 qualifying news items in the 11 Australian daily newspapers. Child protection authorities and social workers were portrayed negatively in all news articles assessed. The primary themes depicted social workers as disrespectful of caregivers, incompetent, too bureaucratic or directly working against the interests of children in care. There was one article that depicted social workers as racist.

A more recent look at media portrayals of social work in Australia was published by Cordoba (2017). Cordoba (2017) assessed 459 news articles published in the

year ending 31 January 2014, sourced from the four most widely read Australian news producers. One of the key findings was the relative absence of media interest in social work compared to other professions such as teachers, doctors and nurses. The coverage of social work that did exist was quite diverse. In a departure to earlier findings (Mendes, 2001, 2008; Riggs et al., 2009), Cordoba (2017) found that social workers were not usually portrayed unfavourably. Instead, reporting more often highlighted the organisational challenges and vocational stress social workers worked with.

New Zealand

There has been little research published exploring media portrayals of social workers in New Zealand, although what does exist is both recent and topical. The 2000 'Brown Report' (Maharey & Brown, 2000) links hostile reporting to decisions by CYF staff to resign. Stanfield and Beddoe (2013) published an article discussing media reporting on child protection social work and child abuse in New Zealand. While it was not based in primary research, they suggest news reporting about social workers in New Zealand shares characteristics with the sometimes hostile environment in the UK, albeit with the important distinction of there being less scapegoating of individuals in New Zealand (Stanfield & Beddoe, 2013).

More recently, Staniforth and Beddoe (2017) published a paper reporting on the only known content analysis of news articles interested in portrayals of social work and social workers in New Zealand. The research is important not only for this reason, but also because the authors sought to better understand the character of reporting rather than simply trying to ascertain how favourable or otherwise it was. They assessed news articles over the period 2008 – 2012 from two New Zealand newspapers, the New Zealand Herald and the Otago Daily Times. The dataset was defined by searching for 'social work', 'social worker' and 'child youth and family'. This is a similar search criteria to the one used in the content analysis completed for this master's thesis.

Staniforth and Beddoe (2017) found that news items about CYF received much of the media interest within their dataset, and within this cluster, items about violence, abuse and crime dominated. News articles rarely focused on treatment and support. Instead much coverage related to intakes and removing children from families, the "beginning and the end of the story" (Staniforth et al., 2017, p. 9). Further, it is according to these functions that the primary depictions of CYF social workers were found to be associated. Firstly, as a passive receiver and processor of information, and secondly, as a more active but discreet remover of children and administrator of placements:

“Thus, the primary portrayal of social workers was that they were unidentified operatives who passively received and processed information or tasks, narrowly focused on abuse, violence and crime, in a receiver role. There was also a portrayal of a more active remover role, discreetly shifting, placing and removing victims and offenders as required.” (Staniforth et al, 2017, p. 11).

Another interesting finding by Staniforth and Beddoe (2017) was that social workers were more visible in articles where state child protection services were depicted as failing. In many cases articles were found to be critical of social workers. Sometimes, news items were found to convey criticism from senior authority figures such as judges, although when this occurred it tended to be directed at the agency rather than at social workers themselves. While it was not a dominant theme, Staniforth and Beddoe (2017) did find positive and more nuanced portrayals of social workers, alongside some acknowledgements of the challenges of the role, such as a lack of placement options or facilities.

WHY DO PORTRAYALS AND PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL WORKERS MATTER?

The literature has not only set out to understand perceptions of social work and its image in the media; some contributors have considered just why social work should care about its image. Proposed reasons for doing so cluster around three themes. Firstly, the importance of a positive image in attracting and retaining people to the profession (Olin, 2013; Tower, 2000). Secondly, implications for policy, practice, and the effectiveness of social work (Ayre, 2001; Cooper, 2005; Gainsborough, 2009; Goddard & Liddell, 1995; LaLiberte et al., 2011; Mendes, 2000; Riggs et al., 2009), and thirdly, the potential role of others in shaping social work’s image to suit wider ideological and political agendas (Mendes, 2000; Warner, 2013).

Recruitment and retention

It has been contended that a poor social work image is detrimental to the welfare of practitioners, and hampers attracting and retaining staff (LaLiberte et al., 2011; Olin, 2013; Tower, 2000; Zugazaga et al., 2006). Staff wellbeing has intrinsic value, and limiting the pool of people social work can draw from can lead to workforce shortages and impact the quality of the workforce. A poor social work image may dissuade not only practitioners, but also other key social work roles such as leaders, policy makers and researchers.

Policy and practice and implications

A number of academics have linked perceptions of social workers and negative portrayals of the profession in the media to the development of child protection

policy and practice (Ayre, 2001; Cooper, 2005; Goddard & Liddell, 1995; Riggs et al., 2009; Warner, 2013). In some cases, it has been linked to legislation change (Douglas, 2009; Gainsborough, 2009; Goddard & Liddell, 1995; Mendes, 2000). Regrettably, sensationalist and vilifying news coverage has been found to be associated with unnecessary or even harmful new laws or policies (Ayre, 2001; Cooper, 2005; Goddard & Liddell, 1995; Mendes, 2000).

Douglas (2009) and Gainsborough (2009) have separately identified a relationship between critical reporting of high profile cases and the subsequent introduction of new policies and legislation in the United States. Douglas (2009) provided evidence for correlation rather than identifying the implications of social work and child protection agencies. Gainsborough (2009) went further. He established a link between 'scandal' type stories about child protection social work and the passing of subsequent legislative change. He also observed that the passing of new laws was not accompanied by any parallel increase in state child protection spending.

Goddard and Liddell (1995) provided a convincing illustration of the role news media can play in enacting potentially counter-productive legislative change. They examined the key role played by the Melbourne newspaper *The Herald Sun* in the ultimate passing of a law mandating the reporting of child abuse. Following the tragic death of two year old Daniel Valerio at the hands of his mother's de-facto partner, *The Herald Sun* ran a relentless campaign, vilifying social workers, and calling for the introduction of mandatory reporting. Despite initial opposition by the Australian state authorities, the campaign was successful in pressuring the government to relent (Goddard & Liddell, 1995; Mendes, 2000).

While the *The Herald Sun's* motivation for the campaign may have been benevolent, the people who needed to know about the abuse of Daniel had already been alerted, albeit there were serious deficiencies in the response (Goddard & Liddell, 1995). In other words, it is unlikely mandatory reporting would have saved Daniel's life. Alarming, mandatory reporting may actually contribute to more harm due to the propensity to over-burden already stretched child protection services with false positives: reports of possible child maltreatment that are not substantiated. In doing so, the capacity of services to respond to children in genuine need could be hindered (Mendes, 2000).

Rather than illustrating the point through a single case study, Ayre (2001) reviewed three decades of news coverage of the death of children known to child protection services in England and Wales. After establishing that the British media was indeed largely critical of child protection authorities and social workers after a significant case of child maltreatment, Ayre went on to examine the legal,

political and organisational changes that followed. He found that following each 'scandal', a consistent pattern of events would play out. Firstly, the agency deemed culpable would be aggressively criticised in the media. Secondly, a public investigation into the response would take place and would produce detailed recommendations for child protection agencies to follow in the future. Finally, the state authorities would issue more demanding practice guidance and policy in order to try and avoid a repeat of the tragedy.

While there were presumably good intentions behind the introduction of responsive practice guidance and policy, and almost certainly cases when it was necessary, Ayre (2001) observed that in practice it usually added to existing material. Consequently, the volume of child protection policy and guidelines builds over time and ironically, this can result in increased incidences of policy violation due to the sheer extent of policy, or simply as a consequence of operational necessity. The risk-averse climates that are encouraged by such a prescriptive style of management are seen by Ayre as completely unsuitable for social work. He contends that in such an environment, social workers lose professional confidence, while organisations become so dominated by procedure that they lose sight of their reason for being. Ultimately, Ayre (2001) concludes that sensationalist and overly critical media coverage fosters a culture of blame and distrust in child protection organisations, and contributes to the development of defensive and counter-productive social work practice and policy.

Interestingly, child protection authorities have also been the recipient of much negative press for being too prescriptive and bureaucratic (Ayre, 2001; Cooper, 2005; Riggs et al., 2009; Warner, 2013). In 2007, in the wake of the death of a child known to child protection services, David Cameron, then opposition leader in Great Britain, publicly criticised social workers for following procedures and not using 'common sense' (Warner, 2013). In the United States, Cooper (2005) found that child protection authorities are simultaneously accused of being both too bureaucratic and for lacking accountability.

Sensationalist and overly critical news reporting of child protection authorities and their staff, alongside counter-productive policies adopted by child protection managers as a response, serve to promote what Cooper (2005) terms the 'vicious circle'. Following critical media reporting that often accuses child protection organisations of being unaccountable, managers respond by adopting procedures that restrict, control and make front line workers more accountable. These have the effect of requiring social workers to spend more time adhering to procedures, reducing their capacity to work with the children and families they are there to

serve. Ultimately, this places children at more risk of harm and in turn invites further criticism from the media (Cooper, 2005).

Ideology and agenda

Others have sought to illustrate the role of ideological or political agenda in shaping perceptions of social workers and social work (Mendes, 2000; Warner, 2013). Interestingly, *The Herald Sun* again features in the literature, this time in Mendes' (2000) comparison of coverage of a high profile child maltreatment case with another Melbourne newspaper, *The Age*. Mendes (2000) reports that each newspaper is known to adhere to differing ideological positions (Mendes, 2000). *The Age* is considered left leaning, while *The Herald Sun* has a reputation for taking a socially conservative stance. Mendes set out to identify, compare and comment on the narratives contained in each newspaper's respective reporting on child maltreatment. Compelling distinctions were identified.

Coverage in *The Herald Sun* repeatedly framed child maltreatment stories in terms of individually abusive parents, incompetent or authoritarian social workers, the wrongful removal of children, or the state carrying responsibility for the death of children known to child protection services (Mendes, 2000). *The Age* favoured reporting on child maltreatment in terms of wider social, structural and policy issues and social workers were far less likely to be vilified. Mendes concluded that the reporting reflected core beliefs of each ideological position. *The Herald Sun* pursued a socially conservative agenda in which 'bad parents' are presented as individual 'others', and the sanctity of the traditional nuclear family is defended against the 'interfering' state. Conversely, *The Age* reflected a more socially liberal and left leaning perspective, in which problems are seen as more systemic and state involvement more benevolent. Mendes' findings show that the content of news coverage can be much influenced by the outlook of the organisation reporting it. This suggests that the frame of news reporting, and consequently the portrayal of social workers, may depend on the ideology of the news source.

Warner (2013) goes further, linking portrayals of social workers not only to ideological, but also to political agendas in the UK. Seventeen month old Peter Connelly, referred to in the UK press as 'Baby P', died as a consequence of prolonged and serious abuse by adults living in his household. Media coverage was highly critical of individual social workers and the child protection authority involved. Warner set out to explore not only the role of the news media, but also that of politicians in the wake of the controversy following Peter's death. Following a thematic analysis of both news articles and Hansard accounts of political debates, Warner (2013) concludes that certain political actors, including then opposition leader David Cameron, worked in tandem with news outlets to

'manufacture dissent' against social workers for mutual benefit. For the politicians involved, it helped present them as outraged and in touch with the grief of the nation. This was contrasted against the inhumane, incompetent, bureaucratic and detached social workers. While less attention is given to the motivations of the mostly tabloid newspapers involved, they shared a socially conservative agenda and certainly benefited from sales. If Warner (2013) is correct, then this is not so much a consequence of an unfavourable social work image as an active sabotage for the benefit of other actors. The lesson for social work is to remain watchful of such dynamics so the discipline can respond to and challenge any attempt to undermine the image of social workers to advance political or ideological agendas.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

Social work is a relatively new discipline, and early efforts to define its role spawned an interest in how the profession is perceived. Initial assessments exposed the relatively poor standing of social work compared to other professions (Bucklew & Parenton, 1962; Kadushin, 1958; Zander et al., 1958). The focus on occupational prestige was soon surpassed by an interest in how well social work is understood, and in assessing attitudes towards social workers more widely (Condie et al., 1978; McMichael & Irvine, 1984; Olsen & Olsen, 1967; Zander et al., 1958). While findings are varied and sometimes even incongruent, they highlight two general patterns: a growing understanding of what social workers do, albeit from a relatively ignorant base (Condie et al., 1978; Dennison et al., 2007; Kaufman & Raymond, 1996), and an accompanying trend towards more mixed and even favourable perceptions of social workers (Condie et al., 1978; Folkins et al., 1981; Kaufman & Raymond, 1996; McCulloch et al., 2017; McMichael & Irvine, 1984; National Association of Social Workers, 2004; Staniforth et al., 2014; Zugazaga et al., 2006). Interestingly, despite these trends, professionals have been shown to lack confidence in the helpfulness of social work interventions (Aplerin & Benedict, 1985; Koeske et al., 1993) and social workers themselves continue to believe the profession is perceived poorly and stigmatised (Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Smith, 2014b; Staniforth et al., 2016; Zugazaga et al., 2006).

The literature is more consistent with respect to social work's image in the media. Child protection authorities and social workers have, for the most part, been portrayed negatively in news reporting (Aldridge, 1990; Franklin, 1998; Lombard, 2009; Mawby et al., 1979; Mendes, 2000; Nava, 1988; Staniforth & Beddoe, 2017; Warner, 2013). Social workers have been depicted as overly zealous, naïve, incompetent (Ayre, 2001; Cooper, 2005; Mendes, 2000; Riggs, 2009), and paradoxically, for being both too bureaucratic (Cooper, 2005) and overly reliant

on following procedures rather than using 'common sense' (Warner, 2013). Negative and even hostile media portrayals of social workers have been linked to recruitment and retention issues (LaLiberte et al., 2011; Olin, 2013; Tower, 2000; Zugazaga et al., 2006), unnecessary and counterproductive policy and legislation change (Douglas, 2009; LaLiberte et al., 2011; Olin, 2013; Tower, 2000; Zugazaga et al., 2006), or framed as a consequence of the pursuit of political or ideological agendas (Mendes, 2000; Warner, 2013). However, the literature has not consistently found coverage of social workers to be negative. More favourable reporting has been identified in the United States (Reid & Misener, 2001) and Australia (Cordoba, 2017), alongside journalism that highlights some of the challenges of the role (Cordoba, 2017; Staniforth & Beddoe, 2017).

There remain many questions to answer with respect to better understanding social work's image, and this thesis has set out to contribute to some of these. In particular, the research focuses on the views of professionals as opposed to public perceptions, and is interested in child protection social workers rather than social workers generally. The findings will complement a growing interest in perceptions and portrayals of social workers in New Zealand, and by doing so, contribute to better understanding the influences, dynamics and implications of social work's image in New Zealand and internationally.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter sets out and discusses the research methodology. It begins by briefly restating the research questions. It then gives an overview of the epistemological position that informs the research, critical realism, and discusses the choice to use mixed methodology. The chapter then reviews the processes used to collect data: an online survey and content analysis of news articles. This discussion comments on the choices informing source and participation selection, some of the challenges experienced gathering the data, and on the strengths and limitations associated with the methods used. Finally, the low risk ethics notification process is described alongside a consideration of the ethical implications of the research.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research set out to answer five questions related to the image of child protection social workers in New Zealand:

1. What influences do children's professionals think are important in forming their views about child protection social workers?
2. How do children's professionals think child protection social workers are depicted in news reporting?
3. How are child protection social workers depicted in news reporting?
4. How do children's professionals perceive child protection social workers?
5. What types of problems do children's professionals think child protection social workers are helpful in resolving?

EPISTEMOLOGY

This research is informed by a critical realist perspective. Critical realism presents a theory of knowledge congruent with a positivist outlook. However, it is distinct from most empirical perspectives because of the weight of validity also placed on subjective experience (Easton, 2010). Critical realism purports that an objective reality exists outside of subjective experience, but acknowledges that it is experienced subjectively (Easton, 2010; Thyer, 2009). The philosophy accepts that the production of knowledge is a social practice, but also maintains that reality has objective properties that influence subjective experience. Knowledge is viewed as somewhat but not entirely socially constructed, and it is contended that critically evaluating and testing knowledge improves one's capacity to predict. Importantly, a critical realist perspective acknowledges that knowledge will be interpreted differently by people. It therefore encourages the use of methodology that seeks to limit bias while recognising that it is not possible to do so entirely (Thyer, 2009). In the context of this research, the perspective assumes that media

portrayals and professional perceptions of social workers exist independently of the researcher, are discernible, and can be categorised into meaningful clusters, while acknowledging that the researcher will influence the findings through the process of undertaking the research.

MIXED METHODOLOGY

A mixed methods approach was adopted in this research. Mixed methodology combines both qualitative and quantitative techniques in a single study (Creswell, 2013). This research used an online questionnaire designed to generate data that could be analysed quantitatively, alongside the content analysis of news articles that has both quantitative and qualitative elements (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Both the quantitative and qualitative elements found in mixed methodology have their strengths and limitations. Quantitative methods seek to reduce the influence of subjectivity, and place a high degree of importance on the validity of instruments. They tend to produce closed-ended data useful for examining the relationships between variables, and from which one can more easily generalise (Creswell, 2013; Punch, 2013; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). However, quantitative approaches can be less effective in eliciting deeper understandings of human behaviour, and the validity of generalisations is highly dependent on the sample (Atieno, 2009; Punch, 2013). Qualitative approaches can be more suitable when seeking to understand individual experiences, and tend to enable a deeper exploration of areas of interest (O'Leary, 2013). On the other hand, they can be prone to researcher bias, and there are usually greater limitations on how far the findings can be generalised (O'Leary, 2013; Punch, 2013).

Proponents of mixed methodology argue that by drawing on the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative approaches, researchers can overcome some of the limitations of purely qualitative and quantitative research, and achieve a more robust and complete understanding of the research topic (Classen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2013; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). While mixed methodology is also subject to the potential vulnerabilities of both qualitative and quantitative approaches, the capability to apply different approaches to components of the research according to suitability can help overcome these limitations.

Although the flexibility and touted benefits of mixed methodology were factors in adopting it for this research, the primary reasons were pragmatism and epistemological fit. Critical realism embraces and attempts to reconcile elements of both empirical positivist and social constructionism paradigms. It places value on both qualitative and quantitative knowledge generated using mixed methodology (Easton, 2010), and is therefore highly congruent with the approach.

Further, while a quantitative approach was adopted for the survey, there is an unavoidable subjective element to the latent content analysis used in this research (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected using an online survey and by analysing a sample of newspaper articles related to child protection social workers. The survey asked children's professionals for their views of child protection social workers, what they believed influenced those views, explored their perceptions of news coverage about child protection social workers and finally, asked them how helpful they believed referrals to child protection social workers would be for a range of problems. The analysis of news articles was completed to examine how child protection social workers are portrayed in New Zealand news reporting.

Online Survey

A cross-sectional online survey (see appendix B) administered through Massey University's Qualtrics tool was used to collect the views of professionals in the children's workforce. There were several reasons behind this choice of tool. Firstly, the online survey enabled the generation of standardised, structured data needed for quantitative analysis. Although surveys can also be used to collect qualitative information through open ended questions (O'Leary, 2013), the method adopted in the current research largely used closed questions to produce quantitative data more easily analysed using Qualtrics. Secondly, surveys can be designed to ensure anonymity (O'Leary, 2013). There was no reason to identify participants in this research and retaining anonymity both aided in the low risk ethics notification and respected the confidentiality of participants. Thirdly, the survey enabled the researcher to reach large numbers of potential participants at a relatively low cost. Fourthly, by enabling participants to directly answer questions without the researcher present, it helped to minimise the impact of interviewer and social desirability bias (Bryman, 2015; Lee, 2006; O'Leary, 2013). Finally, the Qualtrics software comes with a range of analytical tools that assisted the researcher organise and present the data.

The layout, design, content, mode (delivery method) and choice of participants are all crucial to ensure credible and applicable information is gathered in a survey (Bowling, 2005; O'Leary, 2013). The survey was designed to be completed in five to ten minutes to help reduce 'respondent fatigue' (Bryman, 2015) and increase the likelihood of completions. The questions were presented in five topic clusters, the first of which concerned demographics. The survey then asked participants about their views of child protection social workers, how these views were formed,

how they perceived child protection social workers to be portrayed in the media, and finally, asked participants to rate how helpful they believed a referral to child protection social workers would be for different types of problems (see figure 1). The choice of questions was informed by the literature review. In particular:

- themes commonly identified in media reporting about social workers (see figure 10)
- perceptions of child protection social workers explored in previous research (see table 1)

Figure 1 - Online Survey Structure



Table 1 - Key media themes about social workers identified by the literature

Key media themes	Source
Incompetent; Failing to act; Too trusting	Ayre, 200 Cooper, 2005 Mendes, 2000 Riggs, King, Delfabbro, and Augoustinos, 2009 Warner, 2013
Bureaucratic	Ayre, 2001 Riggs et al., 2009 Warner, 2013
Overzealous; Child stealers; Abusing authority; Unaccountable	Ayre, 2001 Cooper, 2005
Liberal	Ayre, 2001
Experts	Reid and Misener, 2001
Helping	Reid and Misener, 2001 Stanfield, Fouché & Beddoe, 2014
Busy; Hard working; Overworked; Stressful job	Stanfield, Fouché & Beddoe, 2014 Cordoba, 2017

In addition to deriving the questions from the literature, five statements were added that reflected concerns highlighted in recent reviews of New Zealand's state child protection system (EAP, 2015, 2016). The final set of statements participants were asked to rate in part 3 and 4 of the survey were:

- They are competent
- They are concerned about the wellbeing of families they work with
- They are enthusiastic about what they do
- They are helpful
- They are honest
- They are intelligent
- They are overworked
- They have a stressful job
- They do what they say they are going to do
- They are trustworthy
- They are idealists
- They are underpaid
- They have their head in the clouds
- They take the views of children and young people they are working with seriously
- They focus too much on what children's families want
- They focus too much on the wellbeing of children at the expense of children's families
- They are competent at working with Māori
- They spend insufficient time with the children and families they are working with
- They spend too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy

Participant Selection

The target audience for the online questionnaire was the workforce of professionals in New Zealand who, in their professional capacity, work with or are highly likely to work with children and young people, and are a professional group who make referrals to CYF. The initial list of professional groups was informed by the Vulnerable Children Act 2014 definition of a 'children's worker' (see page 6). Professional groups that feature prominently in earlier comparable research were prioritised, namely: teachers (McMichael & Irvine, 1984); social workers (Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Koeske et al., 1993; McMichael & Irvine, 1984; Olsen & Olsen, 1967; Pietroni, 1991; Staniforth & Beddoe, 2017; Staniforth et al., 2016; Staniforth et al., 2014); nurses (Pietroni, 1991), psychologists (Aplerin & Benedict, 1985; Koeske et al., 1993) and doctors (Aplerin & Benedict, 1985; Koeske et al., 1993; Olsen & Olsen, 1967). The target group of professionals was

then agreed with the thesis supervisors: non-CYF social workers, teachers, early childhood teachers, doctors (general practitioners, paediatricians and psychiatrists), police officers and nurses.

Professional bodies representing one or more of the professional groups were first contacted on 16 September 2016 by email. An email was sent to each professional body that outlined the research and sought their assistance in inviting their members to participate. The email stated that the researcher would be happy to cover any costs associated with doing so. Steps to encourage participation are important given the generally low response rates for surveys (Bowling, 2005; Bryman, 2015; Creswell, 2013; Lee, 2006; O'Leary, 2013; Rubin & Babbie, 2012). Accordingly, if there was no response for a week, this was followed up with a further email and two follow-up phone calls over the subsequent three weeks. All but one professional body responded.

Of those professional bodies who were willing and able to assist, only some agreed to the preferred approach of emailing their members directly and inviting them to participate. Some organisations declined to email participants directly but offered instead to publish an invitation to participate on their website or in a member publication. Long and short invitations to participate in the survey were created to account for this distinction (see appendix C and D) and provided to participating professional bodies accordingly. Those professional bodies who were unable to help declined primarily because they receive frequent requests of this nature and have adopted a policy of rationalising what they send on to their membership. Approximately two thirds of the contacted professional bodies invited their members to participate in some capacity. The mode of invitation to reach participants used by each professional body is presented in table 2.

Table 2 – Mode of invitation used to reach participants

Professional Body	Represented Professionals	Outcome
Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers	Social Workers	Invitation to participate sent to all members
Association of Salaried Medical Specialists	Doctors	Unable to assist
Independent Schools Education Association	Teachers	Unable to assist
The New Zealand Educational Institute	Primary and Early Childhood Teachers	Published invitation to participate in professional publication
New Zealand Medical Association	Doctors	Published invitation to participate in online newsletter
New Zealand Nurses Organisation	Nurses	Agreed to publish invitation to participate in their magazine but ultimately this was not done due to delays which would have required the survey period to be extended longer than desired
New Zealand Nursing Counsel	Nurses	Unable to assist
New Zealand Police Association	Police Officers	Agreed to send invitation to participate to limited number of members
New Zealand Psychological Society	Psychologists	Invitation to participate sent to all members
Paediatric Society of NZ	Paediatricians	Invitation to participate sent to all members
Post Primary Teachers Association	Secondary School Teachers	Invitation to participate published on twitter feed
Royal New Zealand College of GPs	GPs	Unknown (confirmation not received)
Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association	Social Workers	Did not respond to inquiries

After the survey opened, each organisation was subsequently contacted and for all but three it was confirmed that invitations to participate had been sent to members on schedule. The researcher was unable to confirm whether the Royal

College of General Practitioners ultimately invited members. The New Zealand Nurses Organisation were required to delay including an invitation to participate in the October edition of their Kai Tiaki magazine due to space limitations. While they offered to include it in the next edition this would have required the survey to remain open until January 2017. At this time many professional bodies had already agreed to assist and in consultation with the researcher's supervisors, this offer was declined.

Survey Responses

The online questionnaire was open from 10 October – 19 November 2016, and received 278 responses. Of these, 211 were complete responses, 24 missed only one question and a further 4 missed two to five questions. 12 participants missed between 10-31 responses but still completed the demographics and at least one section. These results were included. 27 participants were eliminated from the dataset because no sections of the survey had been fully completed. This meant that the final data set accounted for 251 responses.

Not surprisingly, professional groups who belonged to organisations that sent invitations directly to members were overrepresented as respondents. The numbers of participating paediatricians were probably greater than would have been the case because of the assistance of one professional who contacted the researcher and advised that he had forwarded the link to colleagues through his professional network. The 32 responses from primary or secondary school teachers were the only professional group reasonably well represented despite not having received a direct invitation to participate. This may be a consequence of the relatively high number of teachers in New Zealand compared to other targeted professions. On the other hand, there was only one response from a General Practitioner (GP) and only two incomplete responses from police officers. Finally, the 19 responses from nurses was surprising considering no request to participate had been sent to members by either of New Zealand's nursing bodies. It is not known how nurses became aware of and chose to participate in the study.

Content Analysis

The analysis of news reporting that formed part of this research required that the researcher, and a quality assurer,⁸ interpret and make judgements about the content of news articles. Content analysis was used to do so. Content analysis is useful for identifying themes and deriving meaning from samples of language

⁸ The role of the quality assurer is discussed later in this chapter (see page 37)

(Macnamara, 2005). It is therefore well suited to the analysis of media and news reporting. Indeed, it has been a favoured technique of many researchers exploring media coverage of social work (Cooper, 2005; Cordoba, 2017; Munro, 2011; Reid & Misener, 2001; Riggs et al., 2009; Staniforth & Beddoe, 2017; Warner, 2013).

Content analysis was initially considered a primarily quantitative approach; however, it is now also widely used in qualitative research (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). There are several variants (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Macnamara, 2005). Each contains core features and processes that define them as content analysis. First, samples of language are sourced. In this case, news articles related to child protection social work. Second, source material is coded. Coding is the process of searching for and generating data from key words, units of language, or even other features such as relationships. Finally, a systematic analysis of the coding is undertaken and interpreted (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004; Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002; Macnamara, 2005).

At the outset of this research, the researcher had intended to use Hsieh and Shannon's (2005) 'summative' variant of content analysis. Summative content analysis accounts for latent meaning by recording not only the presence of words and phrases, but also their context. This approach was favoured because it may have provided insight into whether ideology and political agendas play a role in shaping how child protection social workers are portrayed in the New Zealand news media. For instance, by assessing whether portrayals of child protection social workers differed significantly depending on ownership of news producers, or whether there were any important relationships with other trending news themes. Unfortunately, in the interests of keeping the research manageable, this approach was abandoned. However, the data was collected with a summative content analysis in mind and it is possible such relationships could be drawn from the dataset in the future.

Instead, the content analysis used in the current research was a general mixed methods quantitative and qualitative approach. This approach begins with a simple count of key words and content for each article, a quantitative method known as manifest content analysis (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). However, the researcher and quality assurer were then required to make judgements of portrayals of child protection social workers in the articles as a whole, an activity that is subjective in nature and very much a qualitative process (Lombard et al., 2002; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

Sourcing sample of news articles

Relevant news articles were sourced using the Newztext online database which provides access to the full content of news articles across most sources in New Zealand. The search criteria ultimately covered the two-year period before the online questionnaire was opened: 10 October 2014 – 9 October 2016. It included all New Zealand newspapers and newswires incorporated in the database (see appendix E). The following search strings were used: ("Child, Youth and Family" OR "Child Youth and Family" OR "CYF"⁹) AND "Social Worker"¹⁰. The search yielded 198 results prior to exclusions.

Articles were then screened to determine whether they included content related to CYF care and protection social workers in the context of their role. Articles were excluded for reasons such as 'social worker' being used only to reference non-CYF staff, referring to someone who was a CYF social worker in the past in a non-vocational context or referring to only non-care and protection CYF social workers. This exercise resulted in the exclusion of 75 articles. The final sample included 123 qualifying articles (see appendix F).

The search criteria ultimately settled on was a refinement of a series of earlier attempts. The first search attempt did not include a requirement for 'social worker'. The rationale was that doing so risked missing potentially relevant articles that referenced CYF social workers by another name. However, that search returned over 1000 results and by the time the researcher had screened 80 articles, only those articles that included the phrase social worker were found to be relevant to the research. The requirement of 'social worker' was therefore added to the search string significantly reducing the number of irrelevant articles returned.

A second refinement to the search criteria was the period covered. The research set out to analyse two years of relevant newspaper articles. However, this was then reduced to one year to ensure that the sample of articles returned remained manageable. Maintaining a manageable sample size is sometimes purported to be the primary consideration alongside ensuring it is sufficiently sizable to promote validity (Riff, Lacy, & Fico, 2014). Fortunately, the researcher was able to extend

⁹ The mechanics of the NewzText database required the actual search strings were "Child, Youth" OR "Child Youth" OR "CYF". These strings return the same set of results as the full phrases do.

¹⁰ The search team "social worker" also captures all instances of "social work".

the period covered to two years while retaining a suitable sample size due to the higher than expected exclusions discussed above.

