The concept of burnout has been seen as a significant problem with health, education, and human service workers in several cultures (Armstrong-Stassen et al., 1994; Green et al., 1991; Jamal, 1999; Schaufeli & Janczur, 1994). In social work specifically, calls for understanding and dealing with burnout span several decades (Lloyd et al., 2002). The call for cross-cultural research concerning this concept has been strong (e.g. Golembiewski et al., 1993), though not yet widely heeded (Rösing, in press). Beyond the search to establish a linkage of cultural factors to burnout (Savicki, 2002), there is also the concern that cultural influences may create conditions that impact different workers differently depending on their job role, as was found in the United States (Savicki, 1993). The current study tests whether culture affects job roles, and whether workers in different job roles experience different levels and sources of burnout.

The current study springs from research measuring burnout in workers in child welfare agencies across thirteen different cultures (Savicki, 2002). The cultures included Australia, Austria, Canada-Anglophone, Canada-Francophone, Denmark, England, Germany-former East, Germany-former West, Israel, Poland, Scotland, the Slovak Republic, and the United States.

Findings linking culture to burnout

Important findings from the previous 13 culture study included identification of significant contributions of culture to burnout, and the description of joint contributions of work environment and personal coping in predicting burnout levels. Using Hofstede’s (1980) cultural dimensions, it was found that higher levels of uncertainty avoidance and career success orientation in the general cultural were related to higher burnout. Individual deviations from cultural norms of lower individualism and higher power distance were also related to higher burnout. Important sources of burnout in the work environment were high work pressure, low efficiency and organization of work, lower autonomy, lower innovation, and lower social support. Individual coping styles of problem-focused coping helped in decreasing burnout; while emotion-focused coping contributed to higher burnout (Savicki, 2002).

Job role differentiation and burnout

Although the previous study differentiated between various job roles present in child welfare organizations, the focus of the previous research precluded a more in-depth study of job roles and burnout. The current study, follows job redesign theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1980), using the presumption was that workers in different jobs designed to accomplish different goals are likely to be exposed to different environmental demands, and thus experience different sources of burnout.

This presumption was partially supported in a study examining the differential impact of demands on three job roles (Savicki, 1993). In that study, the first job role, child and youth care workers, organized their work lives around continuous contact with a small set of children in the children’s living milieu. These workers experienced high requirements for teamwork and for flexibility to adjust to immediate and ever changing demands. In the second job role, employees in the same organizations who had more specialized treatment goals were more likely to see their clients serially: one-at-a-time, in private meetings, for short durations. These workers, many of whom were social workers, experienced requirements for external supervision, and for work activities structured around the time schedule. The third job role, managers, more often worked alone, had no immediate peers in the organization, and in addition to dealing with task and personnel issues within their agency, often also had to deal with pressures from external funding and evaluation sources as well as the general public. A multiple discriminate analysis of work environment factors found that, although workers in these three roles often worked in the same organization, they experienced significantly different work-related social climates. The patterns of contributors to burnout for each job role was also different (Savicki, 1993).

Culture and job roles
With the addition of culture as a variable, the question arises of whether or not the findings concerning job role and burnout reported in the United States can be replicated in different cultures. Additionally, the influence of culture may also affect the very organization of roles within child welfare agencies. The larger study (Savicki, 2002) did find vast differences in the proportions of workers assigned to various job roles in different cultures. Hofstede’s (1980) cultural dimensions generate several speculations about this finding. For example, cultures with higher norms for uncertainty avoidance might have a more specialized workforce to cover a broader range of details. Cultures with a higher norm for power differentials might have more managers. And, cultures higher in collectivism might encourage a generalist orientation, thus decreasing the numbers of specialists. The addition of culture opens a broad range of possibilities.

The following research hypotheses will be the focus of the current study:
Hypothesis 1: Culture has an impact on job role configuration within organizations
Hypothesis 2: Different job roles are subject to different work stressors
Hypothesis 3: Burnout levels are different for different job roles.
Hypothesis 4: Burnout sources are different for different job roles.

Methods
Participants
The 835 participants from the 13 cultures previously mentioned were all treatment providers, educators, and managers who worked in day or residential treatment facilities dealing with children or youth who might be classified as emotionally disturbed or developmentally delayed. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Sample sizes for each culture were: Australia (37), Austria (48), Canada-English (48), Canada-French (68), Denmark (79), England (89), Germany-East (98), Germany-West (47), Israel (36), Poland (42), Scotland (56), The Slovak Republic (80), United States (97).

Measures
Participants responded to a 166 item questionnaire containing questions concerning demographic information as well as several research scales. When necessary, the questionnaire was translated into the language of the respondents’ culture using either the back-translation or the bilingual professional panel method (Hofstede, 1980; Van de Vijver, & Leung, 1997).

Job roles
On the questionnaire, participants self-identified their primary job role from several options: child and youth care workers, specialists, teachers/educators, supervisors, mid-managers, and administrators. Since participants were not asked their educational training area or academic degree, social workers could have been employed in any of the job roles. However, informal sources suggest that social workers appeared most often in the Specialist job role category. Because of small numbers and related job duties, the last three roles were combined into a single role category labelled ‘manager’, with all analyses conducted on the resulting four job roles: child and youth care workers (n = 399), Specialists (n = 135), Teachers (n = 126), Managers (n = 139).

Burnout
Burnout was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The factor analyzed sub-scales for the MBI the include: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996).

Emotional Exhaustion is the extent to which a worker feels worn out and drained by the job. Depersonalization is the extent to which workers think about and treat children and youth and their families in an unfeeling and impersonal manner. Personal Accomplishment describes the extent to which workers feel successful in their work. This last scale becomes lower as workers become more burned out.

Cultural Work Values Scale
Hofstede’s (1980) study of cultural work values resulted in four dimensions of cultural work values. These dimensions describe critical norms and understandings of cultures.

Individualism vs Collectivism. Individualistic cultures emphasize personal action and responsibility. Collectivist cultures emphasize interpersonal relatedness and group action.

Masculinity (Career Success) vs Femininity (Quality of Life). Masculine cultures emphasize autonomy, assertiveness, and the centrality of work. Feminine cultures emphasize social-consciousness, nurturance and the centrality of social connectedness. Although Hofstede (1998)
defends his choice of the terms ‘Masculinity vs Femininity’ as a description of culture, the current research will use Adler’s (1997) terms ‘Career Success vs Quality of Life’ for this scale because these terms capture important content of the scale; yet are less likely to be mistaken as indicators of gender.

**Power Distance.** Power Distance between a manager and a subordinate in a hierarchy is the difference between the extent to which the manager can determine the behavior of the subordinate and the extent to which the subordinate can determine the behavior of the manager. In high Power Distance cultures managers believe that they can dictate the behaviour of the subordinate; and subordinates believe that they have little recourse but to follow; whether the behaviour is agreeable or not. On the other hand, in low Power Distance cultures managers understand that they must consult and collaborate with subordinates to direct their behaviour; and subordinates understand that they can question and influence the manager’s directives.

**Uncertainty Avoidance.** Uncertainty Avoidance indicates the degree to which cultures establish rules, procedures, and rituals to buffer uncertainties of individual judgment and freedom. High Uncertainty Avoidance cultures develop rules to cover a broad range of possibilities. Low Uncertainty Avoidance cultures let individuals react more spontaneously and ‘go with the flow’.

For each of the above dimensions two measures were calculated. The first, and Overall Culture measure was the average for each culture. The second measure was a Cultural Conformity indicator. That is, each member of a culture may agree more or less with the overall culture’s estimate of value for each dimension. Thus, conformity to, or deviation from the overall cultural norm was operationalized as the individual’s score on each dimension minus the average for the culture.

**Work Environment Scale.**
Selected sub-scales from the Work Environment Scale (Moos, 1981) were used to measure 7 different dimensions of an environmental characteristic called social climate.

**Peer Cohesion.** Peer Cohesion is the amount of friendliness and support that is perceived in co-workers.

**Supervisor Support.** Supervisor Support is the support of management and the extent to which management encourages workers to be supportive of each other.

**Autonomy.** Autonomy is the degree to which workers are encouraged to be self-sufficient and to make their own decisions.

**Task Orientation.** Task Orientation is the extent to which the work environment emphasizes efficiency and good planning.

**Work Pressure.** Work Pressure the extent to which the press of work dominates the job milieu.

**Control.** Control is the extent to which management uses rules and pressures to keep workers under control.

**Innovation.** Innovation is the extent to which variety, change, and new approaches are emphasized in the work environment.