To retain or exclude duplicates

The final sample of news articles used contained a number of articles from different sources which are essentially duplicates. News producers regularly distribute articles to a range of newspapers within a network, who then print that article with only minor or cosmetic changes. Excluding duplicates from the sample would have reduced the number of qualifying news articles to 94. This would have remained a sufficient sample size to work with but would have had implications for the analysis. Retaining duplicates meant that the coding applied to any duplicated article is augmented by the number of duplicates. For example, the same article printed in four different newspapers portraying social workers as incompetent would be counted once if duplicates are excluded, or four times if they are not. Both measures are useful but in different ways. Excluding duplicates might provide better insight into the motivations, views and interests of news producers, while including them gives a better indication of the saturation of themes and narratives reaching news consumers. Because this research is more interested in the latter, duplicates were retained in the final sample.

Coding and analysis

Content analysis coding requires that a latent coding schema be developed (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999, as cited in Hsieh and Shannon, 2005). In other words, a list of themes or words that articles will be coded against. The manifest coding schema used to identify themes in the sample of news articles was designed to correspond to part 2 and 3 of the survey. The survey itself was informed by themes identified in the literature (Ayre, 2001; Cooper, 2005; Mendes, 2000; Reid & Misener, 2001; Riggs et al., 2009; Stanfield & Beddoe, 2013; Warner, 2013), and in recent reviews or reports related to New Zealand's state child protection system (EAP, 2015, 2016; Office of the Chief Social Worker, 2014; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2015, 2016).

Some themes present in the literature were not incorporated in the coding schema because they were similar to codes already included, or because they were considered archaic and less relevant today. Adjectives were created to represent each included theme and paired with an opposite adjective, such as competent and incompetent. There were three themes that featured sufficiently in the articles that codes were added to the schema to account for them after coding had commenced. Specifically, these were hardworking/lazy, protective/abusive and having a simple or complex job. All articles were then re-assessed against these

codes. Unfortunately, it was too late to add questions about these themes to the survey itself. The final coding schema is presented in table 3.

Table 3 - Coding schema used for the content analysis of news articles

Competent	Incompetent
Concerned about the wellbeing of families they work with	Unconcerned about the wellbeing of families they work with
Enthusiastic about what they do	Unenthusiastic about what they do
Helpful	Unhelpful
Honest	Dishonest
Protective	Abusive
Intelligent	Unintelligent
Overworked	Underworked
Hard working	Lazy
Having a stressful job	Having an unstressful job
Having a complex job	Having a simple job
Doing what they say they are going to do	Not doing what they say they are going to do
Trustworthy	Untrustworthy
Underpaid	Overpaid
Having their head in the clouds	Grounded
Taking the views of children and young people they are working with seriously	Not taking the views of children and young people they are working with seriously
Focusing too much on what family's want	Not focusing enough on what families want
Competent at working with Maori	Not competent at working with Māori
Spending insufficient time with the children and families they are working with	Spending too much time with the children and families they are working with
Spending too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy	Not spending enough time on paperwork and bureaucracy

In order to assist with the coding, a simple database was created using Access Database. This allowed the researcher and quality assurer to assess the articles against the coding scheme using a custom-built form (see appendix G). The articles were loaded in a random order. An added benefit of using the database was the ease with which the data could be subsequently exported to a spreadsheet for analysis.

A content analysis guide was created which sought to provide clarity and promote consistency when coding. The guide was primarily created for the quality assurer

but was also referenced by the researcher when coding. The instructions outlined in the guide included:

- The content analysis is interested in how CYF Child Protection Social Workers are portrayed in the media. It is not asking you to record how Youth Justice, Caregiver or Adoption social workers are portrayed, nor is it asking you how Child, Youth and Family as an institution is portrayed in the media.
- You may judge that an article portrays CYF Child Protection Social Workers in a certain way even if it does not say it outright.
- Some articles talk about a person or people who have been CYF Child Protection Social Workers in the past but who are no longer working in this role. You are asked to make a judgement call on whether comments about someone who used to be a social worker qualify or not.
- While most of the descriptors are included as pairs of opposites, you may tick both if you think the article portrays CYF Child Protection Social Workers as both.

The guide has been attached (see appendix H).

Quality Assurance

Intercoder reliability is a measure of consistency between those responsible for coding (Lombard, Snyder-Duch & Bracken, 2002). If intercoder reliability is not robustly established, the analysis of the results carries less weight (Singletary, 1993, as cited by Lombard *et al.*, 2002). A prerequisite of establishing intercoder reliability is that more than one person should be involved such that discrepancies between coders can be identified and accounted for (Lombard *et al.*, 2002). With the assistance of the researcher's supervisors, a recent social work graduate agreed to independently code a random subset of 20 articles so that the results could be compared to the researcher's and a measure of consistency obtained.

Intercoder reliability was assessed using the 'percent agreement'. The percent agreement is, at its most basic, a process of counting the number of coding decisions that match between independent coders and presenting the findings as a variable between .00 (no agreement) and 1.00 (perfect agreement) (Lombard *et al.*, 2002). It is acknowledged that the percent agreement is not the most robust approach (Kolbe and Burnett, 1991). However, alternatives such as the Holsti method, Scott's Pi, Cohen's Kappa and Krippendorff's Alpha can be complex, time consuming, resource intensive and cumbersome to undertake without suitable software (Lombard *et al.*, 2002). It was agreed in conjunction with the

researcher's supervisors that the percent agreement was suitable given the constraints of completing a master's level thesis.

A comparison between the researcher's coding and that completed independently by the quality assurer provided percentage agreements between 42% and 98% depending on how consistency was measured. Only 42% of articles were assessed identically if one requires 100% consistency across every characteristic in that article to count as a single positive match. However, there were usually multiple descriptors applicable per article and this method does not provide an overview of overall alignment. Alternatively, one can look at every possible selection option and compare like for like, including counting two negatives as a match. If this approach were adopted consistency would be 98%. This approach is also misleading because the majority of descriptors are irrelevant to any single article. The 98% 'match' is therefore mostly accounted for by obviously inapplicable negatives. The third approach applies matches only to codes that either the researcher or quality assurer have determined apply to an article. This measure produced a percentage agreement of 65%. This is slightly below the 70% or above generally desired for exploratory research (Lombard et al., 2002).

LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY

There are important limitations to the methods adopted in this research. First and foremost, qualitative latent content analysis requires coders to apply judgement, a process that is subjective by its very nature (Lombard et al., 2002; Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). Establishing intercoder reliability using a quality assurer was intended to help mitigate bias and identified some areas of disagreement as expected. However, it also highlighted judgement calls that were different but in a sense both correct. In other words, there is probably no entirely correct way to code the articles. The results are therefore undoubtedly shaped by the lens and biases of both the researcher and quality assurer. Considering this, the percentage agreement of 65% is probably as consistent as one could expect. If sufficient resources are available to future researchers in this area, validity of latent coding could be strengthened by coding as a group and averaging the results (Lombard et al., 2002).

When undertaking content analysis, it is considered best practice to completely remove the researcher from coding (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991; Lombard et al., 2002). Unfortunately, this was not achievable because of practical and resourcing limitations. While best efforts have been made to be objective and transparent, it is likely the researcher's investment and interest in the subject area have influenced the coding of the content analysis. The impact is probably elevated due

to the researcher's declared conflict of interest as an employee of New Zealand's statutory child protection agency, Oranga Tamariki.

A further limitation to the content analysis was the choice to examine only news articles from newspapers and non-social media online news sources. News provided through other mediums, such as radio, television and social media was not examined. It is possible that the character of news produced for newspapers is different from that produced for other mediums. The research does attempt to generalise the findings to wider news reporting, but it does so with the caveat that the content of newspaper and online news is not necessarily reflective of news delivered by other mediums.

A known constraint of surveys is that they are highly researcher-driven. Answers are only given to the specific questions researchers have thought to ask and there is rarely an opportunity to seek clarification or follow-up (Bowling, 2005; Bryman, 2015; Creswell, 2013; Lee, 2006; O'Leary, 2013; Rubin & Babbie, 2012). As noted already, three pairs of codes were added to the content analysis after it became apparent to the researcher that these featured in news reporting about child protection social workers. Because the survey had already been sent to anonymous participants, the opportunity to add these questions to it was lost, as was the ability to compare news narratives and participant views on these topics.

The survey reached a sizable number of participants. However, due to challenges in reaching some professional groups, the cohort is not entirely representative of the wider children's workforce. Respondents were skewed towards being older, Pakeha and female, and some professional groups, such as GPs and police officers, were largely or entirely unrepresented. Attempts to generalise the findings to the wider children's workforce are caveated by the fact that some demographics and professional groups were underrepresented in the survey.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research was guided by the principles of Massey University's Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants, and by the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Work's Code of Ethics. The research was evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk (see appendix I and J). Therefore, a low risk notification was made (low risk notification number 4000015356) and it was not assessed by one of Massey University's Human Ethics Committees.

The primary ethical consideration the researcher needed to manage is conflict of interest. Throughout the research, the researcher has been an employee of New

Zealand's state child protection agency, the Ministry for Children Oranga Tamariki.¹¹ Although the researcher has been a care and protection social worker in the past, he was employed in advisory and policy roles over the course of this research. Further, the researcher's university fees were partly funded through the Ministry of Social Development's¹² internal study awards programme available to employees working towards academic qualifications relevant to the Ministry's purpose. This programme requires only that participants provide evidence of completion and grade. There has been no risk that the researcher might be required to refund fees on the basis of the content of the research. Oranga Tamariki has had no role in commissioning, overseeing or reviewing the research, and will not be provided with any of the research content until after the thesis has been formally assessed.

Despite these limitations, the conflict of interest remained and needed to be managed throughout the research. While not consciously aware of doing so, there was potential that the researcher could have been motivated to cast a favourable light on Oranga Tamariki or care and protection social workers for employment reasons, or out of a sense of loyalty to the organisation or people who work there. It is also possible that the researcher's prior experience as a social worker and familiarity with Oranga Tamariki influenced the interpretation, analysis or presentation of the findings. Indeed, the critical realist epistemology in which this research is positioned suggests this is likely (Easton, 2010; Thyer, 2009).

A number of mitigations were put in place to help oversee and manage the conflict of interest. Most importantly, the conflict of interest has been made transparent and reflected on in supervision. Supervisors have reviewed all research material prior to use, and been vigilant to signs of conflict of influence in the thesis, such as inferences that appear to be anecdotal or not informed by the literature or data. The researcher has not shared any part of the thesis or draft findings with professional colleagues, and has attempted to ensure any comments related to Oranga Tamariki are clearly derived from the literature, research data or public record.

Aside from conflict of interest, no notable ethical risks were identified. Survey respondents participated on a voluntary basis and their responses were

¹¹ Formally Child, Youth and Family (see page 5)

¹² At the time the researcher applied for Study Awards funding, Child Youth and Family was a service line of the Ministry of Social Development.

anonymous, and data sought through the content analysis was from the public record. As professionals, survey participants were not considered a vulnerable group and the subject matter and methodology was unlikely to cause harm to participants, the researcher or Massey University. Culture, ethnicity and gender played no direct role in selecting participants and there was no need to use deception of any kind.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter overviewed the epistemological position which informed the research and discussed the choice of methodology. It argued that the validity critical realism places on both empiricism and subjective experience makes it a good fit for mixed methodology. The choice of methodology was also pragmatic.

The process of undertaking both the survey and content analysis was discussed, and some of the key lessons, accomplishments and challenges were noted. With the assistance of professional bodies, the survey reached a relatively sizable cohort, although participants were not as representative as had been hoped. The content analysis ultimately covered the two-year period desired, but not without refining the search criteria several times as lessons were learnt. It was also necessary to abandon the more ambitious summative content analysis in favour of a mixed methods approach in the interests of keeping the research manageable. The limitations of the research were discussed, highlighting the subjective elements of latent content analysis and some of the compromises that were made, including limiting the content analysis coding to the researcher and a single quality assurer. Finally, the ethical considerations and steps to manage them were discussed. The most important of these was the researcher's conflict of interest as an employee of New Zealand's state child protection agency Oranga Tamariki.

The next chapter presents the results from the research. Data generated from the online survey and content analysis is provided and in some cases contrasted to illustrate relationships. Key themes and results of note are commented on as they emerge.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter provides the results of both the survey and content analysis completed for this research. It begins with a brief outline of the characteristics of the survey respondents, then presents and comments on the data generated from the survey and content analysis. The chapter is structured in segments that pertain to each research question. The final section of this chapter highlights some of the more interesting relationships between the views of survey participants and the themes identified in news articles.

Survey results	Sources of influence on children’s professionals’ views about child protection social workers
Survey results	Perceptions of child protection social worker portrayals in news reporting
Content Analysis results	Depictions of child protection social workers in news reporting
Survey results	Perceptions of child protection social workers
Survey results	The perceived helpfulness of referrals to child protection social workers in resolving different types of problems

SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The ‘typical’ survey participant was female, middle aged or older, Pakeha and experienced in their profession. 85% of participants were aged 40 or over, the most representative group being those aged 50-59 at 41%. Less than 4% of those who took part in the survey were under 30. There was a disproportionately large ratio of female (80.5%) and Pakeha¹³ (84.5%) participants. Just over 10% of the children’s professionals who took part in the survey identified with Māori ethnicity, and no ethnic group other than Māori or Pakeha exceeded 2%. Interestingly, this means that participation from people who identify with Asian or Pacific ethnicities was negligible despite these ethnic groups making up 12% and 7% of New Zealand’s population (Statistics New Zealand, 2013). 75% of the respondents had been working in their profession for a decade or more. Only three (1.2%) had

¹³ The survey enabled participants to identify with multiple ethnicities. Therefore, the total number of ethnicities recorded exceeded the number of participants.

been working less than a year. The demographics of survey participants are presented figure 2.

The over-representation of some demographics in the survey is likely to be in part a consequence of the high number of social workers who participated. Almost half (46.8%) of the 251 respondents were social workers who did not work for CYF. The social work workforce in New Zealand is disproportionately female and skewed towards older people (Staniforth et al., 2014; SWRB, 2017; Van Benyen, 2016). In October 2017, 83% of social workers registered in New Zealand were female, and 73% were aged 40 or older (SWRB, 2017). However, the lower than expected participation of people identifying with ethnic groups other than Pakeha is less well explained by the high proportion of social workers who responded. Only 36% of registered social workers in New Zealand identify with 'European', 'European Other' or 'Pakeha' ethnicities, while 17% identify with Māori (SWRB, 2017). A further 30% are recorded as 'New Zealand' but are not further defined.

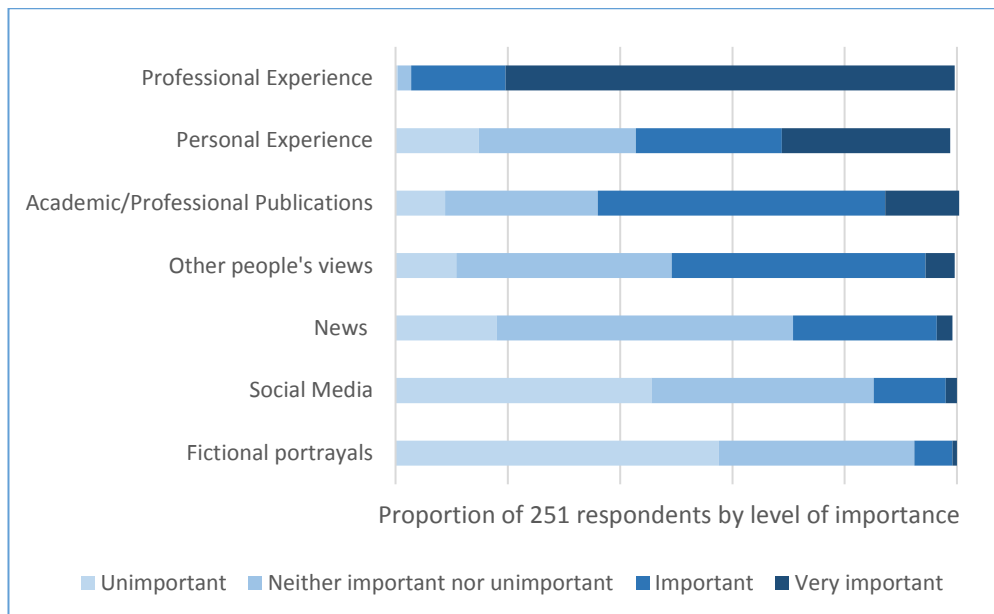
Figure 2 - Demographics of Survey Respondents



SURVEY RESULTS - WHAT INFLUENCES DO CHILDREN'S PROFESSIONALS THINK ARE IMPORTANT IN FORMING THEIR VIEWS ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS?

Survey participants rated how important different sources of information were in forming their views about child protection social workers (see figure 3). Professional experience was by far the most important influence cited. Almost all (97%) of respondents considered it important or very important. 80% went as far as weighting it very important. Academic/professional publications and personal experience were also considered important, with 64% and 57% of participants rating them as so respectively. Interestingly, personal experience was more likely to be rated 'very important' than academic/professional publications, despite the latter receiving a greater total of combined 'important' and 'very important' responses. Half (51%) of respondents considered other people's views to be important or very important. News reporting was cited as important in a little over a quarter (29%) of respondents, although less than a fifth (18%) considered it unimportant. Few people considered social media (15%) or fictional portrayals of social workers (8%) important or very important influences.

Figure 3 - Importance of factors that influenced participant views of child protection social workers



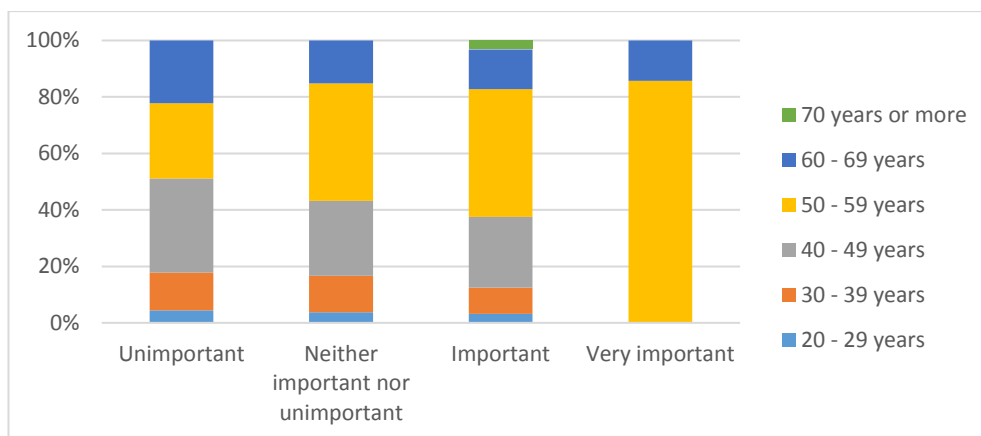
24 participants cited additional sources of influence under the 'other' option, and without exception, these were reported to be important or very important factors in influencing their views about child protection social workers. While some of these 'other' options could have been counted under the existing seven categories presented in the survey, they were counted separately to respect the choice of

respondents to differentiate them. Several professionals added client, family, caregiver or children’s views as important, and a few noted professional or academic training.

All professionals who reported that news was a ‘very important’ influence on their views of child protection workers were women. However, considering 80% of survey participants were women, this is not necessarily significant. The number of professionals who cited news sources as ‘important’, ‘neither important nor unimportant’ or ‘unimportant’ were proportionate to the ratio of participants by gender. Indeed, no source of influence significantly differed according to gender. Therefore, for this sample at least, the influences that professionals think shape their views of child protection social workers are largely the same for both males and females.¹⁴

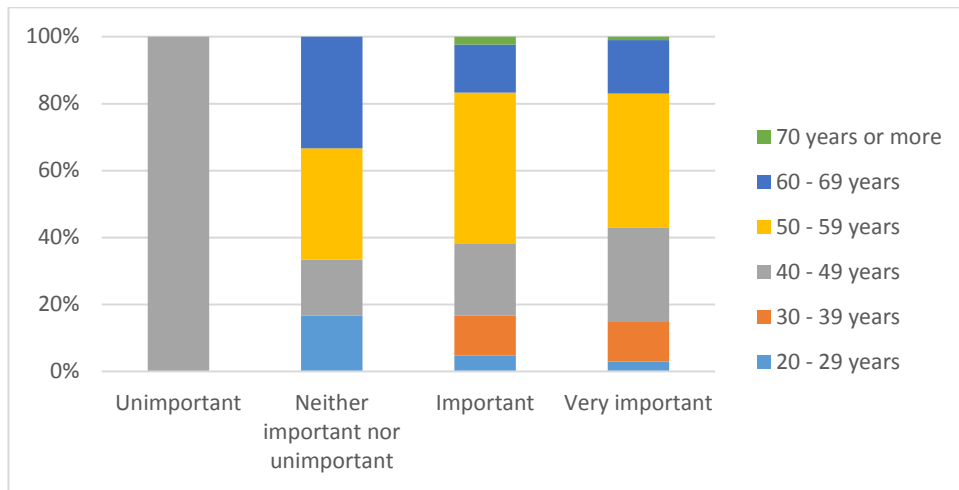
There were, for the most part, no significant differences in the importance participants placed on sources of influence by age group. However, there were some notable exceptions. Participants from older age groups tended to place more importance on news as a source of influence than younger age groups (see figure 4). There was also a minor trend of older age groups placing a higher degree of importance on professional experience, although participants as a whole nonetheless overwhelmingly considered professional experience important or very important (see figure 5). The importance of social media as an influence on how participants viewed child protection social workers was essentially the same across all age groups.

Figure 4 - Importance of news as influencing factor by age group



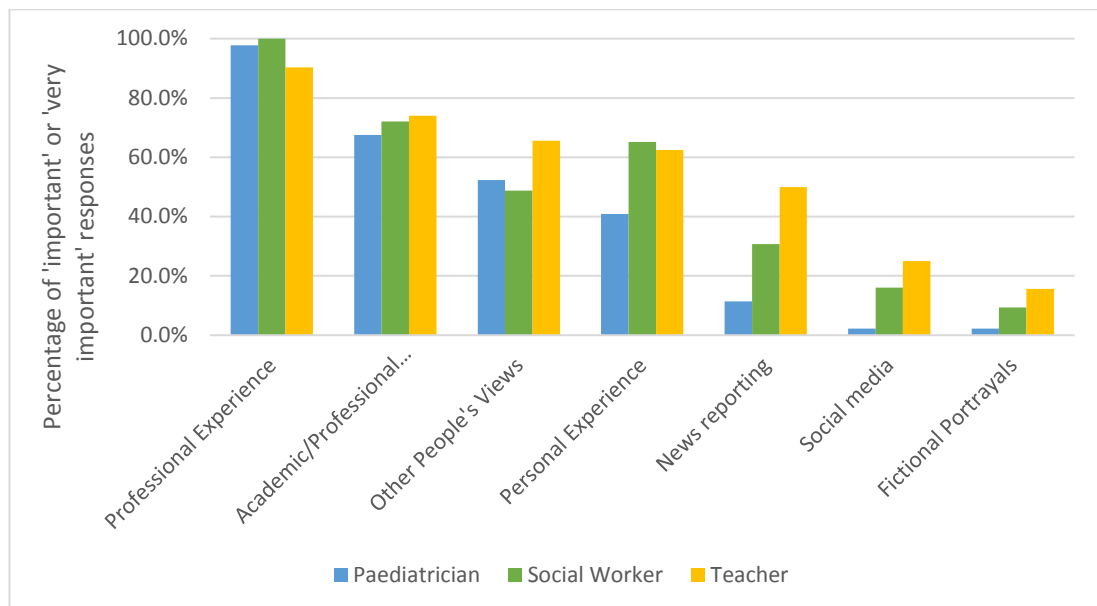
¹⁴ The survey was designed to enable participants to identify with a range of genders. However, all professionals who completed the survey identified as either male or female.

Figure 5 - Importance of professional experience as influencing factor by age group



Social workers, teachers and paediatricians were the most represented professions in the survey, and shared many views about which factors were important or otherwise in influencing their views about child protection social workers. However, there were distinctions between the level of importance these groups placed on news reporting, social media and fictional portrayals of social workers. 50% of teachers considered news to be an important or very important influence, compared to 31% of social workers and only 11% of paediatricians. 25% of teachers said social media was important or very important, compared to 16% of social workers and only 2% of paediatricians. The trends were similar for fictional portrayals of social workers. 16% of teachers rated them important or very important influences, against 9% of social workers and 2% of paediatricians. The distinctions in the level of importance social workers, teachers and paediatricians accorded to each source of influence are illustrated in figure 6.

Figure 6 - Distinctions between professions on the importance placed on factors influencing their opinion about child protection social workers



SURVEY RESULTS – HOW DO CHILDREN’S PROFESSIONALS THINK CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS ARE DEPICTED IN NEWS REPORTING?

The survey asked participants to rate how well they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements describing how child protection social workers are portrayed in New Zealand news reporting. Figure 7 on page 49 presents the results in full¹⁵. There were some areas of wide consensus. 81% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that child protection social workers are portrayed in news reporting as being overworked, while 80% agreed that they are depicted as having a stressful job. Most also agreed that media reporting frames child protection social workers as spending insufficient time with children and their families (75%), and as spending too much time on paperwork at bureaucracy (67%).

There were several statements which survey respondents largely disagreed with, the strongest of which was the question of competency:

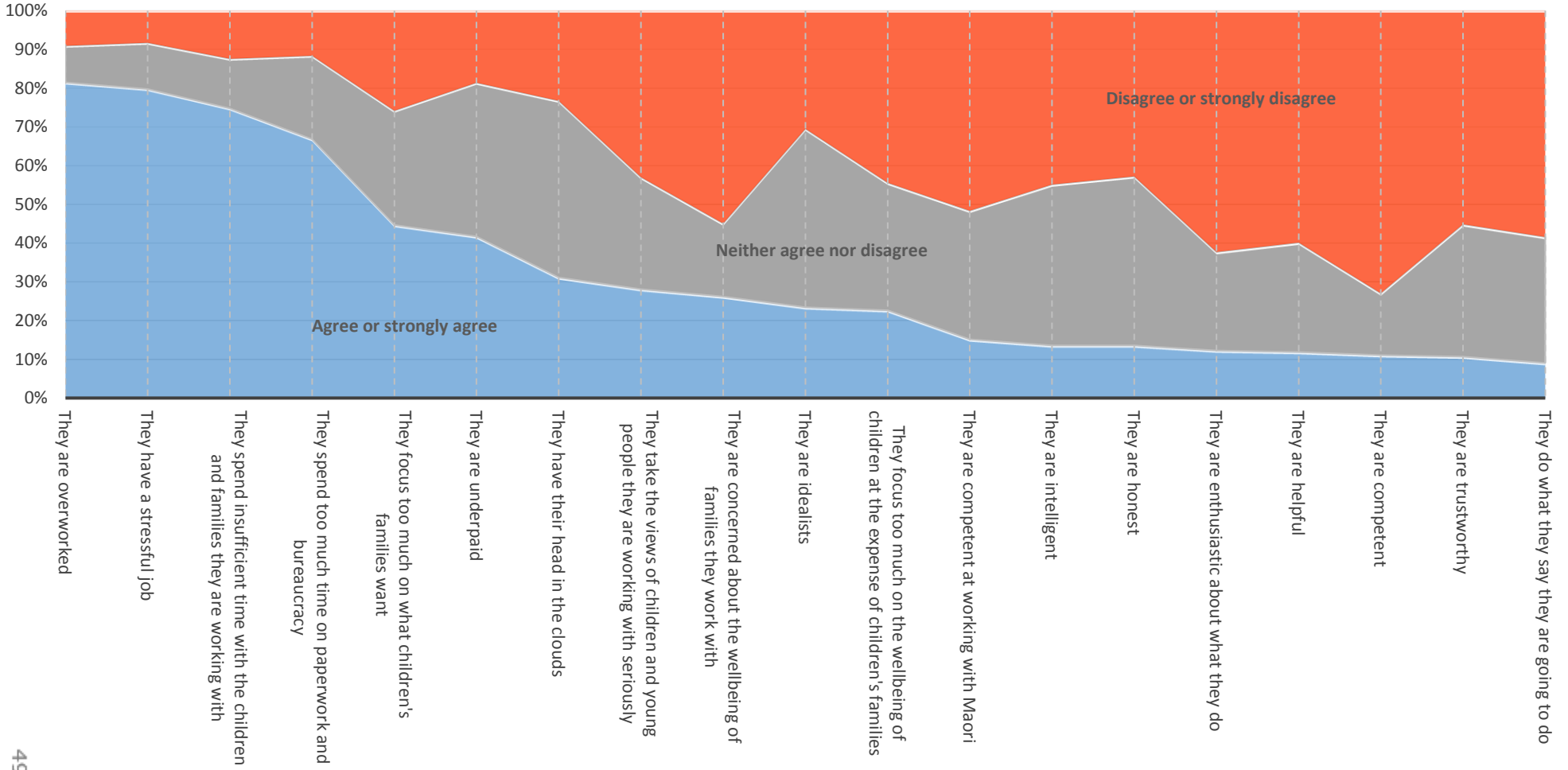
- 73% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement ‘they are portrayed as competent’
- 62% disagreed that ‘they are portrayed as enthusiastic about what they do’

¹⁵ A companion chart distinguishing strong and moderate responses is presented as figure 22 in appendix M

- 60% that 'they are portrayed as helpful'
- 58% that 'they are portrayed as doing what they say they are going to do'
- 55% that 'they are portrayed as concerned about the wellbeing of the families they work with'
- 55% that 'they are portrayed as trustworthy'
- 52% that 'they are portrayed as competent at working with Māori'

Responses to the statement 'they are portrayed as concerned about the wellbeing of the families they work with' stood out as being more polarised than most. While most respondents still disagreed with the statement, those that selected a different response were more likely to agree than respond neutrally.

Figure 7 - How children's professionals believe child protection social workers are portrayed in news reporting



There were mixed responses to the outstanding statements. However, they can still be usefully categorised into clusters according to whether they are weighted towards agreement, disagreement or neither. 'They are portrayed as underpaid' and 'they are portrayed as focusing too much on what children's families want' were the only two statements that received mixed responses weighted towards agreement. Conversely, responses were mixed but skewed towards disagreeing that child protection social workers are portrayed as trustworthy, honest, competent at working with Māori, idealists, taking the views of children and young people seriously and focusing too much on the wellbeing of children at the expense of children's families.

CONTENT ANALYSIS RESULTS - HOW ARE CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS DEPICTED IN NEWS REPORTING?

The content analysis undertaken to inform this research sought to understand how child protection social workers are portrayed in New Zealand news reporting. The coding used descriptive attributes in opposite pairs. The data is presented in sections to indicate the overall favourability of news reporting towards child protection social workers, to highlight areas of most interest to the news media, to identify polarisation, and to illustrate how child protection social workers are commonly portrayed in news reporting.