**Coping Scale.**
This 28 item scale was developed to measure individual coping styles in the work place (Latack, 1986). It is based on research that found more particular coping strategies could be categorized into these two major coping styles.

**Control Coping.** Control Coping consists of both actions and cognitive reappraisals that are proactive, take-charge in tone. They address the actual source of stress. This approach is sometimes called ‘problem-focused coping’.

**Escape Coping.** Escape Coping consists of both actions and cognitive reappraisals that suggest an escapist, avoidance mode. They are oriented to decrease the negative feelings of stress. This approach is sometimes called ‘emotion-focused coping’.

**Procedures**
In the typical procedure, the culture contact person approached directors of child welfare agencies to have all of the treatment and management staff from the agencies respond to the research questionnaire. A major consideration for burnout research is that participants be currently functioning in a helping profession; that is, they are actually professionals doing real child welfare practice under typical working conditions. The current sample, while not randomly chosen or
Results

Prior to discussing results related to the research hypotheses, a brief description of the job roles will highlight the differences in both location and mode of operation between the job roles; thus providing empirical support for the presumption of differentiated task structures for the roles.

Location and modes of service of job roles
Significant differences were found in where workers in different job roles worked, and what modalities of service delivery they employed. These differences are consistent with the presumption that a distribution of effort in child welfare organizations results in differentiated role expectations in the service of providing adequate care and treatment for the children assisted by these organizations. Child and youth care workers performed their duties significantly more often in the living milieu of the child. Specialists, such as social workers, were significantly more likely than other roles to work in meetings with clients and in the homes of clients. Teachers, unsurprisingly, worked significantly more often than other roles in a school setting. While there is some overlap in terms of where workers in the different roles work, there are clear, statistically significant distinctions between roles concerning the emphasis.

Similar distinctions between roles occurred in favoured modalities of care. Both child and youth care workers and teachers spent a significantly higher percentage of time with children in a group modality. Specialists were significantly more likely to work with families, and managers were significantly more likely to be active with community organizations. The roles were undifferentiated in their use of work with individuals; every role used that mode of delivery approximately equally.

These results are consistent with earlier findings (Savicki, 1993) concerning the differentiated locations and modalities of workers occupying different roles within a child and welfare organization. Workers in different job roles were differentially distributed depending on the service emphasis of the child welfare organization. They tended to work in different parts of the child and youth care service organization, and the tended to emphasize different types of service.

Hypothesis 1: culture’s impact on role configuration
Different configurations of roles in child welfare organizations were related to different cultural work values. Cultures higher on the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension had a significantly higher percentage of Specialists. Cultures lower on Individualism (i.e. more Collectivist) had a significantly higher percentage of Teachers. Cultures higher on the Career Success dimensions had significantly more Specialists. Thus, cultures that valued formal training and expertise, and those that emphasized identity through one’s work, organized service delivery so that a higher number of special treatment providers were employed. Cultures that valued collective action and responsibility employed a larger proportion of teachers. Hofstede’s (1980) analysis is consistent with these findings in that high Uncertainty Avoidance cultures showed “Belief in experts and their knowledge” (p. 140), and preference for a “specialist career over [a] manager career” (p. 132). Likewise, in high Career Success cultures personal value is achieved through high status careers such as those represented by specialization (Hofstede, 1980). In Collectivist cultures more emphasis is placed on passing on the values of the in-group, and the socialization value of schools may be emphasized to meet this goal.

In attempt to test hypothesis 1 in another way, a Role Diversity Index was calculated for each culture. This index compared the proportions of workers in specialist, teacher, and manager roles to the proportion those in the child and youth care worker role. A higher Role Diversity Index number indicated a larger proportion of workers employed in roles other than the most common role: child and youth care workers. First order correlations of the Role Diversity Index with cultural work value scores indicated that role diversity was significantly higher in cultures with low Power Distance, high Uncertainty Avoidance, and low Individualism. The Role Diversity Index results were consistent with the previous analysis for both high Uncertainty Avoidance and low Individualism (Collectivism), but not for high Career Success. In addition, cultures who valued a more consultative or collaborative relationship with their managers showed higher role diversity. Again, Hofstede’s findings (1980) lend some support to the current results in that low Power Distance cultures feel that power should be distributed, in this case among various roles, and that the value is placed on
independence and consultation among various roles (pp. 92 & 94).