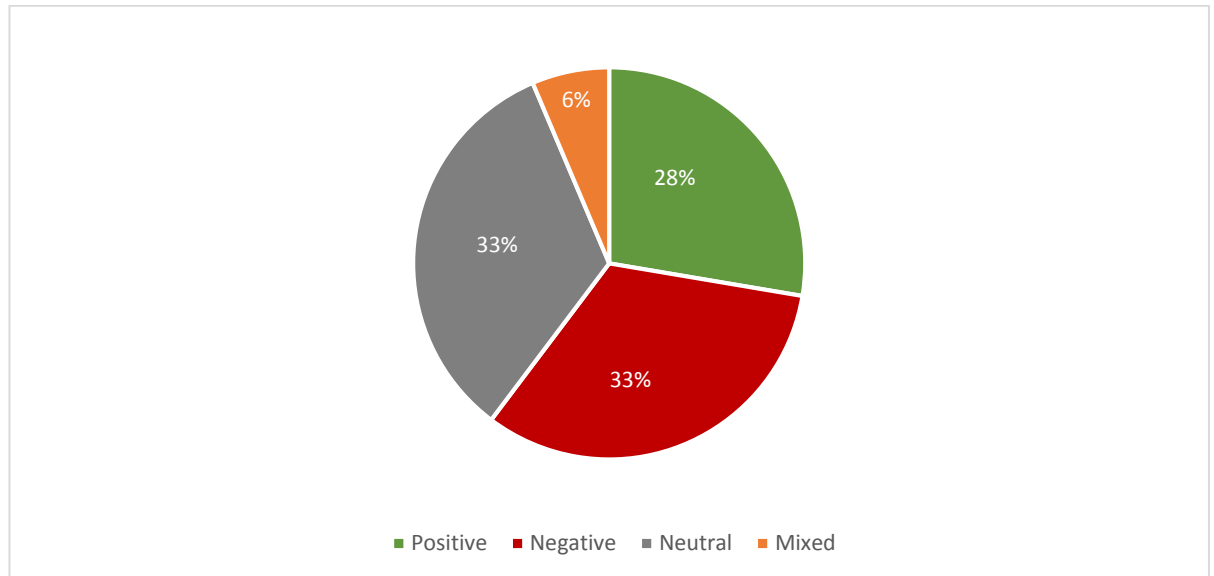
Favourability of portrayals

This content analysis did not in itself ask coders to make a judgement on whether an article portrayed child protection social workers positively or negatively. However, the coding schema used pairs of opposing adjectives. This enabled an overall assessment of favourability to be made by counting the prevalence of adjectives tagged as positive or negative. Adjectives tagged as neutral were omitted from the count. In what may seem counterintuitive, the codes relating to the amount of time spent on paperwork and bureaucracy, and to whether social workers were portrayed as spending sufficient time with children and their families were tagged as neutral. This decision was made after an assessment of the articles coded against these adjectives showed that in all cases, social workers themselves were not singled out as at fault. For example, one article entitled 'More men needed for social work' clearly implied that social workers do not spend enough time with their clients, but suggested the reason was because a perpetual cycle of crisis meant there was insufficient time to do so. The tally of all adjectives tagged as positive, negative and neutral is provided (see appendix K).

Applying this method to the content analysis shows that 28% of the articles portrayed child protection social workers favourably, 33% unfavourably, 6% had

mixed coverage and 33% were neither favourable nor unfavourable (see figure 8). If the articles with mixed coverage are counted in the favourable and unfavourable scores, then 34% depicted child protection social workers positively and 39% negatively.

Figure 8 - Favourability of portrayals of child protection social workers



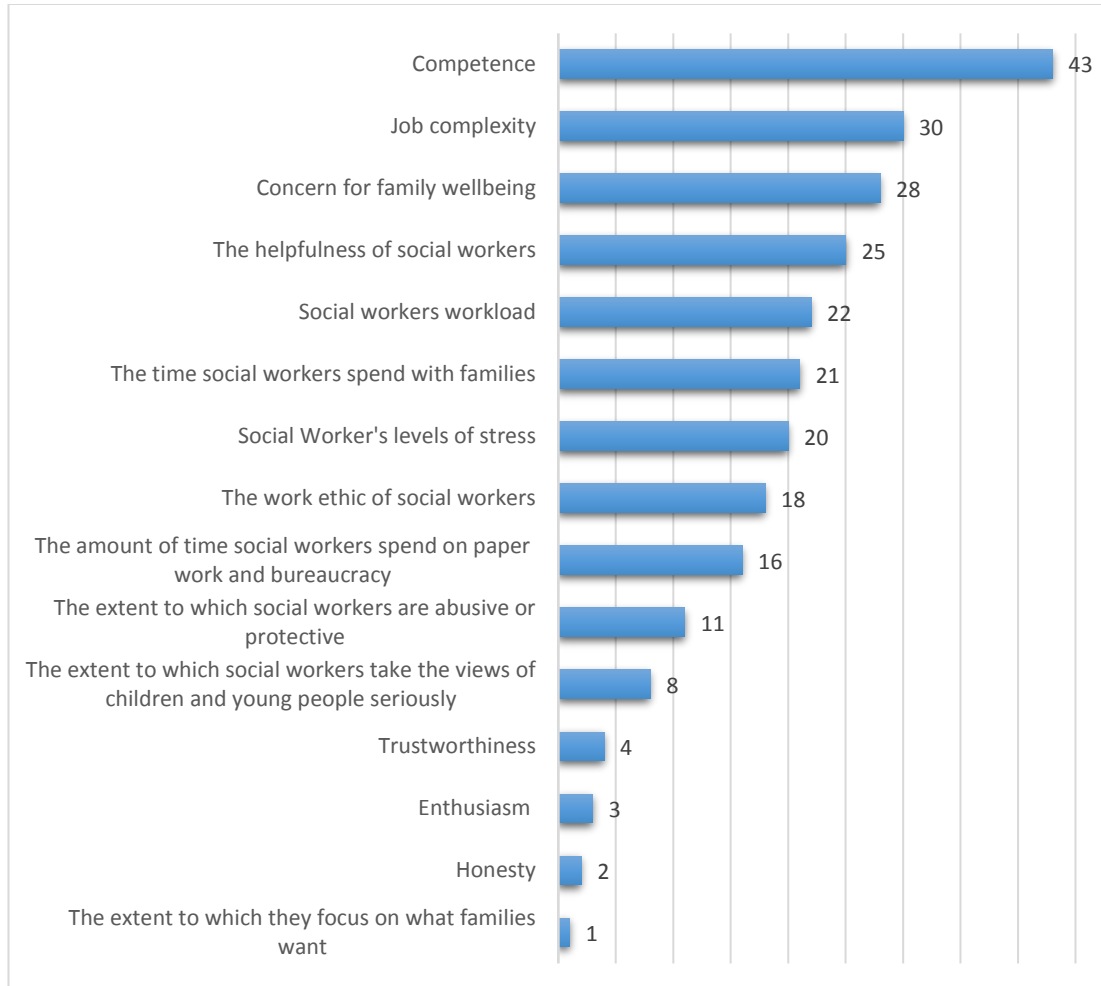
Media interest

Media interest, as it is used in this master's thesis, is a count of articles that portrayed child protection social workers according to each interest area, irrespective of whether the portrayal was positive, negative or both.¹⁶ It is intended to measure how much media coverage is given to each. Using this method, the content analysis data suggests that news publishers are most interested in the competence of child protection social workers. 43 of the 123 articles (35%) commented on or made inferences about the competence of child protection social workers. This was followed by job complexity (24%), how concerned child protection social workers are about the wellbeing of families they are working with (23%), and the helpfulness of child protection social workers (20%). On the other hand, none of the assessed articles referenced issues such as the intelligence of child protection social workers, follow-through, remuneration

¹⁶ The methodology adopted allowed for the counting of both positive and negative portrayals in the same article. However, no article was found to have depicted child protection social workers as both for any descriptive characteristics used in the content analysis.

of child protection social workers or their competence in working with Māori. The count of news articles by interest area is shown in figure 9.

Figure 9 - News coverage by interest area



Characterisation of child protection social workers in news reporting

Although many news articles were found to portray child protection social workers quite differently, clear themes were identified. The content analysis results suggest that the 'average' child protection social worker is depicted in news reporting as often ill-equipped for the complex and stressful role of child protection social work, overworked, not spending enough time with children and their families, and instead spending too much time on paperwork. They are also conveyed as hard working and genuinely concerned about the wellbeing of the children and families they are working with.

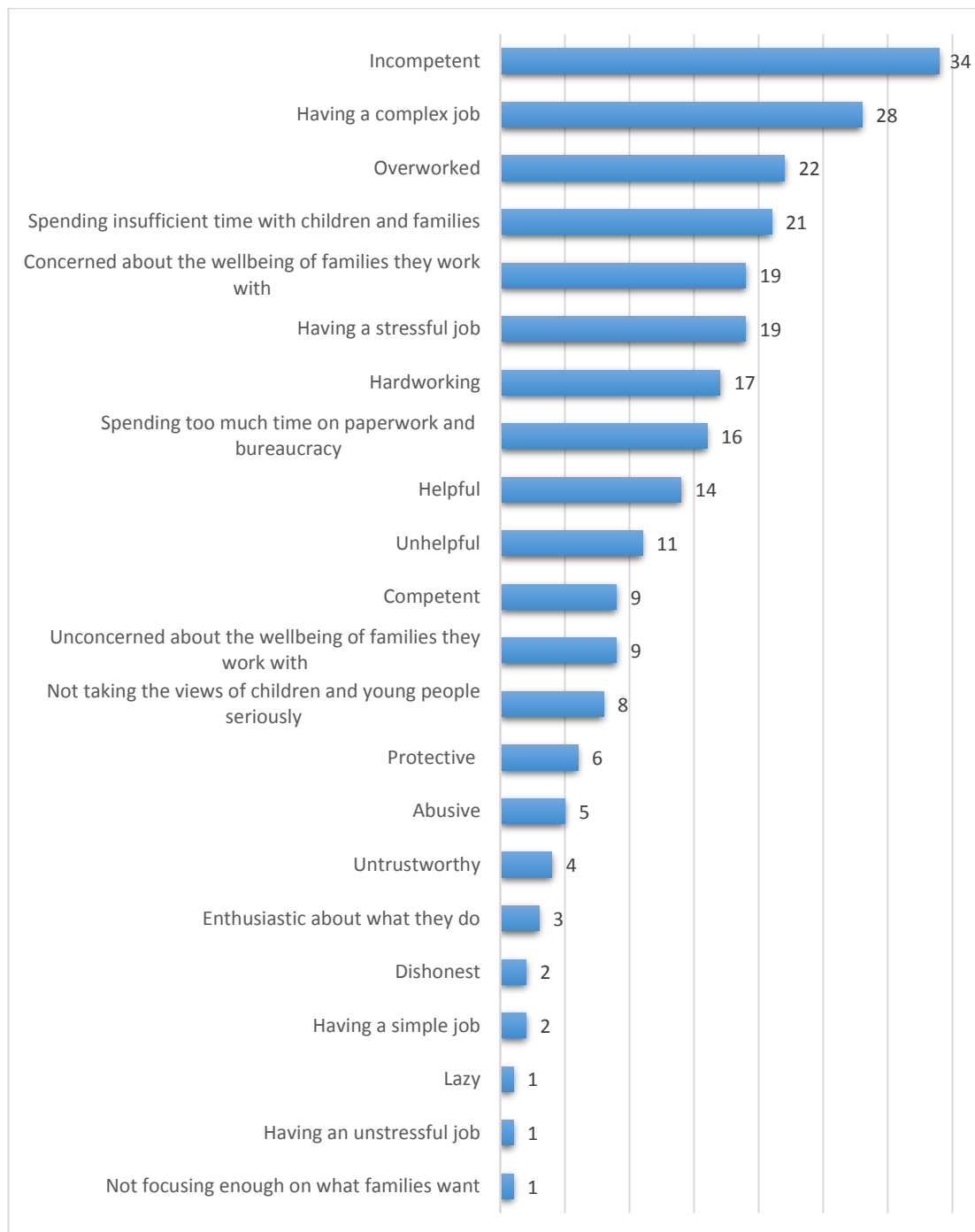
The most widespread theme identified in the content analysis was incompetence. Over a quarter (28%) of the articles highlighted mistakes, misjudgements, poor decision-making or failures that suggested incompetence. The next most

prevalent theme, identified in just under a quarter (23%) of articles, was social work portrayed as a complex job. These were followed by depictions of child protection social workers as:

- overworked (18%)
- spending insufficient time with children and their families (17%)
- being concerned about the wellbeing of families they are working with (15%)
- having a stressful job (15%)
- hard working (14%)
- spending too much time on paper work and bureaucracy (13%)

While not as widespread, news coverage also portrayed child protection workers as both helpful (11%) and unhelpful (9%), being competent at what they do (7%), and as being unconcerned about the wellbeing of their clients (7%). Other depictions were identified less frequently. These included being abusive, protective and untrustworthy. The count of articles found to portray child protection social workers by each characteristic is presented in figure 10.

Figure 10 - Count of articles that portrayed child protection social workers by characteristics

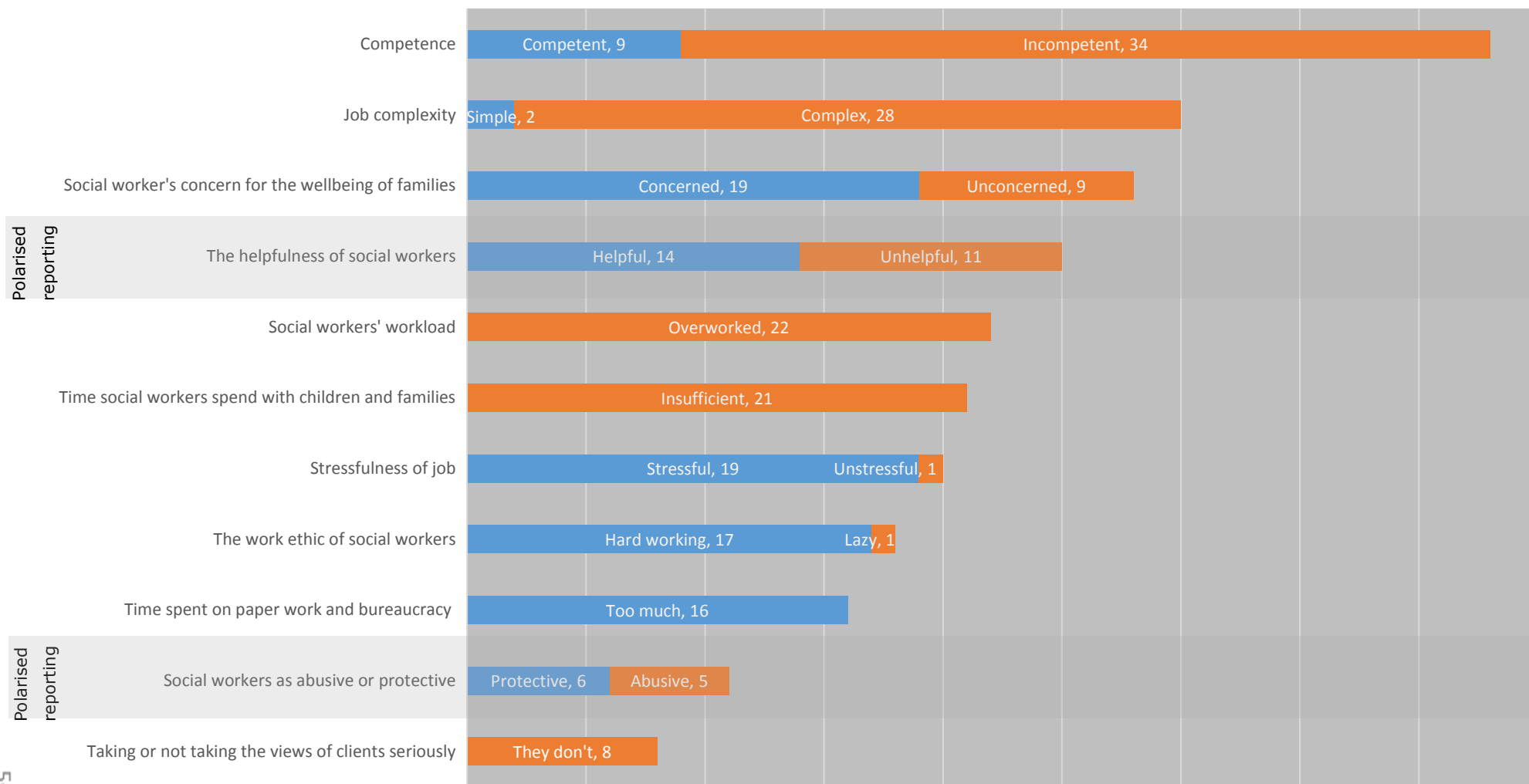


Consistency of news reporting about child protection social workers

The content analysis can also be drawn on to differentiate those issues for which the media holds a reasonably consistent view about child protection social workers, and areas where depictions are more polarised. As shown in figure 11 (see page 56), media portrayals of child protection social workers were, for most issues, found to be reasonably consistent. For example, child protection social

workers were portrayed as incompetent in 79% of news articles that related to competence. In the case of job complexity, the views expressed in the news media are even more consistent: 93% of articles related to job complexity depict the role as complex, while only 7% imply that it is simple. When news reporting commented on or made inferences about stress, almost all (95%) articles suggested that child protection social workers have a stressful job. In two areas, there was complete consensus. All 22 news reports that referenced workload depicted child protection social workers as overworked, and all 21 that related to the time social workers spend with children and their families implied that it was insufficient. There were in fact only two attributes of child protection social workers which were polarised in news reporting: helpful vs unhelpful, and protective vs abusive. 14 articles (56%) depicted child protection social workers as helpful and 11 (44%) as unhelpful. Likewise, 6 (55%) of 11 articles portrayed child protection social workers as protective against 5 (45%) which portrayed them as abusive.

Figure 11 – Characterisation of child protection social workers in news reporting by interest area



SURVEY RESULTS – HOW DO CHILDREN’S PROFESSIONALS PERCEIVE CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS?

The survey results suggest that professionals in the children’s workforce in New Zealand largely think of child protection social workers as having stressful jobs, being overworked and concerned about the children and families they work with despite spending insufficient time with them. Instead, they are seen to devote too much time to paperwork and bureaucracy. Perhaps for these reasons, professionals also tend to think that child protection workers do not do what they say they will do. Figure 12 (see page 59) presents these results in full.¹⁷

Survey respondents did not generally think of child protection social workers as having their heads in the clouds, or as being idealists. Participants were somewhat more likely than not to agree that child protection social workers take the views of children and young people seriously, are underpaid, intelligent and competent. There were mixed views about whether child protection social workers are helpful, trustworthy, honest, enthusiastic about their role, and whether they focus too much on what children’s families want. Less than a quarter agreed that child protection social workers are competent at working with Māori.

Favourability of participant views towards child protection social workers

The survey did not specifically ask participants how positively or negatively they viewed child protection social workers. However, they were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with a range of statements about child protection social workers. Some of the statements do not clearly reflect positive or negative judgements about child protection social workers, such as ‘they are overworked’. However, 12 of the 19 statements are plainly favourable adjectives. Therefore, one can indicate overall favourability or otherwise by assigning positive values to responses that agreed to these statements, and negative values to those that did not. The tally of statements tagged as positive, negative and neutral are presented in appendix L. To account for strength of feeling, the following values were used:

¹⁷ A companion chart distinguishing strong and moderate responses is presented as figure 23 in appendix M.

Strongly agree	+2
Agree	+1
Neither agree nor disagree	0
Disagree	-1
Strongly disagree	-2

This exercise produced a sum total of positive 566. To put this into perspective, the possible extremes were plus or minus 2502. These numbers would have required all participants to strongly agree with, or strongly disagree with, all 12 statements.

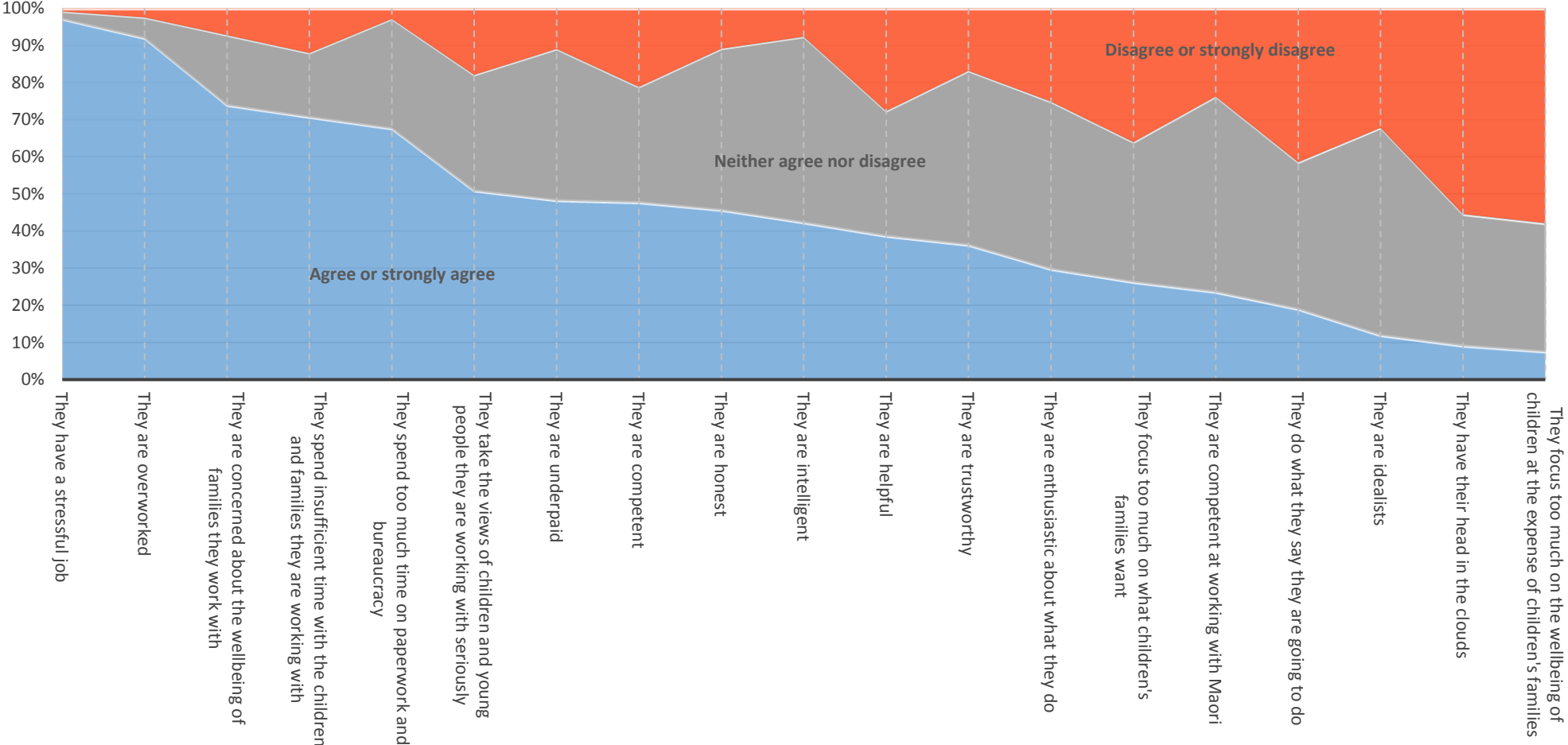
While this analysis is a useful indicator of overall favourability, it does have its limitations. It is almost certainly not the case that all adjectives are equally important to assessing overall favourability, yet this was done for lack of a better alternative. The decision to assign 'strongly' responses twice the value of standard agree or disagree responses is also somewhat arbitrary. However, even accounting for these limitations, the result of 566 is comfortably in the positive. This indicates that participants viewed child protection social workers more favourably than not.

Perceptions of child protection social workers

There was an overwhelming consensus amongst survey respondents about some characteristics of child protection social workers. Almost all professionals (97%) agreed that social workers have a stressful job while only two participants, less than 1% of the sample, disagreed. A further six neither agreed nor disagreed. Agreement with the statement 'they are overworked' was almost as widespread. 92% agreed or strongly agreed, 6% neither agreed nor disagreed and only 2% disagreed.

The next cluster of statements participants most agreed with were that child protection social workers are concerned about the wellbeing of families they work with (74%), that they spend insufficient time with the children and families they are working with (71%) and that they spend too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy (68%). Interestingly, 12% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that child protection social workers spend insufficient time with the children and families they are working with. In other words, there is a small but notable minority (12%) of professionals that think social workers do spend sufficient time, or perhaps even too much time with the children and families they are working with.

Figure 12 - How professionals in the children's workforce view child protection social workers



There were some survey findings that may be of concern to Oranga Tamariki and their staff. Firstly, less than a fifth (19%) of respondents agreed that child protection social workers do what they say they are going to do, with 41% actually choosing to disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. Secondly, only a quarter (24%) agreed that child protection social workers were competent at working with Māori. However, 24% agreed with the statement, while the remaining 52% choose to neither agree nor disagree. There was less confidence that child protection social workers are competent at working with Māori amongst the 26 participants who identified with Māori ethnicity: a similar proportion (24%) agreed with the statement but there was more widespread disagreement (50%).

There were further results of potential concern. Only 30% of participants agreed that child protection social workers are enthusiastic about what they do, 36% that they are trustworthy, 39% that they are helpful, 42% that they are intelligent, 46% that they are honest and 48% that they are competent. However, the outstanding respondents were more likely to 'neither agree nor disagree' rather than disagreeing outright (see figure 12). When this is accounted for, the survey responses are actually weighted towards agreeing with these statements. Nonetheless, the results still suggest that child protection social workers as a group are not seen by their professional colleagues in the children's workforce as consistently upholding these attributes.

There were only two statements that professionals largely disagreed with: 55% of participants disagreed that child protection social workers 'have their head in the clouds', while 58% disagreed that child protection social workers 'focus too much on the wellbeing of children at the expense of families'. Only 8% agreed with the latter statement.

There were very mixed views on whether social workers 'focus too much on what children's families want' with 26% agreeing, 38% neither agreeing nor disagreeing and 36% disagreeing. A range of responses was also received for the question of whether child protection social workers take the views of children and young people they are working with seriously: 51% of respondents agreed and 18% disagreed. While this is weighted towards agreement, it is an important focus of the overhauled Oranga Tamariki (EAP, 2016) and these results are unlikely to be considered satisfactory. Almost half (48%) of the respondents agreed child protection workers are underpaid, with only 11% disagreeing. Neutral responses, at 41%, were also significant.

Distinctions in perceptions of child protection social workers between professional groups

In the interests of keeping this research achievable, the analysis largely refrained from dissecting the data to assess whether professional groups perceived child protection social workers differently. The data collected would enable such statistical analysis and it is possible the researcher will do so in the future. An exception was made for perceptions of competence. This was because incompetence was the most prevalent theme identified in the content analysis, an important theme found in the survey, and because similar comparisons between professional groups are commented on in the literature (Koeske et al., 1993).

Interestingly, the results of this research indicate that contrary to the earlier findings of Koeske et al. (1993), psychologists, social workers and nurses had similar views on the competency of social workers. As illustrated in figure 13, only minor distinctions were identified. Social workers and psychologists were skewed towards seeing social workers as competent, while nurses were a little more likely to respond neutrally. Further distinctions between professional groups emerge when paediatricians and teachers are also considered. Paediatricians were more likely than other professions to see child protection social workers as competent, while teachers were more polarised in their views than other professions.

Figure 13 - Responses to 'Are they competent?' by professional group

Profession	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Doctor (Paediatrician)	6.8%	52.3%	25.0%	15.9%	0.0%
Nurse	0.0%	31.6%	47.4%	15.8%	5.3%
Psychologist	0.0%	47.4%	31.6%	21.1%	0.0%
Social Worker	2.5%	44.9%	29.7%	21.2%	1.7%
Teacher (primary or secondary)	9.4%	31.3%	31.3%	18.8%	9.4%

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PORTRAYALS IN NEWS REPORTING AND THE VIEWS OF CHILDREN'S PROFESSIONALS

Alongside exploring the opinions children's professionals have about child protection social workers, this research examined both how child protection social workers are portrayed in the New Zealand news media, and the expectations children's professionals had about such portrayals. The purpose of looking at all three areas was to determine whether any insights emerged when the results

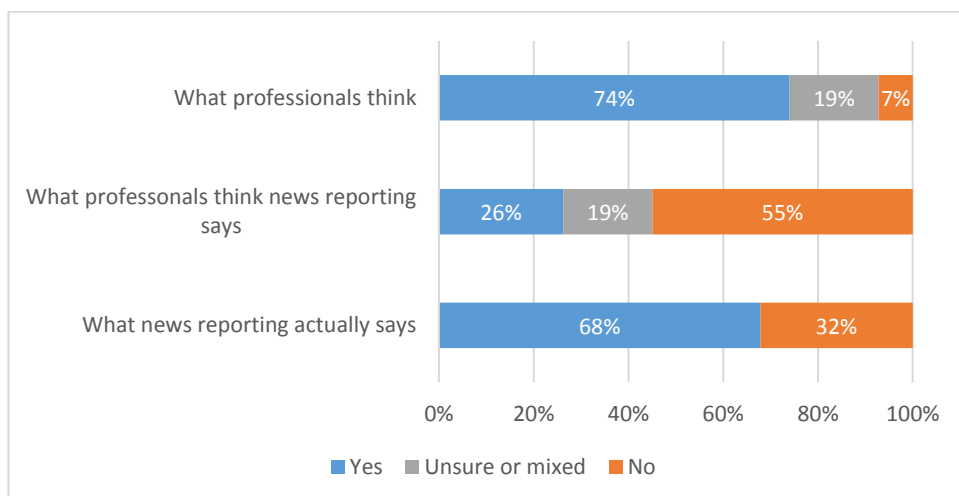
were compared. This section presents some of the survey and content analysis results together in order to highlight the more significant relationships. Only some themes were identified in news reporting in sufficient quantities to enable a meaningful comparison to the findings of the survey.

For most attributes, children’s professionals had reasonably accurate expectations about how child protection social workers would be portrayed in news reporting. They were likely to concur with many depictions, particularly when child protection social workers were shown to be overworked, having a stressful job, not spending enough time with children and their families or spending too much time on paper work and bureaucracy. On some other matters, children’s professionals tended to hold a different view. When this occurred, it is children’s professionals who were more likely to harbour a positive outlook. However, depictions and perceptions of five characteristics of child protection social workers that did not conform to this pattern. These were for competency, concern about the wellbeing of clients, helpfulness, trust and taking the views of children and young people seriously. The results for these traits are presented in more detail.

Concern about the wellbeing of clients

Despite almost three quarters of respondents agreeing that child protection social workers are concerned about the wellbeing of the children and families they work with, just over a quarter thought they were portrayed as such in news reporting. However, more than two thirds of the articles assessed in the content analysis did portray child protection social workers as concerned about the children and families they work with (see figure 14).

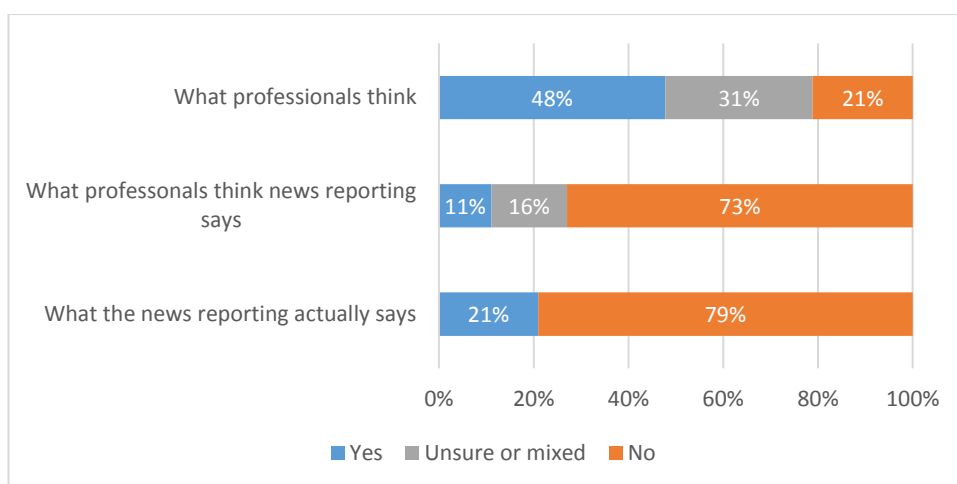
Figure 14 - Are they concerned about the wellbeing of the families they are working with?



Competency

A similar, albeit less pronounced pattern emerges when competency is considered. While almost half of the survey participants agreed that child protection social workers are competent, few agreed that they are portrayed as competent in news reporting. Of those articles in which competency was relevant, only one in five portrayed child protection social workers as competent. In other words, news reporting is far more critical of child protection social workers on this matter than most children's professionals are, and children's professionals largely expected this (see figure 15).

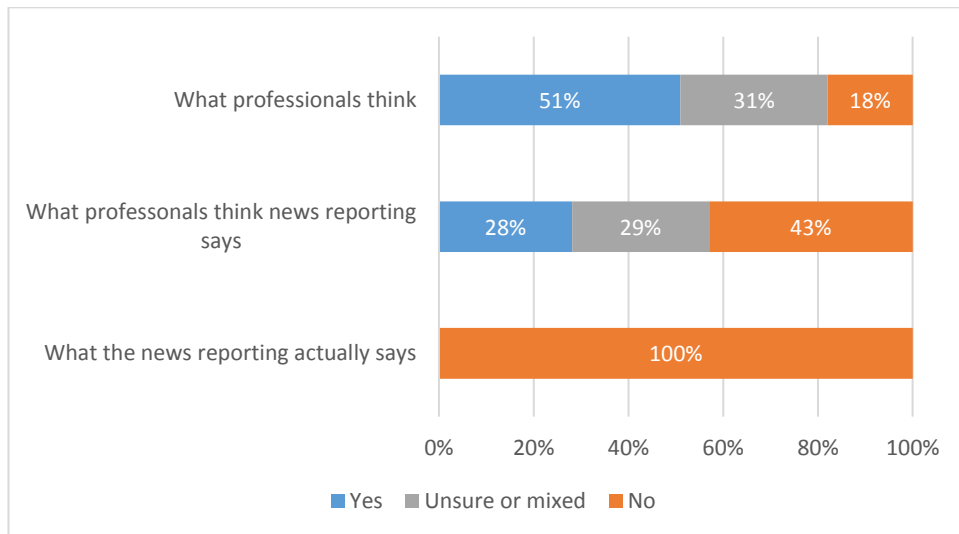
Figure 15 - Are they competent?



Taking the views of children and young people seriously

Just over half of the survey respondents agreed that child protection social workers take the views of children and young people they are working with seriously. Participants had mixed views about whether social workers would be portrayed as doing so in the news, although were more likely than not to have reservations. In fact, news reporting on this issue was found to be completely consistent: no articles that commented on or alluded to this issue portrayed child protection social workers as taking the views of children and young people they are working with seriously (see figure 16).

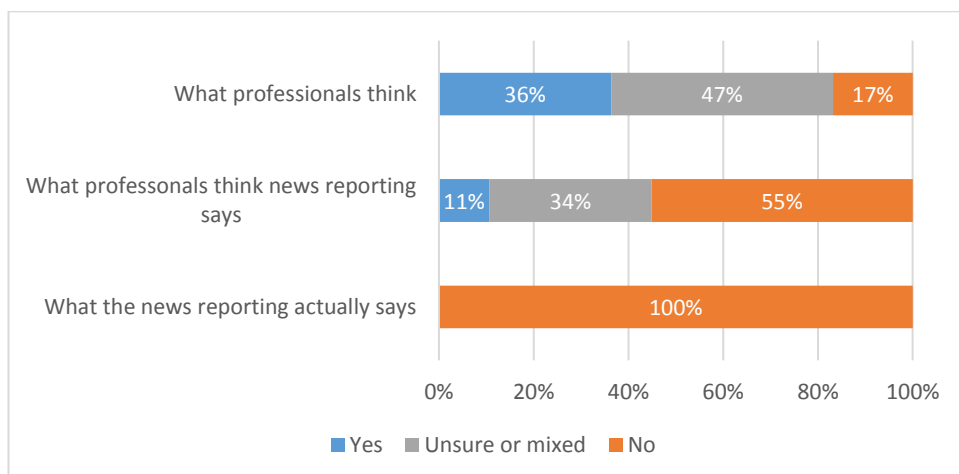
Figure 16 - Do they take the views of children and young people they are working with seriously?



Trust

Another area where children’s professionals’ opinions of child protection social workers tended to differ from dominant media themes is trustworthiness. Children’s professionals had mixed views about whether child protection social workers are trustworthy, but tended to expect child protection social workers to be shown as untrustworthy in news reporting. All four news articles that commented on or alluded to trustworthiness did indeed portray child protection social workers as untrustworthy (see figure 17). However, considering the limited number of articles that referenced trustworthiness, these are indicative findings at best. It is possible that child protection social workers are depicted as even less trustworthy in news reporting than they are perceived to be by children’s professionals.

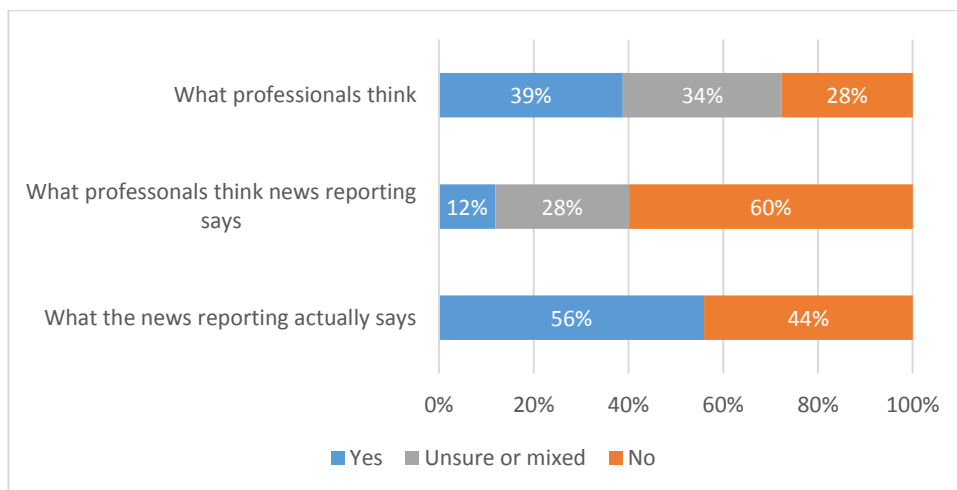
Figure 17 - Are they trustworthy?



Helpfulness

Although only 12% of professionals expected news reporting to portray child protection social workers as helpful, they were in fact found to be depicted as helpful slightly more often than not (see figure 18). This raises the question of whether children’s professionals tend to underestimate the extent to which child protection social workers are shown to be helpful in the news. However, there was no option in the survey that allowed participants to indicate that they believed news coverage about helpfulness was mixed. This may have encouraged some respondents who understood this to choose between agreeing or disagreeing. In saying that, neither agree nor disagree would probably be the most accurate reflection of this view, and would mean 34% of participants correctly anticipated mixed coverage.

Figure 18 - Are they helpful?



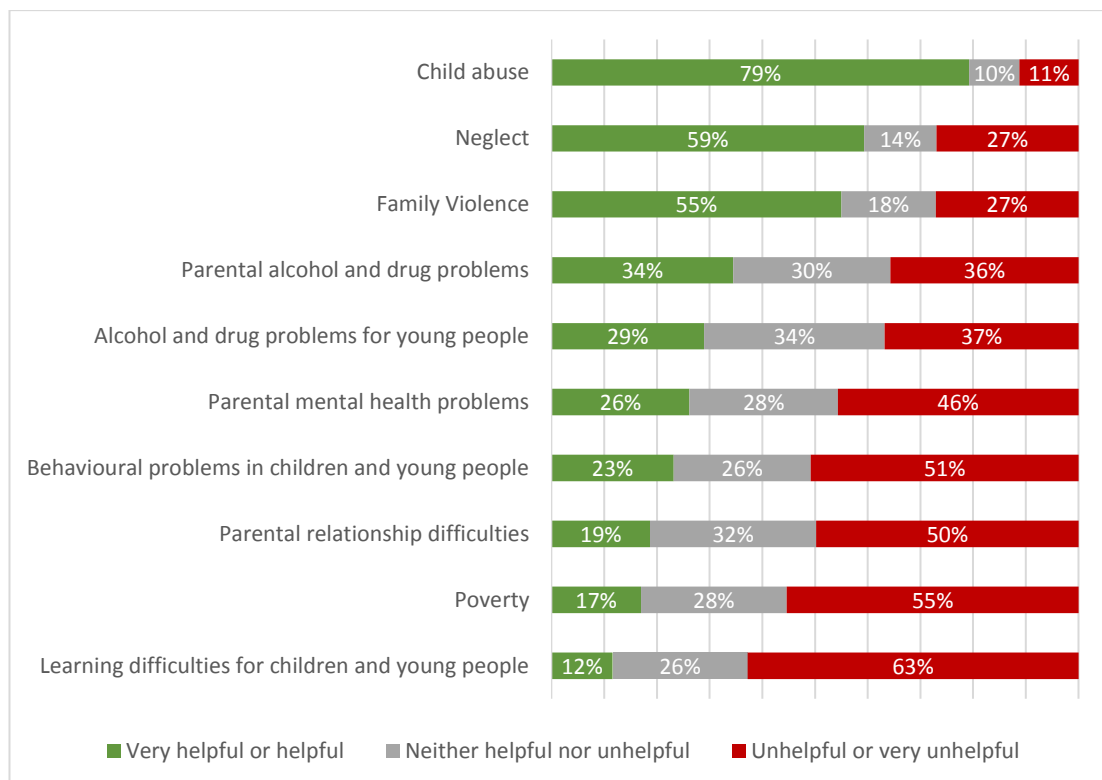
Comparative graphs for all ten attributes for which there was sufficient data to enable a comparison are provided in appendix N.

SURVEY RESULTS – WHAT TYPES OF PROBLEMS DO CHILDREN’S PROFESSIONALS THINK CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS ARE HELPFUL IN RESOLVING?

The survey asked participants to rate how helpful they believed referrals to child protection social workers would be for a range of problems. The results highlight a lack of confidence for most types of problems (see figure 19). In fact, referrals were seen as more helpful than not only for child abuse, neglect, and family violence. 79% of respondents thought a referral for child abuse would be very helpful or helpful, 59% for neglect and 59% for family violence. 11% of professionals believed a referral for child abuse would actually be unhelpful or very unhelpful. For cases of neglect or family violence, 27% believed referrals would be unhelpful.

A greater proportion of respondents believed a referral would be unhelpful than helpful for all other types of problems asked about in the survey. 64% believed a referral would be unhelpful or very unhelpful for children or young people experiencing learning difficulties, 55% for poverty, 51% for behavioural problems in children and young people, 50% for parental relationship difficulties and 46% for parental mental health problems. Responses were more mixed, but still slightly weighted towards unhelpful for alcohol and drug problems experienced by parents or by young people.

Figure 19 - Perceptions of helpfulness of referrals to a child protection social worker for different types of problems¹⁸



CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the data collected from both the online survey, and from the content analysis of two years of news articles relevant to child protection social workers. The results highlight the importance participants accorded to personal and professional experiences, and to academic and professional

¹⁸ Due to the effects of rounding, there are some discrepancies between the percentages shown in figure 14, and the combined percentage values distinguishing moderate and strong responses shown in figure 24 (see appendix M)

publications in influencing their opinions about child protection social workers. News reporting and other people's views were also found to be moderately important.

A number of perceptions that survey participants held about child protection social workers were also found to be prevalent in news reporting. There was alignment in viewing social workers as overworked, having stressful jobs, spending too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy, and spending insufficient time with the children and families they are working with. When the views of most participants differed from dominant media themes, the opinions of participants were for the most part the more favourable.

Generally speaking, reporting about child protection social workers was skewed towards being unfavourable, although not overwhelmingly so. However, areas of specific concern were identified. News reporting widely depicted social workers as incompetent, and often framed them as untrustworthy, spending insufficient time with the families they are working with and spending too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy, although this tended to be in the context of having a difficult and complex job. On the other hand, child protection social workers were likely to be portrayed as hard working and concerned about the wellbeing of families they are working with. The negative tone of news reporting was mostly anticipated by survey participants.

Survey participants were found to have a somewhat positive view of child protection social workers overall, although the results also highlighted specific areas of concern. Perceptions of child protection social workers not doing what they say they are going to do, not spending enough time with children and families they are working with and lacking competence at working with Māori were widespread. While there were mixed views on whether child protection social workers are trustworthy, competent, helpful, intelligent and honest, these results are unlikely to be considered satisfactory by stakeholders. Perhaps most alarmingly, the survey highlighted a striking lack of confidence in the perceived helpfulness of referrals to child protection social workers for a range of problems.

The following chapter discusses the results of the research in more detail and draws out findings. Their implications, relationship to the literature and contribution to answering the research questions are discussed. Particular attention is given to the field of child protection, and to synthesising the research findings with key New Zealand-based studies.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter examines the key findings from the survey and content analysis, and discusses the contributions they make to answering the research questions. Relevant research is drawn upon to inform the discussion, consider the contribution of the research to understanding the image of social workers in New Zealand, and to illustrate how this compares to other jurisdictions. The discussion also considers how accurate children's professionals views about what influences their opinions are likely to be, and what the research findings mean for child protection social workers, social work bodies and for New Zealand's state child protection agency Oranga Tamariki. The chapter is presented in sections that relate to each research question.

WHAT INFLUENCES DO CHILDREN'S PROFESSIONALS THINK ARE IMPORTANT IN FORMING THEIR VIEWS ABOUT CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS?

A key reason this research sought to understand what influences children's professionals' perceptions of child protection social workers was to assess the relative importance of news reporting. In fact, the results suggest it is not one of the most important influences, at least not directly. Instead, it appears the interactions and experiences professionals have with child protection social workers, and academic and professional publications most influence their opinions. Other people's views were also considered influential by many. On the other hand, few professionals identified either social media or fictional portrayals of child protection workers as having much influence.

The validity of participant perceptions about what influences their opinions

The survey asked participants how important they believed a range of influences were in forming their views about child protection social workers. Testing the accuracy of these beliefs was beyond the scope of the research. This poses an important question at the outset of this discussion: to what extent do children's professionals accurately understand what influences their opinions?

Questions about how well people know themselves and how attitudes are formed have been of interest to fields as varied as psychology, sociology, communications, marketing, media studies and political science. The literature indicates that people's self-perceptions are neither reliably insightful nor completely naïve when it comes to understanding themselves and their attitudes (Fishbein & Middlestadt, 1995; Glasman & Albarracín, 2006; Millar & Millar, 1996; Regan & Fazio, 1977; Vazire & Carlson, 2010; Zell & Krizan, 2014). This suggests

participant insights into what has influenced their views of child protection social workers should not be dismissed, but should also be treated with caution.

The literature can also be examined to assess whether the relative importance children's professionals attributed to each source of influence aligns with what one might expect. Studies in the field of psychology suggest that beliefs formed from direct experiences are more dominant in influencing behaviour than those formed through indirect experience (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006; Millar & Millar, 1996; Regan & Fazio, 1977). One would therefore expect personal and professional experience to be rated as important sources of influence in the survey. This is indeed what participants largely reported.

Taking another approach, research into 'source credibility' suggests that the level of trust and expertise recipients of information attribute to its source carries weight, sometimes more than the content itself (Bryant & Oliver, 2009; Metzger, Flanagin, Eyal, Lemus, & McCann, 2003; Wilson & Sherrell, 1993). This seems congruent with the survey's finding that professional and academic publications were perceived to be an important source of influence, and much more so than general news items or social media. The fact that the findings of the survey align to what one would expect does not necessarily mean children's professionals' insight into what influences their opinions is accurate. It does at least mean no red flags were identified. This complements the knowledge that self-reporting can be useful (Fishbein & Middlestadt, 1995; Glasman & Albarracín, 2006; Millar & Millar, 1996; Regan & Fazio, 1977; Vazire & Carlson, 2010; Zell & Krizan, 2014), and suggests that survey participants' perceptions about what influences their opinions are likely to be accurate enough to be useful.

The value in understanding how children's professionals' views are influenced

Why does knowing what factors influence children's professionals' perceptions of child protection social workers matter? Perhaps most importantly, it means that stakeholders who have an interest in what others think of child protection social workers, such as Oranga Tamariki, know where to most usefully direct their attention. The findings of this research suggest it is the behaviours and interactions between social workers and their professional colleagues alongside academic/professional publications that matter most.

The premise that children's professionals' perceptions of child protection social workers are strongly influenced by personal and professional experience is unlikely to surprise stakeholders. However, making sustained improvements to areas children's professionals are most concerned about is unlikely to be straightforward. After all, the most widespread opinions they hold about child

protection social workers appear to be that they are overworked and working in a stressful and complex role. These factors probably have more to do with wider systemic and organisational problems than child protection social workers themselves. Even concerns about a lack of competence, trust and cultural competency are unlikely to be divorced from structural or organisational challenges. Changing perceptions will likely require focusing on behaviours, communication, workforce development and recruitment, alongside organisational issues such as resourcing, mandate and interagency relationships at all levels. At the time of writing this thesis there is a significant restructure of New Zealand's child protection system underway seeking to make some of these changes (EAP, 2016; Office of the Chief Social Worker, 2014; Tolley, 2017). Stakeholders with an interest in social work's image would do well to keep abreast of the progress, and to advocate for and support its success.

Alongside professional and personal experience, children's professionals considered academic and professional publications important in forming their views about child protection social workers. Any strategy seeking to influence the views of children's professionals should consider this finding. Importantly, this is not intended to infer that academic or professional bodies should collude with agencies such as Oranga Tamariki to project false narratives about social workers to suit an agenda. Rather, stakeholders could advocate for these publications to test or draw attention to elements of child protection social work believed to be misunderstood by children's professionals.

Another source of influence cited as moderately important was 'other people's views'. In some respects, this finding is of limited value because the survey did not ask participants who they meant by 'other people'. However, understanding that other people's views matter is useful for at least one reason. It is congruent with findings from communications and marketing research that suggest efforts to persuade people can be hindered or accelerated by influential people (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1966; Southwell & Yzer, 2007; Weimann, 1991). This is a secondary effect which serves to augment the potential influence of mediums such as news or professional publications. Any strategy seeking to improve the image of statutory child protection social workers should be cognisant of who carries influence within the community, and what role they can play in supporting or blocking these efforts.

Surprisingly, despite the fact that use of social media as a professional tool in social work is growing (Reamer, 2013; Stanfield & Beddoe, 2013), it appears that for now at least, it plays only a minor role in shaping professionals' perceptions of child protection social workers in New Zealand. Fictional portrayals appear to be

even less influential again. This is unfortunate. With some exceptions (Freeman & Valentine, 2004), research has found that social workers are depicted largely positively in fictional media such as films and television (Davenport & Davenport, 1997; Henderson & Franklin, 2007; Valentine & Freeman, 2002). With the possible exception of working with teachers, a distinction highlighted later in this chapter, neither social media nor fictional portrayals of social workers should be priorities in any efforts seeking to change the image of child protection social workers.

The survey results indicated that news reporting is only moderately important in influencing how children's professionals view child protection social workers. In some respects, this was expected. Studies have shown news reporting to be particularly ineffective in changing people's opinions for 'obtrusive' issues: issues in which they have personal experience (Bryant & Oliver, 2009; McCombs, 2013; Winter, Eyal, & Rogers, 1982). For professionals in the children's workforce who have worked with child protection social workers, their attitude towards them is an obtrusive issue. However, while this dynamic works to limit the influence news reporting has for some children's professionals, there are a range of other secondary effects that can augment, and in some cases diminish, the persuasive impact of mass media.

News media is widely accepted as effective at 'agenda setting': influencing at least the topics or issues which people talk about (Bryant & Oliver, 2009; McCombs, 2013; McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 1993; Winter et al., 1982). This can be compounded by the impact of framing: the packaging and presentation of a story, the manner of which can shape how it is perceived (Altheide, 1997; Perse & Lambe, 2016; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). For example, illicit drug use could be framed as a public health or criminal justice issue (Altheide, 1997). Further, news narratives can be amplified or moderated by particularly influential people known as 'opinion leaders' (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1966; Southwell & Yzer, 2007; Watts & Dodds, 2007) or by a critical mass of more easily influenced individuals (Watts & Dodds, 2007). Together, these factors work to increase the potential influence and reach of news reporting. Children's professionals may be more influenced by news reporting than they realise, even if much of this is indirect.

These findings suggest that news reporting should not be the primary focus for stakeholders interested in how statutory child protection social workers are understood and perceived by their professional colleagues. However, it still carries weight and if secondary factors are considered, may even be important. However, its relevance is almost certainly supplementary to the personal and professional experiences of children's professionals alongside the messages conveyed in academic and professional literature.

Distinctions in sources of influence by professions

An unanticipated finding of the survey was the variation amongst teachers, non-CYF social workers and paediatricians¹⁹ in what sources they identified as important in forming their views about child protection social workers²⁰ (see figure 6 on page 47). While professionals from each discipline tended to agree on the relative importance of professional experience, academic/professional publications and other people's views, paediatricians were a little less likely to consider personal experience important, and there were sizable discrepancies between the professional groups in the perceived influence of news reporting, social media and fictional portrayals of social workers. Teachers appear most influenced by these sources, social workers less so and paediatricians less so again.

These are useful patterns to understand because they inform where one might devote attention and resources in any effort to influence or educate professionals about statutory child protection social workers. Personal and professional experience, alongside academic publications and other people's views, are important to all professional groups and it would pay to consider these irrespective of who the target audience is. If the focus was only teachers, news portrayals become quite relevant and it could even be worthwhile using social media and fictional mediums. On the other hand, if one were trying to influence or educate paediatricians, fictional portrayals and social media are all but irrelevant and should probably be ignored.

HOW DO CHILDREN'S PROFESSIONALS THINK CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS ARE DEPICTED IN NEWS REPORTING?

Seeking to understand how different professional groups believe child protection social workers are portrayed in the media is a reasonably specific research question. Perhaps not surprisingly, no research appears to have been published to date that has sought to do so, even if the subject matter is broadened to include social workers generally. In the absence of relevant studies with which to compare these findings, the discussion of this research question is brief. It considers the perceptions of professionals against the actual themes identified in the content analysis, concluding that children's professionals understanding of news portrayals

¹⁹ While early childhood teachers, psychologists, nurses and doctors with other specialisations also participated in the survey, they made up only between three and eight percent of respondents. The numbers were not considered sufficient to include in the comparisons.

²⁰ The comparative findings are shown in figure 6 on page 47 of the results chapter

of child protection social workers is reasonably accurate. Where there are exceptions, these are noted.

The findings of the survey suggest that children's professionals in New Zealand tend to believe news coverage about statutory child protection social workers is dominated by the challenges of the role, and generally depicts child protection social workers unfavourably. Portrayals of incompetence are believed to be particularly widespread (see figure 7 on page 49). At the risk of oversimplifying, their view of the primary media narrative could be summed up colloquially as: 'Those CYF social workers have stuffed up again, but boy they have a really tough job'.

It turns out this view is not too far from the truth, at least if one accepts the findings of the content analysis completed for this research. News coverage about child protection social workers does tend to frame them as incompetent, having a complex and stressful job, being overworked, as untrustworthy, as spending insufficient time with the children and families they are working with and as spending too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy. However, there were two areas where children's professionals' expectations of how child protection social workers are portrayed in the media tended to be wrong. Children's professionals were inclined to underestimate the extent to which child protection social workers are portrayed as not taking the views of their clients seriously, and most did not expect news reporting to usually show social workers as caring about the wellbeing of their clients.

These findings suggest that, for the most part, children's professionals have a reasonably sound understanding of how child protection social workers are portrayed in news reporting. Children's professionals appear to correctly understand that news reporting about child protection social workers is somewhat unfavourable, and that when relevant, articles are likely to recognise the complexities and challenges of the role.

HOW ARE CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS DEPICTED IN NEWS REPORTING?

The findings of the content analysis indicate that in the two years to 10 October 2016, the most widespread portrayals of child protection social workers in New Zealand news reporting were incompetence and having a complex job, followed by being overworked, spending insufficient time with children and their families, being concerned about the wellbeing of families they are working with, having a stressful job, being hard working and spending too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy. Notably, there was no media interest in the cultural competency of child protection social workers. This is despite the fact that this issue has been

highlighted in several New Zealand Government reviews and reports (EAP, 2015, 2016; Maharey & Brown, 2000; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2015, 2016). The findings of this research also indicate that many children's professionals have reservations about the competency of child protection social workers to work with Māori. This is a particularly troubling finding when one considers the disproportionately high number of Māori children and young people child protection social workers work with (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2015, 2016).

Consistency of news media narratives

The findings of the content analysis indicate that for most issues, there is a dominant media narrative. Polarisation in news reporting was identified for only two characteristics: for portrayals of child protection social workers as helpful or unhelpful, and for depictions of them as protective or abusive. Unfortunately, the data produced for this research is mostly unhelpful in explaining why competing depictions of child protection social workers were found to be relatively rare in news reporting. However, ownership over the production of news may play a role. The NewzText database shows that the New Zealand news landscape is dominated by two consortiums: Fairfax and New Zealand Media and Entertainment (NZME). On occasion, both publish nearly identical news articles in several of the newspapers they own. It is also possible consistent narratives aligned to their respective agendas are encouraged.

Favourability of portrayals in news reporting

News reporting was found to, more often than not, depict child protection social workers unfavourably. This finding is congruent with much of the literature and therefore not unexpected (Aldridge, 1990; Franklin, 1998; Lombard, 2009; Staniforth & Beddoe, 2017; Warner, 2013). However, it was surprising to find that, aside from some specific areas of real concern, child protection social workers were not portrayed particularly unfavourably overall. Some of the most widely reported on issues were workload pressures, complexity, a stressful working environment and bureaucratic overhead. Further, articles frequently depicted child protection social workers as hard working and caring about their clients despite these challenges. These findings suggest that journalists often recognise the complexities and systemic difficulties facing child protection social workers, and many may be sympathetic to their predicament.

Considering the hostile treatment social workers often receive in news reporting internationally (Aldridge, 1990; Franklin, 1998; Lombard, 2009; Warner, 2013), the fact that portrayals in New Zealand do not appear to be overly negative should be received as good news by child protection social workers, their employers and

representative professional bodies alike. However, news reporting was still found to be unfavourable overall, particularly in some specific areas. Most strikingly, child protection social workers were mostly portrayed as incompetent. Of those articles for which competence was relevant, four out of five suggested that child protection social workers made mistakes, were ill-equipped for the role or otherwise did not do their job properly. Although the trustworthiness of social workers was not often referenced in news reporting, when it was referenced it was always to show child protection social workers as untrustworthy. Child protection social workers were marginally more likely to be portrayed as helpful than not, and slightly more likely to be depicted as protective than abusive. However, given that child protection social workers are in the business of helping people and protecting children, polarised reporting on these issues is far from satisfactory.

It is equally interesting to consider the significance of absent media narratives about child protection social workers. Remarkably, the content analysis identified a complete lack of media interest in how competent child protection social workers are at working with Māori whānau. This is significant because concerns about cultural capability have been repeatedly raised in reviews or reports about New Zealand's child protection system (EAP, 2015, 2016; Maharey & Brown, 2000; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2015, 2016). One possible reason for this is bias in the news media. At least in terms of child abuse, disproportionate coverage of Māori families has been identified in news reporting (Merchant, 2010). Merchant (2010) also found that ethnicity was not normally reported on unless the victim/s or perpetrator/s of child abuse were Pacific or Māori (Merchant, 2010). Merchant's findings are indicative of prejudice that works to frame child abuse as a Māori problem. This may help explain why there has been a lack of media interest in looking at other possible contributing factors, such as a lack of state competency at working with Māori. While exploring this possible bias further was beyond the scope of this research, it could be an interesting future research project.

Positioning the findings in relation to New Zealand-based research and literature

This research builds on a limited but growing body of academic and Government publications that have examined or commented on media coverage of social workers in New Zealand (Maharey & Brown, 2000; Stanfield & Beddoe, 2013; Staniforth & Beddoe, 2017; Staniforth et al., 2016; Van Heugten, 2011). All have drawn attention to negative portrayals of social workers in New Zealand, and coverage has been compared to the hostile media environment in the UK (Stanfield & Beddoe, 2013), linked to burnout (Maharey & Brown, 2000) and associated with public and political criticism (Van Heughten, 2011 as cited in Stanfield and Beddoe, 2013). It has been noted that the social work role becomes more visible in news items when the article is critical of state child protection agency actions (Staniforth & Beddoe, 2017). Finally, Staniforth et al. (2016) have drawn attention to widespread perceptions amongst social workers that the profession is portrayed badly in the press. This research has sought to build on this work by looking at how child protection social workers are portrayed in news reporting, not just in terms of favourability, but across a range of attributes and behaviours.

There are important distinctions between the methodology of this research and existing literature related to the New Zealand environment. With the exception of the content analysis completed by Staniforth and Beddoe (2017), the literature commenting on media portrayals of social workers in New Zealand draws on secondary sources. Further, only Maharey and Brown (2000) and Staniforth and Beddoe (2017) have focused, in part at least, on statutory child protection social workers rather than social workers generally. The recent publication by Staniforth and Beddoe (2017) is perhaps the closest to this research in terms of methodology. It is the only other New Zealand-based content analysis identified that focuses on portrayals of child protection social workers. However, Staniforth and Beddoe (2017) adopted a qualitative thematic approach rather than the mixed methodology used in this research.