In summary, cultural work values were related to both the diversity of roles within a culture, and to specific job roles that were emphasized in the culture.

**Hypothesis 2: Job roles and different sources of burnout**

Figure 1 is a graphic representation of the results of a multiple discriminant analysis of job roles by work environment variables showing that all four roles studied were significantly different from each other in terms of the impact of their work environment. Function 1, accounting for 65% of the variance, combined the influences of high Innovation, high Autonomy, high Work Pressure, and high Peer Cohesion. On this function both Managers and Teachers were significantly higher from all others. Child and Youth Care Workers and Specialists were not different from each other. Function 2, accounting for 25% of the variance, loaded predominantly with Task Orientation. On this function Specialists were different from all other job roles. Managers, Teachers, and Child and Youth Care Workers were not significantly different from one another.

Thus, consistent with earlier findings (Savicki, 1993), the four job roles emphasized different aspects of the work environment. Not only did the four roles differentiate themselves in terms of locations and modes of service, as discussed earlier; they also perceived themselves as working in significantly different workplace environments. For example, Managers experienced high degrees of Autonomy while Child and Youth Care Workers and Specialists did not. Likewise, Child and Youth Care Workers and Teachers perceived a good deal of structure in their work life, while Specialists did not. Thus the distinctions in job tasks and requirements were paralleled by distinctions in the impact of work social climate factors in the immediate work environment.

**Hypothesis 3: Burnout levels**

Given the differences mentioned in the previous section, one might expect that the levels of burnout suffered by each job role might be different. In fact, no differences appeared between job roles on any of the three burnout sub-scales. Despite substantial differences in job tasks and perceived work environments, the different job roles all reported a similar level of burnout. As illogical as this result may seem at one level, on another level it...
is consistent with job design theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Although the task requirements for each job role may be quite different, the level of stress experienced may be the same. Each unique set of task requirements may generate its own types of stressors, which, even though qualitatively different from all others, may still be potent in producing burnout.

**Hypothesis 4: Different Patterns of Burnout**

Given the absence of difference in levels of burnout between the different job roles, it may be useful to examine the pattern of variables that contribute to burnout for each of the job roles. A pan-cultural analysis was conducted using hierarchical multiple regressions for the four job roles with each of the three burnout scales (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment) using work environment variables in step 1, coping styles in step 2, and Cultural Conformity measures in step 3. Overall Culture was not used in these analyses, since all job roles within any culture had identical Overall Culture scores. This specific regression order was followed to provide the most conservative test of the potency of culturally related variables as sources of burnout.

For Child and Youth Care Workers, Emotional Exhaustion was related to the combination of lower Task Orientation, higher Work Pressure, higher Escape Coping and lower than average Individualism in relation to the workers’ overall cultural norm. Depersonalization was related to the combination of lower Task Orientation, higher Work Pressure, lower Control Coping, higher Escape Coping, lower than average Individualism, and higher than average Career Success. Personal Accomplishment was related to the combination of higher Control Coping, higher Escape Coping, lower than average Individualism, and higher than average Individualism for the workers’ culture. Taken together, these results for child and youth care workers point out the environmental stressors of too much work to do in a disorganized work situation, while not dealing with the stressors directly and attempting to reduce negative emotions resulting from the stressors were sources of burnout. In addition, workers who scored lower than their home culture on the value of individual responsibility, and higher than their home culture on the meaning of work for self-identity were more likely to suffer burnout. Workers in the child and youth care worker role indicated many sources of burnout from the environment, from coping styles, and from non-conformity with cultural norms.

For Specialists, Emotional Exhaustion was related to the combination of lower Task Orientation, higher Work Pressure, and higher Escape Coping. Depersonalization was related only to increased Escape Coping. Personal Accomplishment was related to the combination of higher Control Coping and Individualism higher than average for the workers’ culture. Taken together, Specialists were more likely to report burnout when work loads were high and work was a bit chaotic; while at the same time the workers did not use problem focused coping, but rather relied on emotion focused coping. In addition, workers who scored higher than their culture mates on the value of taking individual responsibility at work, seemed to suffer less burnout.