Despite differences in methodology, some interesting insights can be drawn from comparing the findings of this research with the content analysis undertaken by Staniforth and Beddoe (2017). Both studies indicate that child protection social workers are portrayed more negatively than not in the New Zealand media. Staniforth and Beddoe (2017) identified favourable accounts but these were not quantified. This research did so and found that news reporting was only marginally negative. 39% of articles were found to contain negative portrayals of child protection workers while 34% included favourable depictions. If indeed news

coverage about child protection social workers is only moderately negative, the widely held belief amongst social workers in New Zealand that the profession is 'not very well presented' or 'presented very badly' in the media (Staniforth et al. 2016, p. 20) may be misconstrued. Considering this research found portrayals of incompetence to be prevalent, to say that the profession is 'not very well presented' is not necessarily wrong. However, the findings of this research do not support the premise that it is 'presented very badly'.

Both studies identified examples of news stories pointing out some of the organisational difficulties child protection social workers deal with. For example, Staniforth and Beddoe (2017) recount commentary in news articles that highlighted a lack of placements for children and young people, or described caregivers being assaulted and placements breaking down. However, these did not seem to be dominant themes. Conversely, the current research found accounts of the vocational challenges facing child protection social workers widespread. Narratives of social workers having complex jobs and being overworked were trumped only by showing social workers as incompetent. This is an interesting distinction. It could simply be a consequence of the different methodologies employed. However, it also raises questions. Has the tone of reporting changed in the approximately 3 years between the periods covered, or do the two newspapers assessed by Staniforth and Beddoe (2017) contain somewhat different narratives than the wider range of news sources analysed for this research?

A key insight reported by Staniforth and Beddoe (2017) was the finding that news portrayals of CYF social workers were largely clustered around two general activities: receiving and managing intakes and information, and removing children and managing placements. The current research did not analyse the roles or activities that social workers were shown to undertake in the dataset of news articles, although doing so would make for an interesting future research project. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to assume the findings of Staniforth and Beddoe (2017) would apply. If so, it means media portrayals of child protection social workers identified in this research represent, for the most part, social workers in the context of these particular roles.

[How does news reporting about child protection social workers in New Zealand compare to other countries?](#)

Unfortunately, true like for like comparisons between the content analysis undertaken as part of this master's thesis and international research are rare. While a number of scholars interested in media portrayals of social work have distinguished the field of child protection from other social work roles (Aldridge,

1990; Ayre, 2001; Cooper, 2005; Douglas, 2009; Goddard & Liddell, 1995; Mendes, 2000; Valentine & Freeman, 2002; Warner, 2013), they have for the most part done so using alternative methods. Indeed, Cooper (2005) has published the only content analysis of news items specifically focusing on child protection social workers. Despite these limitations, comparing findings can still give a number of insights.

Firstly, it seems that New Zealand child protection social workers have a less negative image in the press than their counterparts in the UK (Ayre, 2001; Franklin, 1998; Goddard & Liddell, 1995; Lombard, 2009) or Ireland (Gaughan & Garrett, 2012). Until very recently, the same could have been said in a comparison with Australian news reports (Mendes, 2000; Riggs et al., 2009). However, a recent publication by Cordoba (2017) suggests the Australian news media is not particularly hostile to social workers after all. Coverage of social workers in New Zealand still appears to lag behind the United States in terms of net favourability (Davenport & Davenport, 1997; Reid & Misener, 2001).

Although this research did not test possible reasons behind the different treatment of statutory child protection social workers in different countries, some explanations are offered in the literature. Reid and Misener (2001) suggest that the higher average qualifications and greater proportion of social workers employed in private enterprise in the United States may contribute to a more favourable image in news reporting compared to the UK. They note that the media landscape in the United States means, unlike the UK, scandals are likely to be reported locally rather than nationally, thus reducing the extent of negative coverage. Interestingly, the findings of this research complicate this explanation. New Zealand's environment is closer to the UK than the United States in terms of social work qualifications, ratio of public to private practice and media landscape. Despite this, the findings of this research suggest the tone of reporting about child protection social workers in New Zealand more closely parallels the United States (Reid & Misener, 2001) than the hostile coverage so prevalent in the UK (Ayre, 2001; Franklin, 1998; Goddard & Liddell, 1995; Lombard, 2009).

Reid and Misener (2001) also speculate that the characteristics of social work professional organisations could help explain why social workers are portrayed differently in different countries. This seems a reasonable assumption. A better organised, resourced and active professional body should be more capable of engaging strategically with the media. Social workers are less unionised in the UK, at approximately 15% (BASW, 2013; Statista, 2017) compared to 22% in the United States (NASW, 2017), which seems to support Reid and Misener's (2001) conjecture. However, unionisation in New Zealand is higher still at 33% (ANZASW,

2017; Vance, 2016) and news coverage of social workers in the United States (Reid & Misener, 2001) seems to be more favourable than this research found to be the case in New Zealand. Further, a quick glance at the publications and activities of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in America (NASW, 2017), British Association of Social Workers (BASW, 2017) and ANZASW (ANZASW, 2017) suggests they are all quite active.

Despite this research posing challenges to some of Reid and Misener's (2001) proposed explanations, it is likely differences in the organisation of social work bodies, private and public mix of service delivery, social work qualifications and distinctive media landscapes are relevant to understanding how social workers are treated in the news in different countries. The findings of this research simply indicate that they are contributing factors at most. There must also be other phenomena at play. Although this research did not set out to find out what they are, some possibilities have been considered.

Statutory child protection social work practice, policies, training and resourcing differ across jurisdictions. It is possible that the favourability or otherwise of news coverage in part reflects these differences. In other words, statutory child protection social workers may be depicted differently in each jurisdiction because it is accurate to do so. Yet, scholars have repeatedly identified sensationalism, inaccuracy and scapegoating in some news reporting (Aldridge, 1990; Ayre, 2001; Mawby et al., 1979; Nava, 1988; Warner, 2013). Negative reporting about child protection social workers is clearly not always valid. Therefore, this explanation cannot fully account for the distinctions in reporting that have been observed.

Another possibility is that gender and misogyny play a role. Women are considerably over-represented in child protection work in New Zealand (SWRB, 2017) and elsewhere (Staniforth et al., 2014; Van Benyen, 2016). Perhaps some hostile reporting panders to attitudes antagonistic to women wielding statutory power? These attitudes may differ according to country and state, partially explaining why statutory social workers are portrayed differently. Finally, several contributors have drawn attention to the influence moral and political agendas have in shaping the content of reporting about social workers (Davenport & Davenport, 1997; Mendes, 2000; Warner, 2013). Although this explanation has not been tested in New Zealand, it seems likely that the values and ideological positions of newspapers and reporters would influence the tone of reporting.

It is almost certainly the case that a range of factors work together to account for discrepancies in how child protection social workers are depicted in news reporting in different jurisdictions. Some possible explanations are found in the literature

(Reid & Misener, 2001), and this thesis has speculated further. However, testing these proposed explanations was beyond the scope of this thesis and the data generated by this research does not provide much insight into these complex dynamics. They may be useful topics to explore in future research.

How do depictions in news reporting compare to the views of children's professionals?

The results of this research suggest that children's professionals have a reasonably good understanding of how child protection social workers are depicted in the news, and often agree with the portrayals. Generally speaking, when opinions diverge it is children's professionals who hold a more favourable view. There are exceptions to this pattern. Children's professionals appear to underestimate how widely child protection social workers are portrayed as concerned for the wellbeing of their clients. On the other hand, few children's professionals anticipated just how extensive portrayals of incompetent child protection social workers seemingly dismissive of the views of their clients would be. Hence, while there appears to be a general relationship between children's professionals' perceptions of child protection social workers, their perceptions of how they are depicted in news reporting, and actual portrayals identified in news reporting, it does not always hold true.

HOW DO CHILDREN'S PROFESSIONALS PERCEIVE CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS?

If you were to ask a professional in the children's workforce what they think about child protection social workers in New Zealand, chances are they would say they have stressful jobs, are overworked, are not usually competent at working with Māori and spend too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy. They would probably think child protection social workers care about their clients despite spending insufficient time with them and not following up on their commitments. They may also have doubts about how much they can trust child protection workers, and a sizable minority would question the competence of the workforce. At least, this is the impression they would be likely to give if the findings of the current research can be generalised to the wider population of children's professionals. This section considers how this picture, and the more detailed findings of the current research, contributes to the growing understanding of social work's image in New Zealand.

Contributions to understanding how social workers are perceived in New Zealand

There is a small body of New Zealand-based literature that has built an understanding of public attitudes towards social workers (Staniforth et al., 2014), explored how social workers see themselves (Hobbs and Evans, 2017; SWRB, 2011, as cited in Hobbs and Evans, 2017) and how social workers believe they are perceived by the public (Staniforth et al., 2016). This research has sought to further develop this picture by illustrating how children's professionals' see social workers working in the field of statutory child protection. By most accounts, this field receives the most negative publicity and stigma (Aldridge, 1990; Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Reid & Misener, 2001).

Together, the literature paints a picture of an environment in which the role of social work is understood and reasonably well regarded by the public. New Zealanders are inclined to see social work as stressful and underpaid, and there is a particularly strong association with a social worker being a 'helper' (Staniforth et al., 2014). On the other hand, social workers are often distrusted (Staniforth et al., 2014), and a 2007 survey completed by the Social Work Registration Board raised questions about the level of confidence people have in social workers. Social workers widely believe the profession is stigmatised (Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Staniforth et al., 2016), and tend to believe that they have a negative public image (Staniforth et al., 2016) despite research suggesting this is not the case (Staniforth et al., 2014). The results of this research build on, support and in some cases raise questions about this picture.

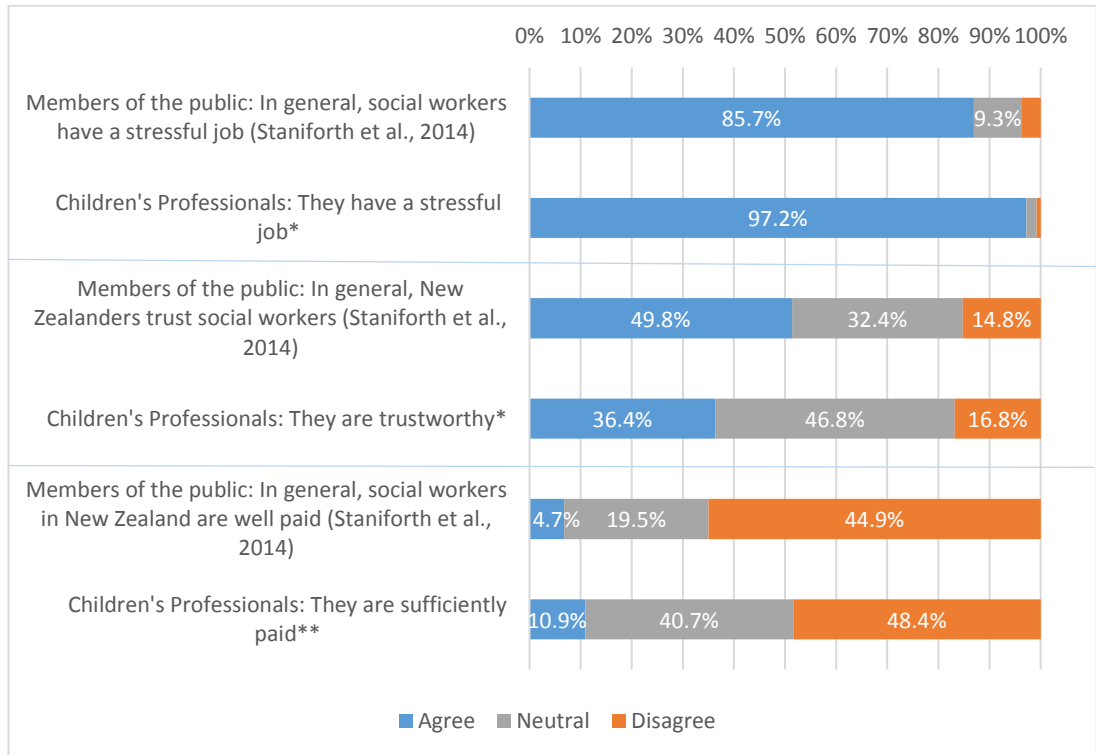
Comparing professional and public perceptions of social workers

One contribution this research can make to the literature is to enable a comparison of the views children's professionals and members of the public hold about social workers, as previously examined by Staniforth et al. (2014). While a useful exercise, there are methodological differences between this research and the survey undertaken by Staniforth et al. (2014). Further, findings for child protection social workers cannot necessarily be applied to social workers generally. Insights from the comparison therefore need to be treated with caution.

Fortunately, there are a few questions in both surveys which were very similar in both method and content. For these, a comparison is both easier and more meaningful. Specifically, Staniforth et al. (2014) asked members of the public to what extent they agreed with statements that 'generally' social workers in New Zealand have stressful jobs, are trusted by New Zealanders, are well paid and are hard working. With the exception of the question about how hard working social workers are perceived to be, children's professionals were asked almost identical

questions in the survey completed for this research. As illustrated in figure 20, a comparison of the results indicates that members of the public and children’s professionals have a strikingly similar range of views for questions of job related stress, trust and remuneration.

Figure 20 - The views of members of the public and children's professionals in New Zealand compared



* The survey completed for this research asked: "To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements as they apply to CYF child protection social workers generally?"

* The statement used in the survey was "They are underpaid". For the purpose of comparison, this has been inversed and labelled "They are sufficiently paid" in this chart.

In looking at these comparisons, one might be tempted to assume that there is no meaningful difference in how child protection social workers are seen by children’s professionals, and what members of the public think of social workers generally. However, further comparative analysis hints at distinctions in how each group views social workers. In another section of their survey that invited open ended responses, Staniforth et al. (2014) found that the most widespread (45%) category of responses that came to mind when members of the public heard 'social worker' were those they categorised as 'helper'. However, the statements that children’s professionals most strongly agreed with in the survey for the current research had nothing to do with helping. Instead, they were that child protection social workers have a stressful job, are overworked, and care about the wellbeing

of the families they are working with. It may be the case that the strongest conceptions children's professionals and members of the public have of social workers and child protection social workers differ.

The favourability of perceptions of social workers in New Zealand

The results of the survey indicate that like public perceptions of social workers (Staniforth et al., 2014), negative characteristics do not dominate children's professionals' views. Instead, the traits that children's professionals seem to most widely agree about are positive or relate to the challenges of the role. This is not to suggest that the survey results highlighted no concerns. They clearly did and these are discussed further in this chapter. However, even mixed responses were largely skewed towards the positive. The findings of this research alongside Staniforth et al. (2014) indicate that in New Zealand, people have a favourable impression of social workers overall, even for those working in the field of child protection.

The premise that children's professionals' opinions of child protection social workers in New Zealand tend to be somewhat favourable has implications. For a start, it shows that the contention of both Staniforth et al. (2016) and Hobbs and Evans (2017) that social workers in New Zealand think they are perceived more negatively than they actually are seems to hold true for statutory child protection social workers also, at least with respect to the opinions of professionals. Akin to recent UK-based findings (McCulloch et al., 2017; Smith, 2014a), the perceived stigma of social work in New Zealand may not be the problem that many social workers perceive it to be.

A further implication is to add weight to the premise that positive perceptions towards social workers are correlated to a greater understanding of social work generally. This link has been identified outside of New Zealand (Dennison et al., 2007; Kaufman & Raymond, 1996), and the findings of relevant research in New Zealand have been congruent with the premise to date (Staniforth et al., 2014). While this research did not set out to explore how well children's professionals understand social work, the results, in so widely acknowledging the challenges of the role, are indicative of a workforce that does.

Perceptions of child protection social workers that may concern stakeholders

Although the findings of this research suggest child protection social workers are generally viewed favourably by their professional colleagues, they also add weight to some previously identified concerns about specific traits. Namely, a lack of trust (Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Staniforth et al., 2014) and confidence in the profession (SWRB, 2011, as cited in Hobbs and Evans, 2017). Potential issues with trust were first tested by Staniforth et al. (2014) who found that almost half of the people they spoke to believed New Zealanders do not trust social workers. This research suggests distrust of child protection social workers is even more prevalent amongst children's professionals. Only a third (36%) of those who participated in the survey agreed that child protection social workers were trustworthy.

Some results of this research indicate a lack of confidence in the profession. Less than half of children's professionals who took part in the survey agreed that child protection workers are competent,²¹ while a quarter went as far as disagreeing. As discussed already, lacking competency was the most widespread depiction of child protection social workers identified in newspaper articles. Such a dominant media narrative coupled with such sizable apprehension amongst children's professionals hardly instils confidence. Unfortunately, the data produced for this research does not help determine the extent to which child protection social work competency is a real issue, a perception problem, or entangled with wider systemic and organisational issues. However, a lack of consistent workforce capability has been identified in Government reports (EAP, 2016) and it would be unwise to dismiss this concern as an image problem alone.

Many other perceptions children's professionals appear to harbour about child protection social workers have likewise been previously identified in reports about New Zealand's child protection system (EAP, 2015, 2016; Maharey & Brown, 2000; Office of the Chief Social Worker, 2014; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2015, 2016). This includes the perception that child protection social workers spend insufficient time with children and their families, spend too much time on paper work and bureaucracy, do not do what they say they are going to do and lack the competence required to work effectively with Māori. None of these findings were therefore a surprise and the primary contribution of this

²¹ Children's professionals were more likely than not to believe child protection social workers are competent when neutral responses are accounted for. However, it remains the case that only (48%) of participants agreed that that they were.

research for these issues is simply to confirm that they are recognised by children's professionals.

Although not tested in the current research, it is unlikely children's professionals perceive social workers themselves as the primary embodiment of all of these problems. Responses about child protection social workers having a stressful and complex job, being overworked and spending too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy probably have more to do with the environment in which social workers operate, rather than social workers themselves. International research has highlighted the negative consequences of poor policies, legislation and organisational issues on the ability of social workers to work successfully (Ayre, 2001; Cooper, 2005; Goddard & Liddell, 1995; Mendes, 2000). The fact that children's professionals so widely agree that child protection social workers have a complex, stressful job hampered by bureaucracy supports this premise. Accordingly, addressing some negative perceptions about child protection social workers is probably contingent on resolving problems in the environment they work in.

The finding that children's professionals, particularly those who identify with Māori ethnicity, largely do not agree that child protection social workers are competent at working with Māori is probably not separate from organisational issues either. However, it does seem to be less well explained by resourcing problems, administrative overhead or vocational stress. The New Zealand Government and New Zealand's state child protection agencies have acknowledged the problem and have taken steps seeking to improve cultural competence in the child protection workforce (EAP, 2016; Tolley, 2016a, 2017). These include introducing *Whakamana te maiti – Practice empowering Tamariki Māori* to the practice framework that guides Oranga Tamariki social workers, the establishment of Māori advisor roles, changes to legislation that require Oranga Tamariki to operate in accordance with Māori principles, and mandating the organisation to adopt policies and practices to reduce disparities in outcomes for Māori children (Oranga Tamariki Act, 1989). It is not yet known whether these initiatives will eventually instil confidence in the cultural competence of child protection social workers or, more importantly, achieve better outcomes for Māori children and young people. Unfortunately, there is good reason to be cautious. Despite acknowledging the significant efforts CYF were making to improve outcomes for Māori, the Office of the Children's Commission 2015 State of Care report found that "cultural capability is not being prioritised in the daily practice of most sites and residences" (p. 26).

WHAT TYPES OF PROBLEMS DO CHILDREN'S PROFESSIONALS THINK CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL WORKERS ARE HELPFUL IN RESOLVING?

Perhaps the most troubling finding of this research is the lack of confidence children's professionals appear to have in the helpfulness of referrals to child protection social workers for most types of problems. Indeed, it is only for child abuse, neglect and family violence that referrals are believed to be more helpful than not, and only marginally so for neglect and family violence. Survey respondents had mixed views about the helpfulness of referrals for parental alcohol and drug problems, alcohol and drug problems for young people and parental mental health problems. More than half believed a referral would be unhelpful for behavioural problems in children and young people, parental relationship difficulties, poverty, and learning difficulties for children and young people. Even if 'neither agree nor disagree' responses are excluded so that only those who actively disagreed are counted, the results are not particularly reassuring. They suggest a greater distrust in the helping potential of child protection social work referrals that has been found in comparable research outside of New Zealand (LeCroy & Stinson, 2004).

These findings should be of great concern to child protection social workers and Oranga Tamariki. After all, protecting children and young people from the harm of child abuse, neglect, and to some extent family violence are core reasons why statutory child protection services exist (Oranga Tamariki Act 1987). Likewise, problems such as family violence, mental illness, poverty and substance misuse are well-established risk factors for child maltreatment and commonly co-occur (Dong et al., 2004; Edleson, 2001; Edwards, Holden, Felitti, & Anda, 2003; Freisthler, Merritt, & LaScala, 2006; Gilbert et al., 2012; Hartley, 2002). This leads to the obvious question of why, and what can be done about it?

Several factors may underpin the apparent lack of confidence in the helpfulness of child protection social workers for these types of problems. Perhaps the most important of these is the likelihood that some participants believed a referral to a child protection social worker would be unhelpful for reasons that were more systemic or structural rather than related to social workers themselves. This thesis has already noted several recent reviews that identified fundamental problems with statutory child protection services in New Zealand, including a lack of role clarity, inadequate resourcing, workforce capability and capacity, bureaucratic overhead, lack of cultural capability and not being child-centred (EAP, 2015, 2016; Office of the Chief Social Worker, 2014; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2015, 2016). It has also been noted that a program of reform seeking to rectify

these problems is underway (Tolley, 2017). Unfortunately, the extent to which the reforms will successfully address these problems is not yet known.

In the short term at least, some problems may even have been exacerbated. For example, in January 2018, Radio New Zealand quoted a spokesperson from Oranga Tamariki reporting that 200 new social workers had been recruited since Oranga Tamariki was formally established nine months prior, bringing the total to 1200 (Tupou, 2018). However, Ministry of Social Development documentation (Ministry of Social Development, 2016b) states that as of 29 February 2016, Child, Youth and Family employed 1402 social workers. While Oranga Tamariki is still trying to recruit (Tupou, 2018), it seems the organisation has a long way to go to break even with pre-restructure staffing levels. It is not clear whether the intent is to ultimately exceed these levels or not.

Interestingly, while the current research indicates that children's professionals are reasonably aware of the organisational and environmental difficulties social workers face, their perceptions of child protection social workers themselves were still found to be somewhat favourable. This suggests concerns about New Zealand's wider child protection system at least exacerbate the lack of confidence children's professionals have in referrals to statutory child protection social workers, and may even play a significant role.

Another possibility is that some survey participants had made referrals to child protection social workers previously and been dissatisfied with the response. Reports have found that less than one fifth of care and protection referrals to CYF are assessed as requiring further action (EAP, 2015). This can be for a range of reasons such as a lack of clarity over the role of CYF (Office of the Chief Social Worker, 2014), the need to prioritise limited resources or even simply responding to changes in circumstances. It seems reasonable to assume that when professionals make referrals to state child protection services, they rightly or wrongly have an expectation the agency will take action. It would not be surprising if some lose confidence when this does not happen. In other words, a lack of confidence in the potential helpfulness of referrals to child protection social workers may partially reflect expectations that they will simply not be acted upon.

There could also be a lack of awareness about the roles and responsibilities of statutory child protection social work. Some survey participants may have indicated a referral would not be helpful because they thought the nature of the problem was outside the mandate of statutory child protection social workers. However, Staniforth et al. (2014) have previously found that the New Zealand public are reasonably well acquainted with what child protection social workers

do. It seems likely that children's professionals would have a better understanding still. If lack of clarity played a role it was probably minor.

If these factors account in part for the widespread feeling amongst children's professionals that referrals to child protection social workers for many problems are unhelpful, what can be done about it? The policy decisions that define the role of statutory child protection services clearly matter. However, these are wider system questions subject to the ongoing reforms of statutory child protection services in New Zealand (EAP, 2015, 2016). Irrespective of the functions state child protection services are ultimately responsible for, they need to be well understood, lest referrers continue to be disappointed when reports of concern they make are closed on the basis of falling outside of the agency mandate. Historically at least, there has been a lack of clarity about the role of statutory child protection services in New Zealand (Office of the Chief Social Worker, 2014). Helping children's professionals better understand the role and functions of statutory child protection social work may lift their confidence in making referrals aligned to the agencies mandate.

On a related note, it is well recognised that multiple agencies and organisations have roles to play in promoting child wellbeing (EAP, 2015, 2016). Just because a referral does not fall within the mandate of state child protection does not mean the referred family is not in need of help. It may be that other agencies or community groups are best placed to assist. Therefore, it would be helpful to maintain systems and relationships that ensure such help is offered to those who need it, even if a child protection intake is closed. Such systems do exist today. However, despite this, reviews continue to identify a lack of effective partnership and collaboration in the wider system (EAP, 2015) and there are almost certainly opportunities for improvement. Children and young people would be the most important beneficiaries. However, it is likely that effective collaborative systems would also increase confidence in the helpfulness of referrals to child protection social workers.

If one accepts that systemic problems in New Zealand's wider child protection system undermine the confidence children's professionals have in child protection social workers' capacity to help, then there is only so much social work bodies and social workers themselves can do to change this. Some of the most significant barriers to change would be structural. It is encouraging that the overhaul of New Zealand's care and protection system (EAP, 2016; Tolley, 2017) seeks to address important systemic issues such as role clarity, workforce capacity and capability, cultural competency, bureaucratic overhead and a lack of child-centred decision making (EAP, 2016; Office of the Chief Social Worker, 2014; Tolley, 2017).

Importantly, there is also a focus on collective action to promote the wellbeing of children and young people (EAP, 2015, 2016; Tolley, 2017). It is too early to know how effective the changes will be. However, it seems reasonable to assume that its success or otherwise will play an important role in shaping future perceptions of child protection social workers.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the results of the research in more detail and considered their contribution to answering each of the research questions. In doing so, the literature was heavily drawn upon and an effort was also made to synthesise the findings with relevant New Zealand-based studies. It was proposed that better understanding the factors that influence children's professionals' perceptions of child protection social workers will assist interested stakeholders in efforts to improve social work's image. The discussion stressed the importance of being attentive to the experiences professionals have when working with child protection social workers, and to the content of academic and professional publications. It was also noted that news reporting may be more influential than children's professionals realise, due to the augmenting potential of a range of secondary effects (Altheide, 1997; Bryant & Oliver, 2009; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1966; McCombs, 2013; McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 1993; Perse & Lambe, 2016; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Southwell & Yzer, 2007; Watts & Dodds, 2007; Winter et al., 1982).

Due to an absence of comparable literature, the discussion only briefly considered participant perceptions of news reporting about child protection social workers. The findings indicate that children's professionals have a reasonably good understanding of how child protection social workers are portrayed in the media. Further, their views about child protection social workers were often congruent with media portrayals. When they were not, news reporting tends to be more critical.

An examination of the content analysis results provided several insights. The consistency of narratives about most attributes of child protection social workers found in the news may reflect the organisation of news production in New Zealand. Net favourability was assessed and it was concluded that reporting about child protection social workers is indeed skewed towards being unfavourable. Scholars and officials have rightfully drawn attention to this (Maharey & Brown, 2000; Stanfield & Beddoe, 2013; Staniforth & Beddoe, 2017). However, the findings suggest reporting is not overwhelmingly negative, and positive accounts of child protection social workers are also reasonably numerous. Widely held perceptions amongst members of the profession that social work is portrayed 'very badly' in

the media (Staniforth et al., 2016) may be misconstrued. Despite this, there is good reason to remain concerned about news portrayals of specific traits.

A comparison of the research findings with overseas literature (Ayre, 2001; Cordoba, 2017; Davenport & Davenport, 1997; Franklin, 1998; Gaughan & Garrett, 2012; Goddard & Liddell, 1995; Lombard, 2009; Mendes, 2000; Reid & Misener, 2001; Riggs et al., 2009) helped position the favourability of coverage of social workers in New Zealand against international jurisdictions. Although this suggested social workers in New Zealand have a more positive image in the news than most of their international colleagues, the reasons for this are unclear. Unfortunately, the findings of the current research served to undermine some of the proposed explanations (Reid & Misener, 2001) found in the literature. The discussion speculated on other dynamics that could play a role.

Interesting comparisons of the survey data were made with several recent studies relevant to the image of social workers in New Zealand (Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Staniforth et al., 2016; Staniforth et al., 2014). Firstly, the discussion highlighted remarkable similarities in the views of children's professionals and public perceptions (Staniforth et al., 2014) for those traits where this can be more easily measured. Secondly, it was contended that the findings add weight to the premise that favourable views of social workers are correlated with a better understanding of what they do (Dennison et al., 2007; Kaufman & Raymond, 1996). Thirdly, by drawing on the findings of this research and the contributions of Staniforth et al. (2014), Staniforth et al. (2016) and Hobbs and Evans (2017), it was suggested that social work is not as widely stigmatised or poorly perceived in New Zealand as many social workers appear to believe (Staniforth et al., 2016).

Despite contending that children's professionals have a generally favourable disposition towards child protection social workers, there are specific perceptions of social workers that key stakeholders should be worried about. Distrust, already highlighted in the literature (Staniforth et al., 2014), was one of them. Others were incompetence, a lack of competence working with Māori, not following through on commitments and not sufficiently taking the views of children and young people seriously. Importantly, it was noted that concerns about these issues have also been identified in comprehensive reports about the New Zealand child protection system (EAP, 2015, 2016; Office of the Chief Social Worker, 2014; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2015, 2016). They are therefore unlikely to be only problems of perception.

The discussion proposed that the lack of confidence participants had in the helpfulness of referrals to child protection social workers was the most concerning

finding of the research. However, while not dismissing the seriousness of its implications, it was suggested that organisational and systemic issues probably contributed more to the lack of confidence than qualities of social workers themselves. A range of other possible contributing explanations were discussed.

The following chapter summarises the findings of the research and considers their implications for a range of stakeholders. In doing so, the researcher makes a number of recommendations. The final chapter of this thesis also considers the limitations of the research and highlights opportunities for future research.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This research set out to answer a range of questions intended to help build an understanding of how child protection social workers are perceived. Of course, this research does not stand in isolation. The findings are intended to complement the work of others who have already taken important steps to better understand social work's image in New Zealand (Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Merchant, 2010; Stanfield & Beddoe, 2013; Staniforth & Beddoe, 2017; Staniforth et al., 2016; Staniforth et al., 2014). The current research looked at how child protection social workers are portrayed in news reporting and how they are perceived by their professional peers. It also sought to better understand some of the dynamics around these questions, specifically by asking what influenced children's professionals' views of social workers and how children's professionals believed child protection social workers were portrayed in the news. Finally, in the hope of better understanding some of the consequences of these perceptions, children's professionals were asked how helpful they believed referrals to child protection social workers would be for a range of problems.

This chapter overviews the findings from the research and considers what they mean. It begins by briefly overviewing the methodology used. The principal findings are then summarised under each research question, and any conclusions drawn from these are discussed. Finally, the chapter considers the implications of the findings for child protection social workers, social work professional bodies, Oranga Tamariki and for researchers and educators. Recommendations are made for each of these stakeholder groups.

METHODOLOGY

This research was undertaken using mixed methodology, a flexible approach that employs both quantitative and qualitative elements in a single study (Creswell, 2013). This approach was chosen because it is highly congruent with critical realism, the researcher's epistemological outlook, and for pragmatic reasons. With the assistance of professional bodies, professionals from the children's workforce were invited to participate in a survey designed to produce data that could be analysed quantitatively. This was coupled with a content analysis of news articles that contained both quantitative and qualitative elements.

SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

The key findings are presented according to the research questions they relate to. This means the findings from the content analysis are primarily listed under research question three, while the other research questions largely draw from the

survey results. Brief comment linking each finding to key results or conclusions is provided.

The five research questions were:

1. What influences do children's professionals think are important in forming their views about child protection social workers?
2. How do children's professionals think child protection social workers are depicted in news reporting?
3. How are child protection social workers depicted in news reporting?
4. How do children's professionals perceive child protection social workers?
5. What types of problems do children's professionals think child protection social workers are helpful in resolving?

All research questions pertain to the New Zealand environment.

Research question 1: What influences do children's professionals think are important in forming their views about child protection social workers?

1. *The important factors influencing children's professionals' perceptions of child protection social workers.*

Participants cited professional experience, personal experiences and academic and professional publications as the most important factors that had influenced their views about child protection social workers. Professional experience was considered particularly important. If these findings apply to the wider children's workforce, then it is the behaviours and interactions between statutory child protection social workers and their professional peers, and the content and tone of professional and academic publications that most determine how statutory child protection social workers are perceived by children's professionals. News reporting was found to be only a moderately important influence. However, the influence of news reporting is probably greater due to a range of secondary effects (Altheide, 1997; Bryant & Oliver, 2009; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1966; McCombs, 2013; McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 1993; Perse & Lambe, 2016; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Southwell & Yzer, 2007; Watts & Dodds, 2007; Winter et al., 1982).

2. *There were distinctions in the level of importance professional groups accorded to some sources of influence.*

While professionals from each discipline widely agreed professional experience, personal experiences and academic and professional publications were the most important factors that had influenced their views about child protection social workers, distinctions between the

professional groups were identified for other sources of influence. Teachers were slightly more likely than others to consider other people's views as important, and paediatricians were a little less likely to place importance on personal experience. There were more sizable distinctions by professional group in the level of importance accorded to news reporting, social media and fictional portrayals. For all three, teachers were more likely to consider them important, followed by social workers and finally by paediatricians. This finding suggests children's professionals should not necessarily be treated as a homogenous group in any strategy to improve perceptions of child protection social workers. Stakeholders should consider which mediums of influence are likely to be effective for each professional group.

Research question 2: How do children's professionals think child protection social workers are depicted in news reporting?

1. *Children's professionals have a reasonably good understanding how child protection social workers are characterised in news reporting.*

Children's professionals who participated in the survey tended to correctly anticipate how child protection social workers would be portrayed in news reporting. They largely understood that portrayals of child protection social workers would be somewhat unfavourable, and that when relevant, news items would normally acknowledge the difficulties and complexities facing child protection social workers. There were two characteristics of child protection social workers for which children's professionals' expectations of reporting notably differed to what was found in this research. These were exceptions to the trend.

Research question 3: How are child protection social workers depicted in news reporting?

1. *News coverage of child protection social workers in New Zealand appears to be unfavourable, but only marginally so.*

The findings of this research suggest that news coverage of child protection social workers in New Zealand is somewhat unfavourable, an anticipated finding based on the literature (Maharey & Brown, 2000; Stanfield & Beddoe, 2013; Staniforth & Beddoe, 2017; Staniforth et al., 2016; Van Heugten, 2011). However, a sizable number of positive accounts of child protection social workers were also found. When these are accounted for, it seems reasonable to conclude that portrayals of child protection social workers in New Zealand news are only marginally negative.

2. *News articles widely reported on the organisational and systemic challenges facing child protection social workers.*

Most of the prevalent narratives about child protection social workers found in news reporting were references to the organisational and systemic challenges of child protection social work. Having a complex job and being overworked were the second and third most widely covered topics, while having a stressful job and spending too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy also ranked highly. Not only were these some of the most widespread themes, views to the contrary were almost absent in news reporting. These findings suggest that journalists and news producers have a reasonably good understanding of the vocational challenges of child protection social worker.

3. *Some unfavourable narratives about child protection social workers are widespread, particularly incompetence.*

Despite finding that news coverage of child protection social workers in New Zealand is only marginally negative overall, several unfavourable narratives are widespread. Incompetence was the single most prevalent depiction of child protection social workers identified in news reporting. Although trust was not often canvassed, social workers were always depicted as untrustworthy when it was. Further, while child protection social workers were almost as likely to be portrayed as protective as they were abusive, or as helpful as they were unhelpful, the fact that reporting is polarised on these issues is troubling. After all, being protective, taking the views of clients seriously, and seeking to build rapport and trust are fundamental elements of good social work practice.

4. *There are positive narratives of child protection social workers in New Zealand news reporting.*

The content analysis identified a small number of traits for which child protection social workers tend to be depicted favourably. Child protection social workers were normally portrayed as concerned for the wellbeing of the families they are working with, and overwhelmingly shown to be hardworking. Accounts of child protection social workers being helpful were also prevalent, but these were found alongside an almost equal proportion of unhelpful depictions.

5. *There is a primary media narrative for most portrayals of child protection social workers.*

The research identified a dominant view in news reporting for most characteristics of child protection social workers. There was polarised reporting for only two characteristics: child protection social workers were

almost as equally likely to be portrayed as helpful or protective as they were unhelpful or abusive.

Research question 4: How do professionals in the children's workforce in New Zealand view child protection social workers?

1. *Children's professionals appear to widely recognise the challenges facing child protection social workers.*

Participants overwhelmingly agreed that child protection social workers have stressful jobs and are overworked. There was also wide agreement that child protection social workers spend too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy. These findings point to a children's workforce that is sympathetic to the challenges and systemic difficulties facing child protection social workers as they carry out their role.

2. *Children's professionals appear to have a favourable view of child protection social workers overall but negative perceptions about specific characteristics prevail.*

Although children's professionals' views about child protection social workers are mixed, they appear to be more positive than negative overall. The research found particularly widespread agreement that child protection social workers are concerned about the wellbeing of the families they are working with. However, some widespread perceptions are concerning, particularly regarding a perceived lack of competence, trustworthiness and capability when working with Māori. A sizable minority also have reservations about whether child protection social workers take the views of children and young people seriously. If these concerns are reflected in the wider children's workforce it means there is a concerning lack of confidence amongst children's professionals regarding some important competencies and attributes of child protection social workers.

Research question 5: What types of problems do children's professionals think child protection social workers are helpful in resolving?

1. *There was a striking lack of confidence amongst participants in the helpfulness of referrals to child protection social workers across a range of problem types.*

The survey results suggest that children's professionals believe referrals to child protection social workers would be more helpful than not for only three types of problems: child abuse, neglect and family violence. This was only marginally so for neglect and family violence. Referrals were considered more likely to be unhelpful for all other types of problem asked about, including parental relationship difficulties, alcohol and drug misuse,

mental health issues and behaviour problems relating to children and young people. While the discussion suggested wider organisational and systemic problems may contribute to this lack of confidence, the finding is alarming nonetheless.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this research have implications for all stakeholders with an interest in not only how child protection social workers are perceived, but also in the effectiveness and future development of child protection and social work generally. Stakeholders can be clustered into four primary groups: social workers themselves, particularly those in child protection roles; New Zealand's state child protection agency Oranga Tamariki; social work professional bodies or unions; and researchers. The implications for each are discussed below.

For social workers

There are some reassuring findings in this research for social workers. For a start, it seems child protection social workers are viewed somewhat favourably by their professional colleagues. While this research focused on child protection social workers, this field of practice has been singled out as being particularly poorly perceived (Aldridge, 1990; Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Reid & Misener, 2001). Therefore, it is quite likely children's professionals' attitudes towards social workers practicing in fields other than child protection are at least as favourable. These findings build on earlier studies highlighting generally favourable public attitudes towards social workers in New Zealand (Staniforth et al., 2016; Staniforth et al., 2014). Previous studies have found that despite being proud of their profession, social workers in New Zealand and elsewhere largely believe social work has a negative image and is stigmatised (Aldridge, 1990; Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Smith, 2014b; Staniforth et al., 2016; Zugazaga et al., 2006). Whether this was true or not in the past is unknown, but it seems not to be the case now. It is hoped this research will encourage social workers by showing that they are generally respected and well regarded by professionals and members of the public alike. By challenging the view that social work is so widely stigmatised, it may also help break down barriers to recruitment and retention.

Social workers in New Zealand (Staniforth et al., 2016) and internationally tend to believe media portrayals of social workers are negative (Aldridge, 1990; Tower, 2000). The findings of the current research do not exactly challenge this perception, but they do suggest it comes with a caveat: it is not that bad. Unlike the treatment of social workers in the UK by some newspapers (Ayre, 2001; Franklin, 1998; Goddard & Liddell, 1995; Lombard, 2009), they are unlikely to be

vilified or scapegoated in the New Zealand press. Child protection social workers may also be encouraged to know that even when they are conveyed unfavourably in the news, it is unlikely to make a significant difference to how they are perceived by their professional colleagues. Instead, child protection social workers would be advised to focus on the one area where they can most strongly influence how they are perceived by children's professionals: developing and maintaining positive relationships with their colleagues in the children's workforce.

Another important finding is the extent to which the organisational and environmental challenges facing child protection social workers are acknowledged by professionals and in news reporting. For child protection social workers feeling stressed, overwhelmed by workload pressures and paperwork, and perhaps struggling to be responsive or spend enough time with children and their families, a key message from this research is that others are not oblivious to these difficulties. In fact, the challenges appear to be widely recognised by children's professionals and journalists alike. The fact that they are recognised does not of course resolve the problems themselves. However, it should help social workers develop working relationships established on realistic expectations, and suggests others are sympathetic to the challenges of the role.

This research also has implications that might concern child protection social workers. Depictions of social workers as incompetent, untrustworthy, not taking the views of children and young people seriously, not following through on what they say they will do, and being unhelpful are prevalent in the media and amongst children's professionals. Many children's professionals also appear to question whether the child protection social work workforce has the competency needed to work successfully with Māori. It is unlikely these concerns are problems of perception alone and social workers would be wise to take them seriously. Although addressing them will very likely require a focus on organisational and structural problems, child protection social workers are part of the wider system and there are almost certainly opportunities for practitioners to help bring about change. It is recommended that as child protection social workers reflect on their practice, they remain vigilant to those characteristics this research has shown children's professionals and media coverage to be most concerned about. There is also an opportunity for practitioners who exhibit strengths in these areas to consider what role they can play in the professional development of their peers, colleagues and the wider workforce.

[For Oranga Tamariki](#)

Oranga Tamariki was established during the period that this research was undertaken, replacing New Zealand's former state child protection authority CYF

(Tolley, 2017). As part of a wider process of structural reform, the new agency was given the mandate not only for leading state child protection and care activities, but also to work with other agencies, bodies and communities to support the wider population of vulnerable children and young people in New Zealand. At the time of writing this research, Oranga Tamariki remains the agency responsible for statutory child protection social work (Oranga Tamariki Act, 1989).

The research findings have significant implications for Oranga Tamariki and the political decision makers who oversee the mandate, resourcing and legislative framework under which Oranga Tamariki operates. Firstly, the agency can take steps to alert its workforce to some of the more positive findings of this research. Social workers will likely be encouraged to know that they are generally well thought of by their professional colleagues, and are particularly well respected for being caring. It may also be helpful for Oranga Tamariki staff to understand that news reporting about them is not overwhelmingly negative despite a belief amongst many social workers that it is (Staniforth et al., 2014).

The findings of this research suggest that many journalists have a reasonable understanding of the challenges of child protection social work. This signals that there are opportunities for Oranga Tamariki to build and maintain constructive relationships with news outlets that promote informed and balanced reporting. An examination of the policy settings and organisational culture that has traditionally prevented journalists from talking to social workers, or obtaining an Oranga Tamariki perspective on a particular case (Merchant, 2010), may assist. While the privacy of clients does need to be respected, it is doubtful doing so requires a blanket ban on talking to practice staff as has been experienced by journalists in the past (Merchant, 2010).

Oranga Tamariki has an important role to play in addressing some of the negative perceptions of child protection social workers identified in this research. Perhaps the most troubling finding was the widespread lack of confidence children's professionals appear to have in the helpfulness of child protection referrals for a range of potential problems impacting children and their families. These include some fundamental to the purpose of Oranga Tamariki, such as child neglect. Other concerning findings include prevalent perceptions of child protection social workers as incompetent, particularly at working with Māori, untrustworthy, not taking the views of children and young people seriously, and not following through on commitments. This thesis has proposed that these are almost certainly not problems of perception alone, nor are they likely to be divorced from the wider systems, policies and environment in which child protection social workers work. Indeed, some of the most widespread perceptions clearly have an environmental

element, such as perceptions of the workforce being overworked, having stressful jobs and being burdened by bureaucracy.

It is suggested that it would be in the interests of Oranga Tamariki to take the negative perceptions of child protection social workers highlighted in this research seriously, and consider what actions the organisation can take or support to address their underlying causes. This could include supporting the professional development of staff, particularly with respect to working with Māori, working with Government to address resourcing problems that underpin workload issues, identifying and removing counterproductive bureaucratic overhead, and promoting practice that values the views of children and young people. The findings of the current research suggest that focusing primarily on the interactions between social workers and their professional colleagues, and on the content of academic and professional publications such as *Social Work Now*, would be sensible priorities.

Oranga Tamariki is likely to point to efforts to address some of these problems that are already underway. Indeed, the recently released practice framework (Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children, 2017b), organisational values and principles (Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children, 2016), establishment of the independent body representing care experienced children and young people *VOYCE Whakarongo Mai*, and a service line responsible for engaging with children and young people (Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children, 2017a) are encouraging developments. However, it is not yet known how successful they will be and there is good reason to be cautious in some areas. Efforts by the former CYF to lift cultural capability were found to have made little difference to practice at sites and in residences (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2015). Furthermore, Oranga Tamariki appears to employ less frontline social workers today than it did in early 2016 (Ministry of Social Development, 2016b; Tupou, 2018), suggesting the problem of an overworked workforce remains. It is important that as the organisation oversees and embeds changes associated with the current reforms, it also undertakes honest assessments of the impact they are having on frontline practice and on the children and young people they are intended to benefit most.

For professional social work bodies and unions

Many of the research implications already outlined for social workers and for Oranga Tamariki apply also to ANZASW, the Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association (Tangata Whenua), and the Public Service Association (PSA) to which many child protection social workers belong. Professional bodies representing social workers clearly have an interest in how social workers are perceived, in terms of supporting the wellbeing of their members and, in the case of ANZASW and Tangata Whenua, in supporting the effectiveness and development of social work. The research findings suggest professional and academic publications influence children's professionals' views about social workers, indicating that publications overseen by these bodies, such as the *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work* journal and the PSA's *Working Life*, could play a role in changing perceptions. These bodies may wish to alert their members to key findings of the research, much of which is encouraging. It is recommended that they work with both Oranga Tamariki and their membership base to help address some of the problems that likely underpin unfavourable perceptions of child protection social workers. If professional bodies believe there is a lack of recognition, will or progress in addressing these problems, then they are well placed to bring these concerns to the attention of Oranga Tamariki or wider Government. This research suggests news organisations could be sympathetic partners in doing so if necessary.

For researchers and educators

This research has provided researchers and educators with an interest in perceptions of social work and social workers in New Zealand with several important insights. Some of these add weight to premises already found in the literature, such as the likelihood that social workers in New Zealand believe the profession is perceived more negatively than is actually the case (Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Staniforth et al., 2016; Staniforth et al., 2014). This is a particularly important finding for social work educators who are well positioned to assess and explore such negative perceptions with aspiring social workers.

The research highlights further opportunities for educators. They may be able to help build resilience in and identify opportunities for graduate social workers by emphasising the extent to which professionals and journalists appear to be sympathetic to the challenges they are likely to face as future social workers, particularly if they enter the field of child protection. Educators are also well placed to draw attention to attributes not so favourably perceived by other professionals in the children's workforce, such as trust and competence at working with Māori. In partnership with researchers, the extent to which these are genuine problems

or problems of perception could be better understood, and social work courses could adapt to build capability where needed.

There are substantial opportunities for social work researchers to complement, build on or test the findings and assumptions posed in this research. The methodology employed in this research was better suited to understanding the mix of perceptions and portrayals of child protection social workers rather than explaining why they are so. Further, it should not be assumed that the findings of the current research relating to child protection social workers necessarily apply to social workers in other fields. Throughout the discussion, several opportunities for future studies were identified that were beyond the scope of the current research. The principal recommendations from the researcher are listed in table 4:

Table 4 - Opportunities for future research

Premise or limitation of the current research	Recommended future research questions
This research focused on perceptions and portrayals of child protection social workers.	How do perceptions and portrayals of child protection social workers differ from perceptions and portrayals of social workers generally, or from those practicing in other fields? To what extent do perceptions and portrayals of child protection social workers differ from perceptions and portrayals of state child protection agencies themselves?
The content analysis of portrayals of child protection social workers in news reporting relied on the researcher assisted by a qualify assurer.	Repeating the content analysis on the current sample, or a new sample of news articles with a group of people would increase the validity in the findings.
Professionals in the children’s workforce consider academic and professional publications to be an important influence in forming their views about child protection social workers.	How are social workers portrayed in academic and professional publications?
The content analysis that examined portrayals of child protection social workers in news reporting in New Zealand did not account for depictions of child protection social workers in different	Are child protection social workers portrayed differently in news reporting depending on the roles they are shown to be undertaking?

<p>roles, yet Staniforth and Beddoe (2017) had found the child protection social workers are usually framed in specific roles.</p>	
<p>The content analysis undertaken for the current research did not assess the extent to which child protection social workers were portrayed differently depending on the type of news article, yet research outside of New Zealand (Reid & Misener, 2001) has identified distinctions.</p>	<p>What types of news stories do social workers feature in and to what extent are depictions of social workers different depending on the type of story?</p>
<p>Literature outside of New Zealand (Mendes, 2000; Warner, 2013) has linked coverage of social workers to political and ideological agendas. The extent to which this is relevant in New Zealand was not tested in the current research.</p>	<p>To what extent do political or ideological agendas influence how social workers are portrayed in the media in New Zealand? How are social workers or the social work profession portrayed in editorials?</p>
<p>News coverage about child protection social workers in New Zealand is somewhat unfavourable, but appears to be more positive than most other jurisdictions.</p>	<p>Why are social workers portrayed differently in news reporting in different jurisdictions? To what extent do factors such as misogyny, the characteristics of social work institutions, social work qualifications, the mix of public and private social work services, distinctions in media landscapes, or different social work practices and policies play a role in differentiating to tone of news reporting about social workers?</p>
<p>The current research assessed portrayals of child protection social workers in news reporting in New Zealand.</p>	<p>To what extent are portrayals of social work, social workers and social work bodies or institutions in New Zealand accurate?</p>
<p>The current research found that interest in the cultural capability of child protection social workers when working with Māori was absent in news reporting.</p>	<p>Why does news reporting appear to be uninterested in the cultural capability of child protection social workers when working with Māori? Does bias in the media play a role?</p>
<p>The current research identified a striking lack of confidence amongst children’s professionals in the potential helpfulness</p>	<p>What are the reasons professionals in the children’s workforce so widely lack confidence in the potential helpfulness of</p>

<p>of referrals to child protection social workers for a range of problem types.</p>	<p>referrals to child protection social workers for a range of problem types?</p> <p>How much confidence do members of the public place in the potential helpfulness of referrals to child protection social workers?</p>
<p>Throughout the period of this research, child protection systems in New Zealand have been involved in a process of significant change (EAP, 2016; Tolley, 2017).</p>	<p>Elements of this research could be repeated in several years to assess the extent to which the structural reforms of New Zealand's state child protection system have impacted how child protection social workers are perceived.</p>

LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Limitations of this research that derive from the choice of methodology have been discussed in chapter 3. Two principal limitations were identified. Firstly, subjective elements of the content analysis process mean that the assumptions and biases of the researcher and quality assurer will have influenced the results. Secondly, there are limits to generalising the findings, because the sample of children's professionals who participated in the survey does not fully reflect the wider population of children's professionals in New Zealand, and because the content of newspaper news is not necessarily aligned to news produced for other mediums.

The first research question sought only to understand what factors children's professionals *believe* influence their perceptions of child protection social workers. The literature examined in chapter 5 suggested that the actual influences on participant opinions could be inferred from self-insights, but they were unlikely to be entirely accurate. Therefore, the research findings only indicate what factors influence children's professionals' perceptions of child protection social workers.

The choice to assess perceptions of children's professionals, and the decision to focus primarily on social workers working in the field of child protection places limits on how widely the findings can be generalised to public perceptions and social workers generally. However, key contemporary New Zealand-based research has already focused on these groups (Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Stanfield & Beddoe, 2013; Staniforth et al., 2016; Staniforth et al., 2014). This research has served to address gaps in the literature.

The significant period of change occurring in New Zealand's state child protection system (EAP, 2016; Tolley, 2017) during the course of this research may have skewed both the nature of news reporting and children's professionals' perceptions

of child protection social workers in New Zealand. However, this is as much an opportunity as a caveat to the findings. It enables future researchers to repeat elements of this research in order to assess whether perceptions and media coverage of child protection social workers have changed as a consequence of the reforms.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research complements the body of New Zealand literature interested in the image of social workers in New Zealand (Hobbs & Evans, 2017; Stanfield & Beddoe, 2013; Staniforth & Beddoe, 2017; Staniforth et al., 2016; Staniforth et al., 2014). In particular, it has focused on media portrayals of social workers in child protection roles, and on the perceptions professionals in the children's workforce hold about them. The findings contribute to the growing understanding of how social workers in New Zealand are perceived.

Social work bodies, child protection social workers and their employers should be encouraged to find that children's professionals hold generally favourable views about children protection social workers. While news portrayals were found to be somewhat negative, they were not as hostile as may have been expected according to much of literature (Ayre, 2001; Franklin, 1998; Mendes, 2000; Olin, 2013; Stanfield & Beddoe, 2013; Warner, 2013). The current findings were not without parallel; a very recent Australian study showed social workers in a favourable light (Cordoba, 2017). The tone of reporting about social work may be changing.

Perhaps the more important contribution of this research has been to assess perceptions and portrayals of child protection social workers across a range of characteristics, thus helping build a much richer picture of how the profession is seen. One of the key findings was the extent to which both journalists and children's professionals appear to recognise the difficulties of child protection work. Reassuring and disconcerting perceptions were also identified, the most prevalent being child protection social workers as hard working and caring, but also as incompetent, particularly when working with Māori. The most alarming finding was probably the widespread lack of confidence children's professionals appear to have in the potential helpfulness of referrals to child protection social workers in New Zealand. Despite the reassuring findings on net favourability, there is much work to be done to improve perceptions of child protection social workers in New Zealand.

This thesis has proposed that improving the image of child protection social workers will require more than a successful public relationships strategy. It is

highly likely that there are truths to the negative perceptions identified, and overcoming them will require addressing their underlying causes. Social workers themselves have a role to play in improving their image. However, doing so is almost certainly contingent on also addressing some of the systemic and organisational challenges they face, such as workload pressure and bureaucratic overhead. Therefore, Oranga Tamariki and the wider Government have important roles to play.

Efforts to resolve substantive problems could be coupled with a purposeful engagement with the media, professionals and academia alike to help address genuine misconceptions or ignorance. Opportunities for doing so have been identified in this research. This may in turn help develop a wider understanding of the complex dynamics involved in most child protection matters, while also raising awareness of positive developments. Importantly, it may help guard against the development of more alarming trends seen overseas, such as the frequent scapegoating of individual social workers (Aldridge, 1990; Ayre, 2001; Mawby et al., 1979; Nava, 1988; Warner, 2013).

The current programme of reforms (EAP, 2016; Tolley, 2017) do appear to be attentive to some of the systemic problems believed to underpin the less favourable findings of the current research. However, this research has highlighted good reason to be cautious about progress in some areas, particularly with respect to workload (Ministry of Social Development, 2016b; Tupou, 2018). It would be interesting to test elements of this research again once the reforms are further embedded to see if perceptions have changed. In the interim, it would be unwise to take a passive approach. The reforms are a journey, and this research has identified steps that could be embarked upon now to help improve the image of child protection social workers. Importantly, these include not only opportunities for Oranga Tamariki, but also for researchers, educators, social work bodies and child protection social workers themselves.

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KEY FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE

Table 5 - Summary of key findings from the literature

Source	Method	Key Findings
(Bucklew & Parenton, 1962)	Comparative study, identical questionnaires completed by 132 social workers and 226 University students studying sociology. United States	Both groups ranked social work as 2nd of 10 strongest 'helping power' of 'helping professions', both groups ranked social work as the least prestigious profession, but more prestigious than trade or clerical roles, both groups agreed social workers gained job satisfaction from 'helping troubled people'.
(Olsen & Olsen, 1967)	Questionnaire completed by 16 social workers and 40 physicians working at University of Michigan Medical Centre, United States	There is significant disagreement about the role of social workers in a medical setting between physicians and social workers. Social workers have a broader view of their role than physicians.
(Brennan & Khinduka, 1971)	Questionnaire administered to a random sample of 80 social workers and 119 lawyers working at Juvenile Courts in the United States	There is significant disagreement of the role of social workers in a juvenile court system setting between lawyers and social workers. Social workers have a broader view of their role than lawyers.
(Clearfield, 1977)	Questionnaire completed by 356 randomly selected practicing social workers, open and closed questions	Social workers consider the profession important and generally have a positive self-image as professionals, but believe the profession has low prestige compared to others, and see social work as a misunderstood and underappreciated profession.

(Condie et al., 1978)	Questionnaire, 250 respondents from randomised households, United States	General unfamiliarity of what social workers do, only 50% 'acquainted' with social work, highest correlation (50%) was that social workers work with troubled children.
(Mawby et al., 1979)	Content analysis of newspaper articles, UK	Portrayal of social workers depends on type of article, coverage of cases more negative, 'human interest' stories more positive
(McMichael & Irvine, 1984)	Semantic differential scaling questionnaires completed by 186 student teachers and 98 student social workers in 1981/1982, interviews with subsection of sample (type and number not stated), UK	Social work students had a largely positive attitude towards social workers across 19 areas, but viewed secondary teachers somewhat more negatively. Student teachers had a largely positive attitude towards both social workers and teachers.
(Aplerin & Benedict, 1985)	Structured questionnaires, completed by 180 volunteer psychology students, sought views of social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists	Social workers viewed as warm, easy to relate to, cheerful, sociable and energetic and appreciative, but not very intelligent. Participants indicated that they would be least likely to seek help from social workers for personal problems out of the three professions.
(Pietroni, 1991)	372 medical, nursing and social work students participated in a series of multidisciplinary team seminars, after which, in single disciplinary groups, they were asked to create a list of adjectives to describe the three professions, UK	Social workers commonly described by nursing and medical students as: left wing, nosey, self-opinionated, intellectual, lesbians, caring, overworked, guardian readers, caring, vegetarians
(Koeske et al., 1993)	Questionnaires relating to hypothetical clients administered to 101 professionals from psychology, psychiatry, nursing, education and social work in a mental health setting, seeking views on perceived help, warmth,	Social workers perceived to have the highest "warmth", but least likely to receive referral to intervention across all scenarios.

	effectiveness and likelihood to refer for interventions from each discipline, United States	
(Goddard & Liddell, 1995)	Case study, newspaper led campaign to introduce mandatory reporting, Australia	Media campaign served interests of newspaper, sensationalist and misinformed reporting led to state capitulation, introduction of mandatory reporting seen as counter-productive. Policies should be informed by research and not driven by appeasement to press.
(McDevitt, 1996)	Comparison of extent of newspaper reporting on child abuse and reporting of suspected abuse to agencies over 25 years, United States	Increases in news stories about child abuse and increases in reporting of suspected child abuse occurs in parallel, suggesting neither is the cause of the other, but that both increases are initially caused by other factors.
(Kaufman & Raymond, 1996)	Questionnaire survey of 452 members of the public, United States	Overall public has low visibility and negative attitude towards social workers. More understanding of social work role correlated to more favourable attitudes, but past experience of social work services correlated to negative attitudes.
(Davenport & Davenport, 1997)	Content analysis of 191 media sources (magazines, TV, news, talk shows, and documentaries) over six month periods in 1992, and again in 1994-1995, United States	Social workers portrayed positively more than three quarters of the time. Social workers generally viewed as experts and often quoted. Negative depictions more strongly correlated with conservative media sources.
(Franklin, 1998)	Content analysis of almost 2000 articles in nine British newspapers	Portrayals of social workers overwhelming negative in British newspapers. Only 30 of almost 2000 articles deemed to portray social workers positively.