For Teachers, Emotional Exhaustion was related to the combination of lower Supervisor Support, higher Work Pressure, and higher Escape Coping. Depersonalization was related to higher Work Pressure and higher Escape Coping. Personal Accomplishment was related to the combination of higher Innovation and higher Control Coping. Cultural conformity scores did not contribute to the teachers’ burnout. Taken together, Teachers were more likely to burn out when they experienced work overload, their supervisors were not encouraging, and they dealt the stressors by reducing the negative feelings associated with them rather than dealing with the sources of stress directly. Support and encouragement of new ideas also helped to reduce burnout.

For Managers, Emotional Exhaustion was related to the combination of higher Autonomy, higher Work Pressure, higher Escape Coping, and higher than average Uncertainty Avoidance for the culture. Depersonalization was related to the combination of low Peer Cohesion, high Work Pressure, and high Escape Coping. Personal Accomplishment was related to the combination of high Peer Cohesion, high Innovation, and high Control Coping. Taken together, Managers are more likely to burn out when they felt they have to make decisions on their own, without support of peers while under a high work load. Also contributing to burnout was the reliance on emotion focused coping, lower levels of problem focused coping, and a higher than average for the culture reliance on rules and regulations to assuage ambiguity at work. Encouragement and support of new ideas was related to lower burnout.
The above patterns of contributors to burnout show both communality and divergence. High Work Pressure, high Escape Coping, and low Control Coping contribute to higher burnout for all job roles. The demands of work load and the manner of coping with that work load shows consistent impact. However, all other contributors to burnout were not common across all job roles. High Innovation was related to lower burnout for only Teachers and Managers. Low Task Orientation and lower than average Individualism were related to higher burnout only for Child Care Workers and Specialists. Other significant contributors (Supervisor Support, Peer Cohesion, Autonomy, and higher than average Uncertainty Avoidance and Career Success) only related to burnout in a single job role. Beyond the core of communality, differences exist in contributors to burnout in the four different job roles.

In summary, all of the research hypotheses were supported with the exception of differing levels of burnout. Child welfare organizations in different cultures seemed to be influenced to use different staffing patterns. Both the tasks of workers in different job roles and their perceived work environment were different. Finally, although no differences appeared in levels of burnout, the contributors to burnout for each job role showed some degree of uniqueness.

Conclusions

In retrospect it seems logical to find sources of burnout in any job role. To expect that one role may be more burned out than another can be a somewhat ethnocentric position. People within a role may find it easier to believe that they and holders of similar positions may burn out more because they are more in touch with the sources of burnout for that particular role. However, it seems that burnout is an equal opportunity hazard that is not limited to specific jobs.

If burnout develops over time (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993), then it is likely that it is an accumulation of strains from low level, chronic sources; much like repetitive strain injury at the physical level (Savicki, 2002). Virtually any set of job tasks or work environment conditions repeated unchanged over a long period of time may erode a worker’s engagement with their job (Savicki & Cooley, 1994). Thus, no one job role necessarily has an advantage over any other if chronic stressors are not recognized and addressed or if working conditions are not changed (Shirom & Mazah, 1988).

Clearly, culture does play a part in how job roles are distributed in an organization. Cultural norms exert an unseen pressure for organizations and individuals to arrange themselves in accordance with specific values. It is useful to notice that not all cultures react in the same ways; there are many constructive ways to distribute staff. This recognition may be helpful for managers within a culture to think about alternative structures that may serve the organization’s mission better while bending cultural norms.

It may also be useful to find those individuals within a culture whose deviation from cultural norms are associated with lower levels of burnout. They may be able to inform others within the organization of alternative ways of thinking and behaving that prevent burnout.

Another implication for practitioners is that there is probably no single method for treating or preventing burnout since the sources of burnout vary from role to role. A burnout workshop or training for staff needs to be differentiated enough to accommodate the variations in role demands or it will predictably miss some portion of the staff needs. The closest to a generalizable formula for burnout prevention may be gaining control over work load and learning and using problem focused coping strategies while minimizing emotion focused coping strategies.

In summary, several important points have been developed from this research. Organizations assign people to different roles to accomplish their goals. Different roles do different tasks. Culture influences role prevalence and role diversity. Different roles perceive different work environments. Different roles are vulnerable to burnout from different aspects of the work environment. Overall levels of burnout do not differ between job roles.

Finally, the analysis, treatment, and prevention of burnout needs to take cultural differences into account. Although there may be some similarities with regard to sources of burnout, culture filters perceptions and expectations so that a successful method of dealing with burnout in one culture is not guaranteed to succeed in another culture. The procedures must be culturally sensitive.
References