(Hiersteiner, 1998)	Analysis of pre-world war II portrayals of social workers in cinema and stage productions	All depictions of social workers were found to be white women, usually 'spinsters', 'misguided mother figures' or 'young fallen angels'. Negatively portrayed, with underlying motives to profession and never altruistic. Portrayals pander to public fears and prejudice, social work image remains influenced by these early portrayals.
(Mendes, 2000)	Comparison of late 1990s' reporting on child abuse between two newspapers with opposing ideologies, Australia	Character of news reporting on child abuse strongly influenced by ideology of newspaper. Conservative agenda characterised by sensationalism, individual culpability and protection of family from the intrusion of the state, socially liberal agenda more focused on wider structural and social issues, and more systemic causes of child abuse.
(Reid & Misener, 2001)	Content analysis of 399 news articles relating to social work, obtained by randomly selecting 20 weeks coverage from 60 major newspapers, comparison between UK (141) and USA (258) news articles, United States and UK	Social workers portrayed mostly positively in the United States media, and mostly negatively in the British press. Portrayal also depends on role and type of story, with 'scandal' more likely to correlate with negative portrayals of social workers.
(Valentine & Freeman, 2002)	Content analysis of 27 (1938 – 1999) films depicting child protection social workers	Social workers are mostly depicted as white, women and agents of social control, working in a system that 'ties their hands' and rarely challenging the status quo or systems of oppression.
(Freeman & Valentine, 2004)	Qualitative content analysis of 44 movies (1938-1998) which depict social workers.	Social workers more likely to be portrayed as female, white, middle class and heterosexual, likely to be incompetent, engage in sexual activity with clients,

		work in child welfare and work with those in poverty. Role almost entirely depicted at the micro-level of practice (helping individuals but not challenging the wider system).
(LeCroy & Stinson, 2004)	Telephone survey of 386 members of the public, United States	Respondents had a reasonably good understanding of social work roles, although 'child protector' was the role most significantly associated with social workers. Most viewed social workers positively (60% positively against 16% negatively), it is only in the fields of 'homelessness' and 'domestic violence' that social work was seen as more valuable than other professions.
("Perceptions of Profession", 2004)	Focus groups undertaken separately with social workers, and members of the public	Social workers believed members of the public would have largely negative views of social work. However, members of the public in fact had largely positive views of social workers despite being aware of negative media coverage.
(Cooper, 2005)	Mixed methodology, including interviews with social workers, analysis of case notes, management minutes and qualitative and quantitative content analysis of a range of news sources, United States	Sensationalist and hypocritical news reporting of child protection authorities, and the ultimately counter-productive policies adopted by child protection service managers as a response, serve to promote what Cooper (2005) terms the 'Vicious Circle'.
(Zugazaga et al., 2006)	Postal survey using semantic differential scales, 665 social workers with Master's degrees participated from an original stratified random sample of 1500, Florida, United States	Social workers believe the profession is depicted more negatively than positively in both the news and entertainment media, with entertainment media seen as slightly more negative in

		depictions of social workers across a range of areas including being ineffective, untrained and unprofessional. Participants did believe social workers were slightly more likely to be portrayed as caring than uncaring.
(Henderson & Franklin, 2007)	Quantitative content analysis of six British television dramas (total of 249 episodes) aired from March – May 2003	Only 22 episodes included a character deemed a 'social care worker' or social worker, and always as a peripheral character, 80% social care workers depicted positively, predominant characteristics included working with children, male, white, trendy, calm, friendly, sympathetic.
(Douglas, 2009)	Analysis of media coverage from 2001-2003, and state child welfare legislation passed from 2002-2004, and of child protection agency practice and policy changes. United States	High levels of media attention are correlated with the subsequent passing of child welfare legislation and with changes to social work policy and practice.
(Gainsborough, 2009)	Content analysis of media coverage to identify extent of 'scandal' stories, analysis of state welfare spending and passing of child welfare legislation, United States	Media coverage of scandals is correlated to the enactment of subsequent child welfare legislation, but not with increased spending on welfare. However, lawsuits are correlated with increased spending.
(Lombard, 2009)	Content analysis of 345 newspaper articles across 13 British newspapers, first quarter 2009, UK	Over 50% of stories portrayed social workers negatively, only 8% positively. Nearly 90% of stories were about child protection and 61% were 'crisis' stories. Prevalence of negative or positive articles were correlated to newspaper source.
(Carmona, 2011)	Qualitative, open-ended face to face interviews with 15 children's social workers employed at the	Social workers believed that the Department of Child and Family Services was portrayed

	Department of Children and Family Services (statutory child protection agency), Los Angeles, United States (Master's Thesis)	disproportionately negatively in the media despite positive achievements, contributing to staff feeling frustrated and disheartened.
(Warner, 2013)	Case study, analysis of 'Moral Talk' in the coverage of the death of 'Baby P', UK	Politicians and elements of the media industry work together to mobilise public anger towards social workers for mutual benefit.
(Staniforth et al., 2014)	386 questionnaires completed by members of the public using phone surveys. Seeking to understand people's views of 'social worker', New Zealand	Participants had a largely positive view of social workers, particularly strongly linking social work to 'helper' and working with children and young people. Generally good awareness of other social work roles. View that profession is stressful and underpaid. Most significant suggestion to improve social work image was to be more visible/provide more information.
Staniforth, Deane, and Beddoe (2016)	403 social workers were surveyed to ascertain their views on the public perception of social workers in New Zealand. The questions were influenced by Staniforth et al. (2014) to strengthen a comparison between the two studies	Social workers tended to believe the profession was perceived more negatively that was found to be the case in Staniforth et al. (2014), and there were widespread expectations that public perceptions were dominated by associations with New Zealand's state child protection authority Child, Youth and Family. Again, this was not found in Staniforth et al. (2014). Social Workers overbearingly believed the profession was presented badly in the media. Despite largely believing social work had a negative image, most participants reporting feeling proud to be social workers.

Hobbs and Evans (2017)	83 qualitative interviews with social workers in New Zealand, seeking to understand how social workers see themselves and their profession, New Zealand	Social workers largely believed the profession was stigmatised, and many felt social workers were marginalised by their professional colleagues. Many social workers self-perceptions were influenced by social work's association with child protection work.
Staniforth (2017)	Qualitative thematic content analysis of 1512 articles in New Zealand over the period 2008 – 2012, New Zealand	Items about CYF received much of the media interest, and references to intakes and placements dominated over issues such as treatment and support. Many articles were found to be critical of social workers, and social workers were more visible in those news reporting on cases where state child protection services were seen to have failed.



Thank you for participating in this survey.

I am a student at Massey University, and I am currently completing my Master's of Social Work. I am interested in the way statutory child protection social workers are portrayed in the New Zealand media, and also in the views professionals in the wider children's workforce hold about statutory child protection social workers in New Zealand.

You have been invited to complete this survey because you are a member of a professional body in New Zealand who represent one of the professional groups whose views this research is interested in, namely: doctors, teachers, social workers, police officers, early childhood teachers, psychologists or nurses.

If you do not work in one of these roles, or if you are employed by New Zealand's statutory child protection agency Child, Youth and Family, please do not complete this survey.

If you belong to more than one professional body you may receive more than one invitation to participate in this survey. Please only complete the survey once.

This survey can be completed on computers, tablets or mobile devices.

Completion and submission of the questionnaire implies consent. You have the right to withdraw from the questionnaire at any point you wish to, and can choose to stop the questionnaire at any time. No data from incomplete questionnaires is sent to or recorded by the survey software.

The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.



What is this research about?

I am interested in the way statutory child protection social workers are portrayed in the New Zealand media, and also in the views professionals in the wider children's workforce hold about statutory child protection social workers in New Zealand.

What will participation involve?

This survey will ask you what you think about child protection social workers in New Zealand, where you receive information about child protection social workers and your perception of media coverage about child protection social workers in New Zealand.

The survey can be accessed and completed online by clicking on the link near the bottom of this email. Completion will take approximately 10 minutes.

Anonymous survey

You are invited to participate in this anonymous survey. The survey is anonymised so that there is no link back to participants or their location via IP addresses. You will be asked to provide demographic information and asked to identify your professional role.

Who is eligible to participate?

To participate, you need to be:

- currently working in one of the following professions: Nurse, Police Officer, Doctor, Teacher, Early Childhood Teacher, paediatricians, Psychologist or Social Worker
- not employed by New Zealand's state child protection authority Child, Youth and Family.

There is no requirement that you have worked with or had direct contact with child protection social workers in order to participate in this survey.

What are my rights as a participant?

Completion and submission of the questionnaire implies consent. You have the right to withdraw from the questionnaire at any point you wish to, and can choose to stop the questionnaire at any time. No data from incomplete questionnaires is sent to or recorded by the survey software.



Definitions

'**CYF**' means New Zealand's statutory child protection agency Child, Youth and Family

CYF child protection social worker means statutory child protection social worker employed by Child, Youth and Family (CYF) in New Zealand

Please click on the next arrow to begin:



About you:

What is your gender?

- Female
 - Male
 - Trans
-

How old are you?

- Less than 20 years
 - 20 - 29 years
 - 30 - 39 years
 - 40 - 49 years
 - 50 - 59 years
 - 60 - 69 years
 - 70 years or more
-

Which options best describe your ethnicity? (Please select all that apply)

- Māori
- Pakeha / New Zealand European
- Pacific
- Chinese
- African
- Indian
- Other (please specify)

>>

Which option describes your current profession?

- Nurse
 - Social Worker
 - Police Officer
 - Psychologist
 - Teacher (primary or secondary)
 - Early childhood education teacher
 - Doctor (Paediatrician)
 - Doctor (GP)
 - Doctor (other)
-

How long have you been working in your field?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 - 5 years
- 5 - 10 years
- More than 10 years

>>

How important have the following been in influencing your views about CYF child protection social workers?

	Unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Important	Very important
Personal experiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional experiences	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other people's views	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
News sources (online, newspapers or television)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional or academic publications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social media	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fictional portrayals (books, films, television, movies, plays)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please state) <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please state) <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please state) <input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements as they apply to CYF child protection social workers generally?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
They are competent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are concerned about the wellbeing of the families they work with	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are enthusiastic about that they do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are helpful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are intelligent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are overworked	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They have a stressful job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They do what they say they are going to do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are idealists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are underpaid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They have their head in the clouds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They take the views of children and young people they are working with seriously	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They focus too much on what children's families want	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They focus too much on the wellbeing of children at the expense of children's families	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are competent at working with Maori	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They spend insufficient time with with the children and families they are working with	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They spend too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements describing how CYF child protection social workers are **portrayed in the New Zealand media**?

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
They are portrayed as competent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as concerned about the wellbeing of the families they work with	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as enthusiastic about that they do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as helpful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as honest	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as intelligent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as overworked	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They portrayed as having a stressful job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They portrayed as doing what they say they are going to do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as trustworthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as idealists	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as being underpaid	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as having their head in the clouds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as taking the views of children and young people they are working with seriously	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as focusing too much on what children's families want	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as focusing too much on the wellbeing of children at the expense of children's families	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as competent at working with Maori	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as spending insufficient time with with the children and families they are working with	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
They are portrayed as spending too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



How helpful do you believe a referral to a CYF child protection social worker would be for resolving the following problems when experienced by families?

	Very helpful	Helpful	Neither helpful nor unhelpful	Unhelpful	Very unhelpful
Family violence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parental mental health problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parental alcohol and drug problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parental relationship difficulties	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behavioural problems in children and young people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poverty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Learning difficulties for children and young people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Alcohol and drug problems for young people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Neglect	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child abuse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Contact information

Please feel free to contact the researcher or the researchers' supervisors if you have any queries or questions about participating in this research.

Researcher

Simon Harding

Email: simon.harding.8@uni.massey.ac.nz

Supervisor

Dr Kathryn Hay

Senior Lecturer

School of Social Work

Email: K.S.Hay@massey.ac.nz

>>



We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE SURVEY (LONG VERSION)

Invitation to participate in questionnaire about Child, Youth and Family social workers

My name is Simon Harding and I am working towards my master's of Social Work at Massey University. My research in this area is part of my requirements towards completing my Master's degree. If you are a professional in the wider children's workforce, I would like to invite you to complete this short survey.

What is this research about?

I am interested in the way statutory child protection social workers are portrayed in the New Zealand media, and also in the views professionals in the wider children's workforce hold about statutory child protection social workers in New Zealand.

What will participation involve?

This survey will ask you what you think about child protection social workers in New Zealand, where you receive information about child protection social workers and your perception of media coverage about child protection social workers in New Zealand.

The survey can be accessed and completed online by clicking on the link near the bottom of this email. Completion will take approximately **10 minutes**.

Anonymous survey

You are invited to participate in this **anonymous survey**. The survey is anonymised so that there is no link back to participants or their location via IP addresses. You will be asked to provide demographic information and asked to identify your professional role.

Who is eligible to participate?

To participate, you need to be:

- currently working in one of the following professions: Nurse, Police Officer, Doctor, Teacher, Early Childhood Teacher, Psychologist or Social Worker
- not employed by New Zealand's state child protection authority Child, Youth and Family.

There is no requirement that you have worked with or had direct contact with child protection social workers in order to participate in this survey.

What are the participants' rights?

Completion and submission of the questionnaire implies consent. You have the right to withdraw from the questionnaire at any point you wish to, and can choose to stop the questionnaire at any time. No data from incomplete questionnaires is sent to or recorded by the survey software.

[Click here to begin](#)

Contact information

Please feel free to contact the researcher or the researchers' supervisors if you have any queries or questions about participating in this research.

Researcher

Simon Harding

Email: simon.harding.8@uni.massey.ac.nz

Supervisor

Dr Kathryn Hay

Senior Lecturer

School of Social Work

Telephone: [+64 \(06\) 356 9099](tel:+64(06)3569099) ext. 83518

Email: K.S.Hay@massey.ac.nz

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ONLINE SURVEY (SHORT VERSION)

Invitation to participate in questionnaire about Child, Youth and Family social workers

My name is Simon Harding and I am working towards my master's of Social Work at Massey University. I am interested in the way statutory child protection social workers are portrayed in the New Zealand media, and also in the views professionals in the wider children's workforce hold about statutory child protection social workers in New Zealand. I would be very grateful if you would be willing help complete this research by sharing your views.

If you wish to participate, please click [here](#) to complete a short survey. All feedback is collected anonymously and the survey will take about 5 - 10 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for you time.

SOURCES OF NEWS ARTICLES

Table 6 - News sources accessed in the Newztext database search

Fairfax	New Zealand Media and Entertainment	Accessible through 'Stuff' Proxy
Waikato Times Sunday	Herald on Sunday	Auckland City Harbour News
Star Times	NZ Herald	Auckland Now
Sunday News	Bay of Plenty Times	Central Leader
The Dominion	Daily Post	Dargaville News
The Dominion Post	Hawkes Bay Today	East and Bays Courier
The Evening Post	Northern Advocate	Eastern Courier
The Press		Feilding Herald
The Timaru Herald		Franklin county news
Manawatu Standard		Hamilton Press
The Taranaki Daily News		Hauraki Herald
Truth		Horowhenua Mail
The Southland Times		Kaikoura Star
Taupo Times		Manawatu Standard
Nelson Mail		Manukau Courier
Whangarei Leader		Matamata Chronicle
		North Harbour News
		North Shore Times
		North Waikato News
		North Waikato Tatler
		Northern News
		Norwest Newsbrief
		Otago Daily Times
		Otago Southland Farmer
		Papakura Courier
		Piako Post
		Rangitikei Mail
		Rodney Times
		Rotorua Review
		Ruapehu Press
		South Waikato News
		The Bay Chronicle
		The Marlborough Express
		Western leader

APPENDIX F

NEWS ARTICLES DATASET

Table 7 - List of news articles assessed in the content analysis

Article Title	Source	Date
CYF worker charged with sex offences	Manawatu Standard	17-Oct-14
Hope - not hatred	The Marlborough Express	19-Nov-14
Teen's upbringing inspires career choice	Taranaki Daily News	10-Dec-14
Abuse stats going down but more to be done	The Daily Post	24-Jan-15
Powhiri welcomes CYF boss	The Nelson Mail	29-Jan-15
Social Development Minister orders Roastbusters inquiry	Radio New Zealand newswire	20-Mar-15
Independent expert panel to lead major CYF overhaul	Scoop	01-Apr-15
Child, Youth and Family set for extensive restructuring	Waikato Times	02-Apr-15
Minister: CYF needs shakeup	The Marlborough Express	02-Apr-15
CYF to face a restructure, says minister	Taranaki Daily News	02-Apr-15
CYF to face a restructure, says minister	The Southland Times	02-Apr-15
Big restructuring on way for CYF, minister says	The Press	02-Apr-15
The hurt goes on	Taranaki Daily News	11-Apr-15
4 foster homes and 30 Social Workers -- ministry says sorry	New Zealand Herald	19-May-15
Snub angers Social Workers	Taranaki Daily News	20-May-15
Social Workers fuming at review snub	The Press	20-May-15
Fresh pyjama appeal launched	Northern Advocate	22-May-15
Funding freeze pushes back monitoring for child abuse	Taranaki Daily News	02-Jun-15
Study reveals the sad secret world of child prostitution	Scoop	19-Jun-15
Police officers paid us for sex, say teen girls	New Zealand Herald	20-Jun-15
Youth to advise CYF overhaul	Waikato Times	08-Jul-15
Mother angry son abused in CYF care	The Press	14-Jul-15

Social Workers push for register	Manawatu Standard	28-Jul-15
Abuse shows need for Social Worker register	Scoop	13-Aug-15
Figures on abuse and neglect revealed	The Marlborough Express	20-Aug-15
CARE-JUDE-TP	Radio New Zealand newswire	27-Aug-15
Dairy stabber: 'everybody let him down'	New Zealand Herald	29-Aug-15
How we raised a killer	New Zealand Herald	29-Aug-15
Interview with Judge Carolyn Henwood & Dr Russell Wills	Scoop	29-Aug-15
A child-abuse solution beyond CYF	New Zealand Herald	31-Aug-15
Surviving the state child care system	Bay of plenty times	05-Sep-15
Surviving the System	Northern Advocate	05-Sep-15
The lost boys of the Barrier	New Zealand Herald	05-Sep-15
New report calls for an open and consultative CYF Review	Scoop	23-Sep-15
Lisa Owen interviews Social Development Minister Anne Tolley	Scoop	26-Sep-15
Judge's fury over cell girl	New Zealand Herald	28-Sep-15
Boy 'used as cash cow' Disabled child's alcoholic mum and boyfriend paid up to \$80,000 for 'care'	New Zealand Herald	29-Sep-15
A boy's life over 14 years comes down to 1100 pages -- an agonising catalogue of misery and neglect.	New Zealand Herald	29-Sep-15
The problems	The Southland Times	29-Sep-15
Anatomy of a failure	The Timaru Herald	10-Oct-15
Anatomy of a failure	The Press	10-Oct-15
Anatomy of a failure	Taranaki Daily News	10-Oct-15
Anatomy of a failure	The Dominion Post	10-Oct-15
Mum in despair over man's access to boy	The Dominion Post	16-Oct-15
SOCIAL-MUM-WRIT	Radio New Zealand newswire	16-Oct-15
Broken system breaks our kids	The Southland Times	22-Oct-15
Our shameful record on child abuse	The Dominion Post	21-Nov-15
Cruellest secret to keep	The Press	21-Nov-15
Cruellest secret to keep	The Timaru Herald	21-Nov-15
Police open 32 child abuse cases each day	The Press	25-Nov-15
Former foster child driven by upbringing	New Zealand Herald	02-Dec-15

CYF admits it made mistakes in Roastbusters case.	Radio New Zealand newswire	03-Dec-15
Improving CYF's response to allegations	Scoop	03-Dec-15
ROAST-REPORT-WRT	Radio New Zealand newswire	03-Dec-15
ROAST-TOLLEY-TP	Radio New Zealand newswire	03-Dec-15
Social Workers say they're being scapegoated in Roastbuster CYF report.	Radio New Zealand newswire	04-Dec-15
Roast Buster review finds CYF wanting	The Press	04-Dec-15
CYF failed youths: Tolley	New Zealand Herald	04-Dec-15
CYF accepts handling of teen sex case faulty	The Southland Times	04-Dec-15
Roast Buster review finds CYF wanting	The Dominion Post	04-Dec-15
CYF handling of teenage sex case criticised	Taranaki Daily News	04-Dec-15
Handling of teen sex case flawed	The Nelson Mail	04-Dec-15
Handling of teen sex case flawed	The Marlborough Express	04-Dec-15
Handling of teen sex case flawed	The Timaru Herald	04-Dec-15
Handling of teen sex case flawed	Manawatu Standard	04-Dec-15
Handling of teen sex case flawed say review	Waikato Times	04-Dec-15
Threats made to Social Worker	Taranaki Daily News	12-Dec-15
Threats made to Social Worker	Manawatu Standard	12-Dec-15
Women threatened to do an Ashburton	The Dominion Post	12-Dec-15
Former CYF Social Worker sentenced on rape charges 40 years later	Manawatu Standard	17-Dec-15
Helping vulnerable lives move on	Waihi leader	10-Mar-16
Foster carers needed	The Daily Post	12-Mar-16
Lack of CYF beds sees teen spend Easter weekend in police cell	The Nelson Mail	30-Mar-16
Youth spent Easter in cell due to lack of beds	The Press	31-Mar-16
Speech - The future of child protection and care	Scoop	07-Apr-16
Girls made to sit in punishment chair, court told	The Timaru Herald	08-Apr-16
Is the CYF overhaul enough?	Scoop	14-Apr-16
Home for youth to be a place of peace	The Daily Post	16-Apr-16
Take his head off... use it as a football	The Timaru Herald	19-Apr-16
Witness says Walmsley 'set up' by complainant	The Timaru Herald	20-Apr-16
Strict bail for teen on hit-and-run charge	The Dominion Post	28-Apr-16

Response 'absolutely appalling'	The Timaru herald	29-Apr-16
Fighting for child safety tough but imperative	Wanganui chronicle	30-Apr-16
The evidence that 'simply couldn't be invented'	The Timaru Herald	04-May-16
Why did CYF do nothing in his last 11 days?	Sunday Star Times	08-May-16
Sister told Social Worker of abuse	Waikato Times	10-May-16
And no one did a thing	The northland age	10-May-16
Tolley critical of failure to act in toddler case	The Timaru Herald	11-May-16
Tolley critical of failure to act in toddler case	The Marlborough Express	11-May-16
Tolley critical of failure to act in toddler case	The Nelson Mail	11-May-16
Horrible lessons' from toddler's killing	Taranaki Daily News	11-May-16
Tolley critical of failure to act in toddler case	Manawatu Standard	11-May-16
Moko: More should have been done	Waikato Times	11-May-16
A backpack of treasures for kids	Hamilton news	13-May-16
'Moko got away with a lot'	Sunday Star Times	15-May-16
We did a poor job, admits CYF on teen killer	New Zealand Herald	04-Jun-16
Sex abuser allowed to live 300m from victim	The Press	14-Jun-16
Worker gets CYF job back	New Zealand Herald	17-Jun-16
A life full of adventures	Wanganui chronicle	02-Jul-16
Warning signs before child's alleged murder	The Press	16-Jul-16
A case of children in peril	The Press	16-Jul-16
More men needed in social work	Taranaki Daily News	23-Jul-16
More men needed to share social work burden	The Dominion Post	23-Jul-16
We need more men as social workers	The Press	23-Jul-16
More men needed in social work	The Timaru Herald	23-Jul-16
More men needed in social work	The Marlborough Express	23-Jul-16
A kid with support stays out of court	The Dominion Post	23-Jul-16
Innocents lose out as Child Youth and Family underfunded	The Dominion Post	26-Jul-16
Funding shortfall for CYF confirmed	The Timaru Herald	26-Jul-16
Innocents lose out as Child Youth and Family underfunded	Waikato Times	27-Jul-16
CYF's \$56m funding hole	The Marlborough Express	27-Jul-16
A kid with support stays out of court	Waikato Times	27-Jul-16
We're all responsible for children	The Southland Times	30-Jul-16
Social Workers overloaded	New Zealand Herald	01-Aug-16

City Missioner's pragmatic legacy	The Press	17-Aug-16
New ministry to focus solely on vulnerable children	Scoop	18-Aug-16
CYF need everyone's successes	Nelson mail	06-Sep-16
Moko's Social Worker: Marae-based approach may work	Waikato Times	06-Sep-16
Crisis housing	Aranaki daily news	10-Sep-16
Leaders 'must listen': candidates briefed on social issues	The Marlborough Express	14-Sep-16
Change starts with the community	The Marlborough Express	16-Sep-16
Making a world of difference in lives	Te Awamutu Courier	27-Sep-16
Another view - Support those who care for most vulnerable	The Northern Advocate	28-Sep-16

DATABASE ENTRY FORM – PART ONE OF TWO

Reviewer	
News title	
Date of article	
Source	
Section	
Record Number	95

THE DOMINION POST — 16 OCT 2015 Edition 1, Page 6

Mum in despair over man's access to boy

By: ZTOMMY LIVINGSTON

A MAN being investigated for rape was allowed continued access to his foster son. Four notifications relating to the man were sent to **Child, Youth and Family** by police and health professionals between 2012 and 2014, each one raising concerns about the boy's safety. Despite an ongoing police investigation into allegations the man had raped his then wife, **CYF** allowed him regular access and overnight visits with the boy. But **CYF** says it made its decisions with the best interests of the child in mind and conditions were placed on the man's access to the child. The man, who in August was found guilty of rape, blamed his sexual behaviour on a rare sleeping condition that gives a person the ability to have sex while asleep. Two separate police investigations were also launched into whether the man was abusing the boy, but no charges were laid. The man's then wife, who is also the boy's foster mother, believes **CYF** did not take the investigation into her rape seriously, resulting in the boy being put at risk. In a document released under the Official Information Act, a **Social Worker** noted she did not believe the woman's claims of rape were true. Instead, it boiled down to "a custody battle between caregivers". The woman said she felt "mortified" when reading the note on the file. "They put it down to 'marriage breakup'. I don't know what else I could have done. It has been the organisation that has made this impossible," she said. While being investigated by police, the man also put in an application for fulltime custody of the child, which was declined because the boy had an emotional bond with his foster mum's children. The woman believes the decision not to allow custody should have been based on the fact the man was being investigated for rape. "**Child, Youth and Family** made it very clear their decision to allow [the boy] to stay with me and not live with [his foster father] was solely because he was attached to my children," she said. "They also made it very clear that my concerns for [the boy's] safety, and the police investigation, were irrelevant in their decision." The woman said she now felt defeated and worn down by the organisation. "I was in a situation where he had to go somewhere where I knew he was not safe. Words can't describe how stressful that was," she said. "You have got this man who believes he can rape people in his sleep, and **CYF**s allow him to take the boy away and sleep in a room on their own. I don't call that making safe arrangement."

DATABASE ENTRY FORM – PART TWO OF TWO

THE ARTICLE DEPICTS CYF SOCIAL WORKERS AS:

None of the below <input type="checkbox"/>	
Competent <input type="checkbox"/>	Incompetent <input type="checkbox"/>
Concerned about the wellbeing of families they work with <input type="checkbox"/>	Unconcerned about the wellbeing of families they work with <input type="checkbox"/>
Enthusiastic about what they do <input type="checkbox"/>	Unenthusiastic about what they do <input type="checkbox"/>
Helpful <input type="checkbox"/>	Unhelpful <input type="checkbox"/>
Protective <input type="checkbox"/>	Abusive <input type="checkbox"/>
Honest <input type="checkbox"/>	Dishonest <input type="checkbox"/>
Intelligent <input type="checkbox"/>	Unintelligent <input type="checkbox"/>
Overworked <input type="checkbox"/>	Underworked <input type="checkbox"/>
Hard working <input type="checkbox"/>	Lazy <input type="checkbox"/>
Having a stressful job <input type="checkbox"/>	Having an unstressful job <input type="checkbox"/>
Having a complex job <input type="checkbox"/>	Having a simple job <input type="checkbox"/>
Doing what they say they are going to do <input type="checkbox"/>	Not doing what they say they are going to do <input type="checkbox"/>
Trustworthy <input type="checkbox"/>	Untrustworthy <input type="checkbox"/>
Idealists <input type="checkbox"/>	Pragmatists <input type="checkbox"/>
Overpaid <input type="checkbox"/>	Underpaid <input type="checkbox"/>
Grounded <input type="checkbox"/>	Having their head in the clouds <input type="checkbox"/>
Taking the views of children and young people seriously <input type="checkbox"/>	Not taking the views of children and young people seriously <input type="checkbox"/>
Focusing too much on what family's want <input type="checkbox"/>	Not focussing enough on what families want <input type="checkbox"/>
Competent at working with Maori <input type="checkbox"/>	Not competent at working with Maori <input type="checkbox"/>
Spending too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy <input type="checkbox"/>	Not spending enough time on paperwork and bureaucracy <input type="checkbox"/>

Reviewer Comment (Optional)

◀
▶

Review Another Article

Definitions

'CYF' means New Zealand's statutory child protection agency Child, Youth and Family.

CYF Child Protection Social Worker means statutory child protection social worker employed by Child, Youth and Family (CYF) in New Zealand. They are also known as 'Care and Protection Social Workers'.

Guiding notes

- The content analysis is interested in how CYF Child Protection Social Workers are portrayed in the media. It is not asking you to record how Youth Justice, Caregiver or Adoption social workers are portrayed, nor is it asking you how Child, Youth and Family as an institution is portrayed in the media.
- You may judge that an article portrays CYF Child Protection Social Workers in certain way even if it does not say it outright.
- Some articles talk about a person or people who have been CYF Child Protection Social Workers in the past but who are no longer working in this role. You are asked to make a judgement call on whether comments about someone who used to be a social worker qualify or not.
- While most of the descriptors are included as pairs of opposites, you may tick both if you think the article portrays CYF Child Protection Social Workers as both.
- One article (record 49) is prefaced with a sentence advising readers where they can seek help, specifically it states:

"REPORT CHILD ABUSE NOW If you have concerns about the safety of a child, you can call police on 111 or Child, Youth and Family on 0508 FAMILY (0508 326 459) for advice. If the Social Worker thinks the child is in immediate danger they will act on it within 24 hours. If you wish to provide information anonymously to police you can call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111."

Please ignore this preface when recording your judgement for that article.

- Please record any additional thoughts you believe could be useful for the researcher in the comments section. This could include, but may not be limited to:
 - Any descriptors you think describe how the article portrays CYF Child Protection Social Workers which are not available to be selected.

- Any reason/s for your decisions that you think could be relevant for the research, particularly explaining cases where you nearly did or didn't select something.
 - Any ambiguities or interpretations you were unsure of, or which you felt could have different meanings.
 - Anything which is unclear or which you did not understand.
 - Anything you think could be an error, either in the articles, database or form design.
- If you believe that none of the available descriptors represents how CYF Child Protection social workers are portrayed in the article, please selected the "None of the below" box. You may still add comments.

NOTIFICATION OF LOW RISK RESEARCH FORM


Massey University

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

**NOTIFICATION OF LOW RISK RESEARCH/EVALUATION
INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS**

Staff researchers and supervisors are fully responsible for ensuring that the information in this form meets the requirements and guidelines for submission of a Low Risk Notification

SECTION A:

1 Project Title Media and Professional depictions of child protection social workers

.

Projected start date for data collection March 2016 **Projected end date** September 2016

(Low risk notifications must not be submitted if recruitment and/or data collection has already begun.)

2 Applicant Details *(Select one box only and complete details)*

.

ACADEMIC STAFF NOTIFICATION

Full Name of Staff Applicant/s

School/Department/Institute

Region *(mark one only)*

Albany Palmerston
North Wellington

Telephone

**Email
Address**

STUDENT NOTIFICATION

Full Name of Student Applicant Simon Harding

Postal Address

Telephone 021 0270 9628

**Email
Address**

simonjharding@gmail.com

Employer

Child, Youth and Family

Full Name of Supervisor(s)

Kathryn Hay / Tracie Mafileo

School/Department/Institute

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Region *(mark one only)*

Albany Palmerston North Wellington

Telephone Email Address K.S.Hay@massey.ac.nz / T.A.Mafileo@massey.ac.nz

GENERAL STAFF NOTIFICATION

Full Name of Applicant

Section

Region (mark one only) Albany Palmerston North Wellington

Telephone **Email Address**

Full Name of Line Manager

Section

Telephone **Email Address**

3 Type of Project (provide detail as appropriate)

Staff Research/Evaluation:	Student Research:	If other, please specify:
Academic Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Name of Qualification <input type="checkbox"/>	MS W
General Staff <input type="checkbox"/>	Credit Value of Research <input type="checkbox"/>	120
Evaluation <input type="checkbox"/>	(e.g. 30, 60, 90, 120, 240, 360)	

4. Describe the process that has been used to discuss and analyse the ethical issues present in this project.
(Please refer to the Low Risk Guidelines on the Massey University Human Ethics Committee website)

The following process has been following prior to submitting this low-risk ethnics application:

1. Consultation with supervisors Dr Kathryn Hay and Dr Tracie Mafileo has taken place throughout the year during scheduled supervision (once every 6-8 weeks). Kathryn Hay and Tracie Mafileo have also read and considered assignment 3 completed in 2014 (*179702, Media Portrayals of Child Protection Social Work in New Zealand – Research Proposal*), the proposal that outlined the initial research questions, proposed methods and objectives of my proposed research.
2. The screening questionnaire has been completed – the only area of possible concern identified is conflict of interest (see paragraph 4)
3. Selected parts of a MUHEC application have been completed for consideration by Kathryn Hay and Tracie Mafileo.
4. The *Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations Involving Human Participants* has been reviewed against the proposed research. I do not believe there is any reasonable risk of harm. Feedback will be sought anonymously and no vulnerable groups, such as children, will be asked for feedback or to participate in the research. The only ethical consideration that will need to be managed regards 'Avoidance of Conflict of Role/Interest' (I am an employee of Child, Youth and Family, although not in the role of a child protection social worker). This has been discussed with supervisors and we believe that this can be managed, primarily through supervision, making all primary material (questionnaires) available to supervisors to be reviewed and ensuring supervisors are confident the portrayal of the findings is reflective of the feedback received.

5. Summary of Project

Please outline the following (in no more than 200 words):

1. The purpose of the research, and

The research seeks to better understand how groups of professionals perceive child protection social workers in New Zealand, and how statutory child protection social workers (employed at Child, Youth and Family) are portrayed in the New Zealand media. Professionals will also be asked where they have gained information to inform their views in an attempt gain insight into the impact of media on professional's perceptions.

The professionals sought as participants will be those from vocations that have involvement in some capacity with statutory child protection social work, such as teachers, police officers, doctors and teachers. Their expectations and opinions of child protection social workers are likely to influence their decisions and interactions with Child, Youth and Family, other professionals and with children, young people and their families in any situations involving possible child maltreatment or neglect. The research will inform discussion on the degree to which professional views are accurate, identify any possible misconceptions or areas of congruence and provide comment on how professional's views are shaped.

2. The methods you will use.

An online questionnaire will be used with professionals (teachers, police officers, nurses, other social workers), and content analysis will be undertaken to review portrayals of child protection social workers in news reporting. Only publically available news sources will be used in the content analysis. No clients or non-professionals will be asked to complete the questionnaire or participate in the research in any way.

Please submit this Low Risk Notification (with the completed Screening Questionnaire) as follows:

1. For staff based at either the Palmerston North or Wellington campus; and students whose Chief Supervisor is based at either the Palmerston North or Wellington campus:

External Mailing Address

Ethics Administrator
Research Ethics Office
Massey University
Private Bag 11222
Palmerston North 4442

Internal Mailing Address

Ethics Administrator
Research Ethics Office
Courtyard Complex, PN221
Turitea
Palmerston North

2. For staff based at the Albany campus and students whose Chief Supervisor is based at the Albany campus:

External Mailing Address

Ethics Administrator
Research Ethics Office
Massey University
Private Bag 102904
North Shore City 0745

Internal Mailing Address

Ethics Administrator
Research Ethics Office
Room 3.001B, Level 3
Quadrangle A Building
Albany Campus

SECTION B: DECLARATION *(Complete appropriate box)*

ACADEMIC STAFF RESEARCH

Declaration for Academic Staff Applicant

I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. My Head of Department/School/Institute knows that I am undertaking this research. I confirm that this submission meets the requirements set out in the Guidelines for Low Risk Notifications and that the information contained in this notification is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

Staff Applicant's Signature _____ Date: _____

STUDENT RESEARCH

Declaration for Student Applicant

I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and discussed the ethical analysis with my Supervisor. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. I confirm that this submission meets the requirements set out in the Guidelines for Low Risk Notifications and that the information contained in this notification is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

Student Applicant's Signature _____ Date: _____

Declaration for Supervisor

I have assisted the student in the ethical analysis of this project. As supervisor of this research I will ensure that the research is carried out according to the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. I confirm that this submission meets the requirements set out in the Guidelines for Low Risk Notifications.

Supervisor's Signature _____ Date: _____
Print Name _____

GENERAL STAFF RESEARCH/EVALUATIONS

Declaration for General Staff Applicant

I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and discussed the ethical analysis with my Supervisor. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. I confirm that this submission meets the requirements set out in the Guidelines for Low Risk Notifications and that the information contained in this notification is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

General Staff Applicant's Signature _____ Date: _____

Declaration for Line Manager

I declare that to the best of my knowledge, this notification complies with the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and that I have approved its content and agreed that it can be submitted.

Line Manager's Signature

Date:

Print Name

.....

.....

EMAIL ACKNOWLEDGING LOW RISK ETHICS NOTIFICATION

----- Forwarded message -----

From: <humanethics@massey.ac.nz>

Date: 21 December 2015 at 11:13

Subject: Human Ethics Notification - 4000015356

To: A.Lindsay@massey.ac.nz, Simon.Harding.8@uni.massey.ac.nz,

K.S.Hay@massey.ac.nz, T.A.Mafileo@massey.ac.nz

HoU Review Group

Ethics Notification Number: 4000015356

Title: Media portrayals and professional perceptions of child protection social workers

Thank you for your notification which you have assessed as Low Risk.

Your project has been recorded in our system which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

If situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your ethical analysis, please log on to <http://rims.massey.ac.nz> and register the changes in order that they be assessed as safe to proceed.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named in this document are responsible for the

ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director (Research Ethics), email humanethics@massey.ac.nz. "

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish require evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to complete the application form again answering yes to the publication question to provide more information to go before one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

You are reminded that staff researchers and supervisors are fully responsible for ensuring that the information in the low risk notification has met the requirements and guidelines for submission of a low risk notification.

If you wish to print an official copy of this letter, please login to the RIMS system, and under the Reporting section, View Reports you will find a link to run the LR Report.

Yours sincerely

Dr Brian Finch
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Director (Research Ethics)

CONTENT ANALYSIS CODING TO ASSESS NET FAVOURABILITY

Table 8 - Content analysis codes and affiliations for favourability assessment of articles

Positive	Negative	Neutral
Competent	Incompetent	Overworked
Concerned about the wellbeing of families they work with	Unconcerned about the wellbeing of families they work with	Underworked
Enthusiastic about what they do	Unenthusiastic about what they do	Having a stressful job
Helpful	Unhelpful	Having an unstressful job
Honest	Dishonest	Having a simple job
Protective	Abusive	Having a complex job
Intelligent	Unintelligent	Underpaid
Hardworking	Lazy	Overpaid
Doing what they say they are going to do	Not doing what they say they are going to do	Having their head in the clouds
Trustworthy	Untrustworthy	Grounded
Taking the views of children and young people seriously	Not taking the views of children and young people seriously	Spending too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy
Competent at working with Māori	Not competent at work with Māori	Not spending enough time on paperwork and bureaucracy
	Focusing too much on what families want	Spending insufficient time with children and families
	Not focusing enough on what families want	Spending too much time with children and families

SURVEY DATA CODING TO ASSESS NET FAVOURABILITY

Table 9 - Alignment of survey responses to positive and negative values for favourability assessment

Included	Excluded
They are competent They are concerned about the wellbeing of families they work with They are enthusiastic about that they do They are helpful They are honest They are intelligent They do what they say they are going to do They are trustworthy They take the views of children and young people they are working with seriously They are competent at working with Māori They focus too much on the wellbeing of children at the expense of children's families They focus too much on what children's families want	They are overworked They have a stressful job They are idealists They have their head in the clouds They spend insufficient time with the children and families they are working with They spend too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy They are underpaid
Weighting	
Strongly agree	+2
Agree	+1
Neither agree nor disagree	0
Disagree	-1
Strongly disagree	-2

SURVEY DATA SHOWING DISTINCTION BETWEEN STRONG AND MODERATE OPINIONS

Figure 21 - How professionals in the children's workforce believe child protection social workers are portrayed in news reporting

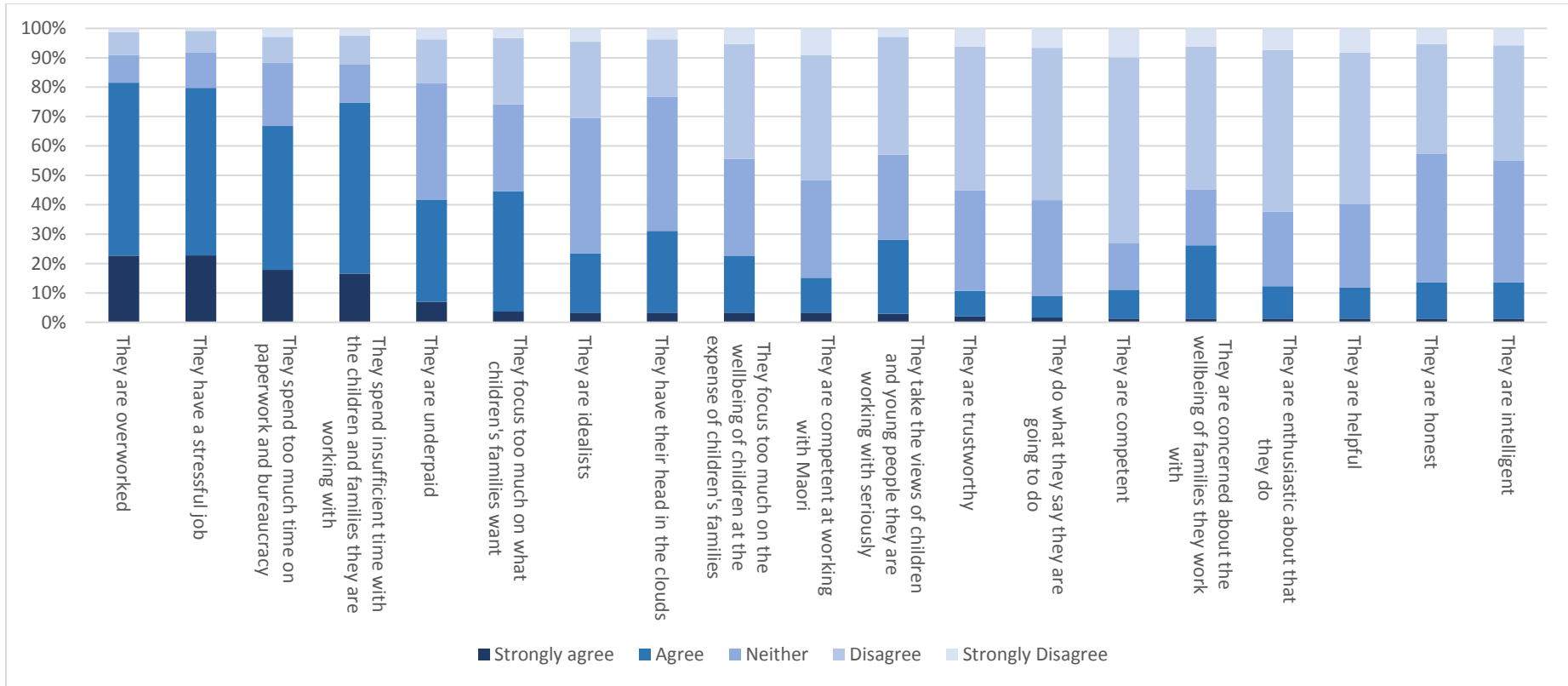


Figure 22 - How professionals in the children's workforce view child protection social workers

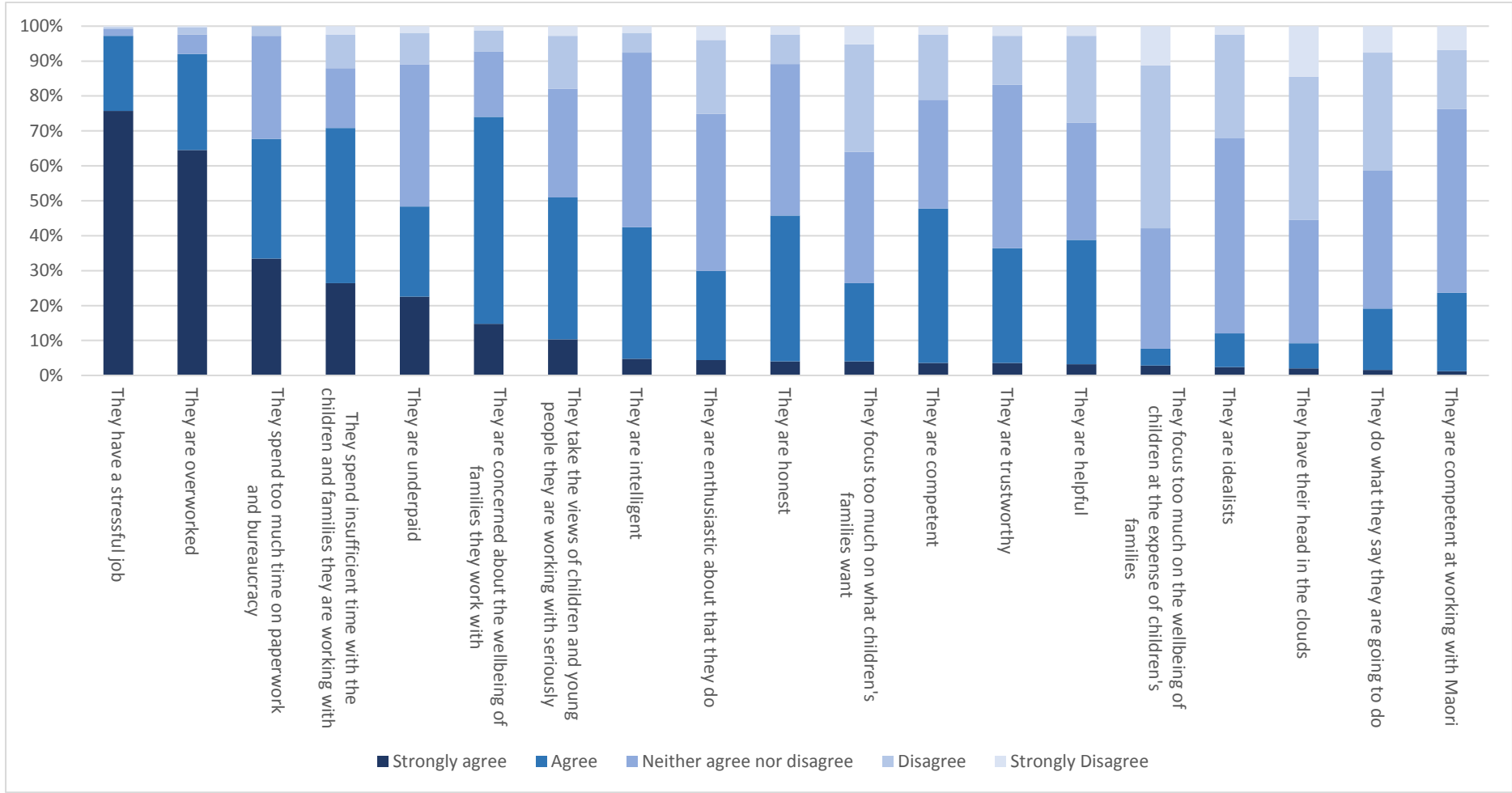
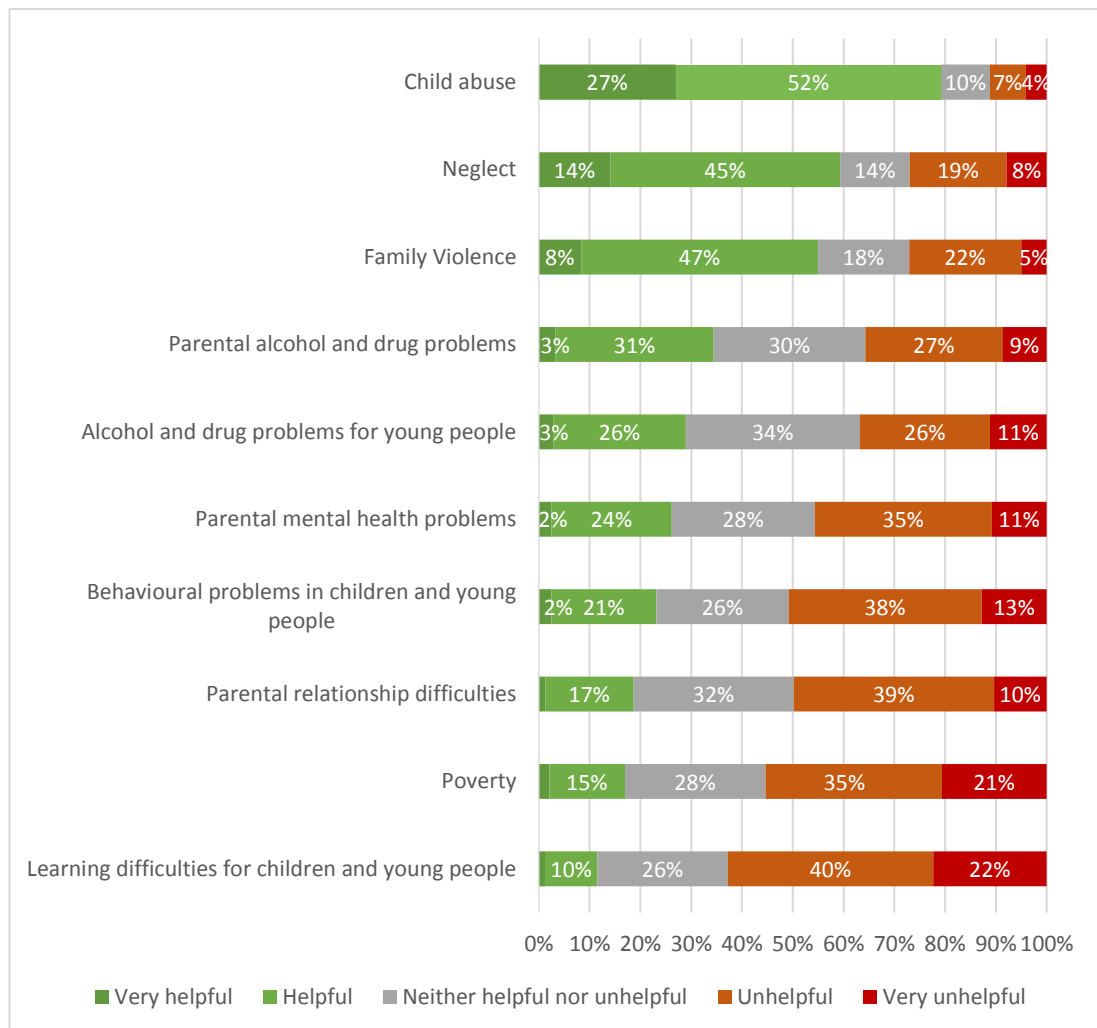
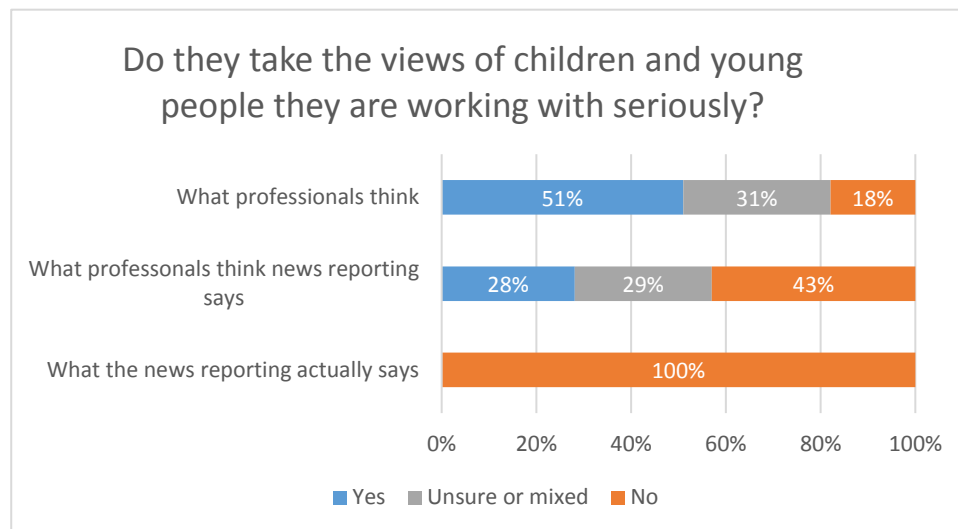
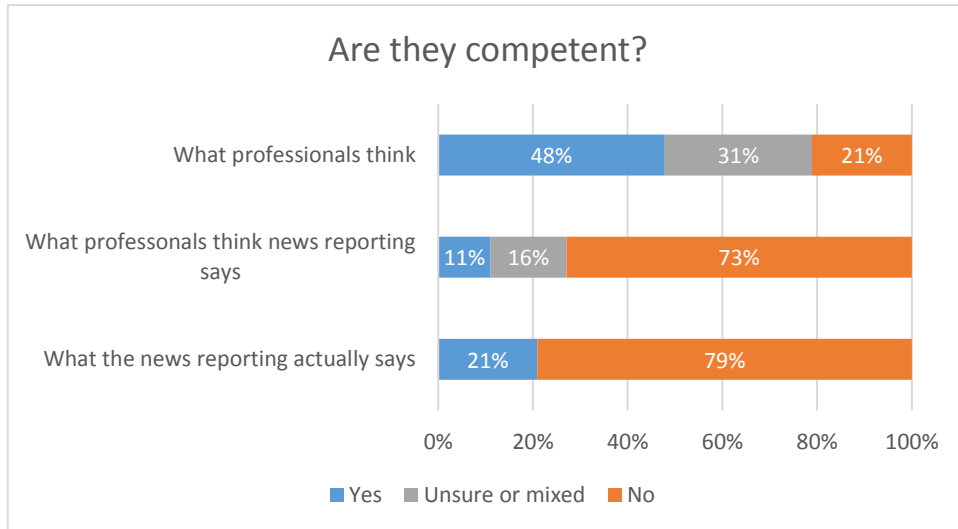


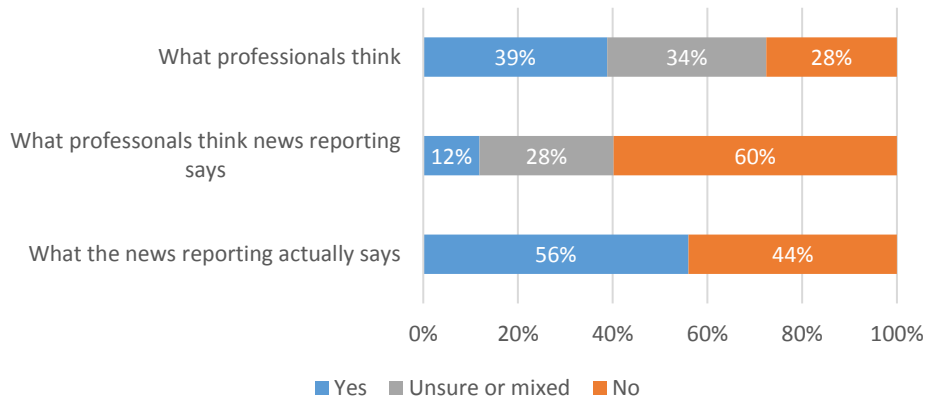
Figure 23 - Perceptions of helpfulness of referrals to a child protection social worker for different types of problems



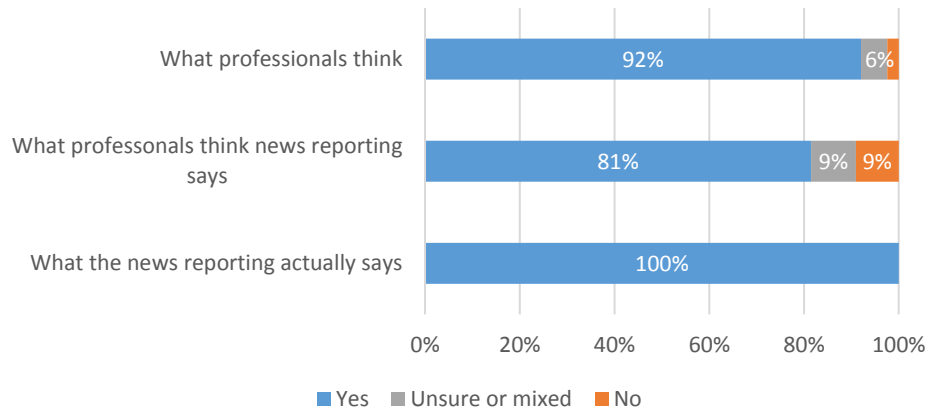
COMPARISONS OF MEDIA PORTRAYALS AND VIEWS OF PARTICIPANTS BY CHARACTERISTIC



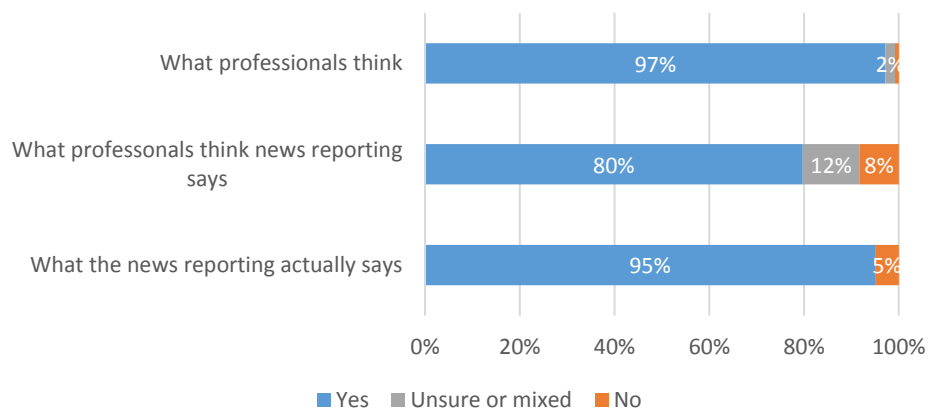
Are they helpful?



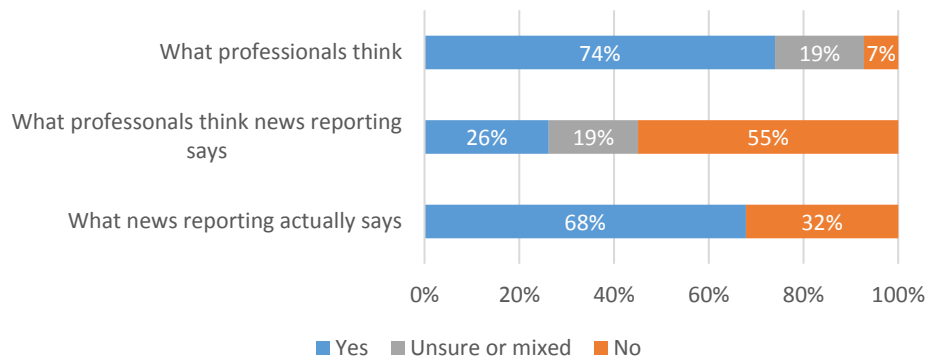
Are they overworked?



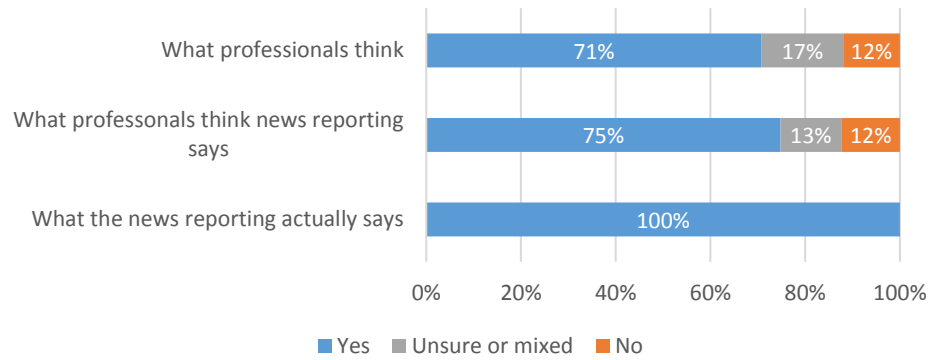
Do they have a stressful job?



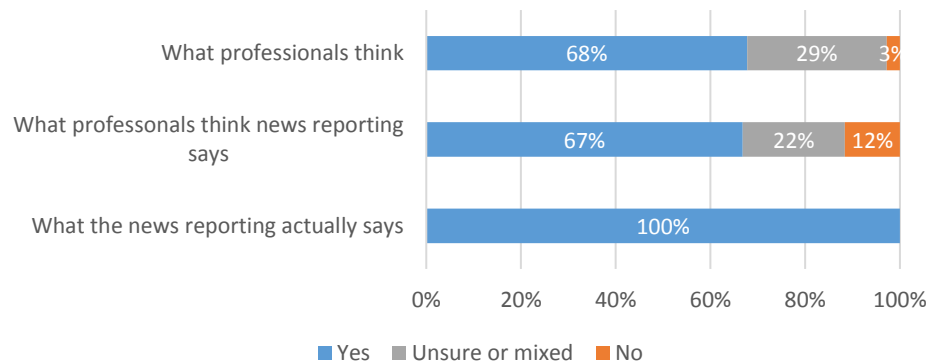
Are they concerned about the wellbeing of the families they are working with



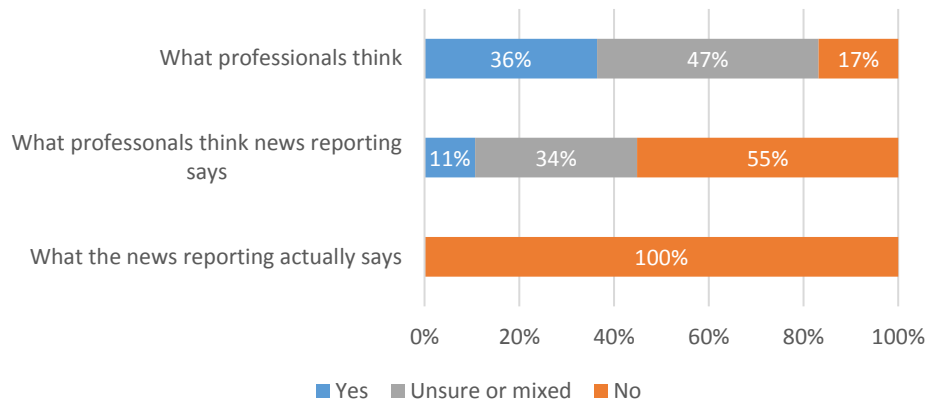
Do they spend *insufficient* time with they children and families that are working with?



Do they spend too much time on paperwork and bureaucracy?



Are they trustworthy?



Are they overworked?

