CONFIDENTIALITY AND INFORMATION-SHARING PRACTICES OF MINISTRY FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SOCIAL WORKERS

by

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Abstract

The move towards a more multidisciplinary approach to the delivery of child protection services in British Columbia raises concerns about the sharing of confidential case material. Factors associated with the information-sharing practices of social workers with law enforcement agencies were examined in this research. This descriptive study involved surveying forty-one intake child protection social workers employed by the Ministry for Children and Families in Vancouver and Coquitlam, using questionnaires. Knowledge of existing legislation, methods of accessing and sharing information with police, and attitudes about police involvement were examined, as well as workers' experience and participation in training. The analysis identified both contributors and obstacles to effective information-sharing and collaboration between social workers and police officers. Informal methods of accessing information were shown to be the most highly used and successful, but the lack of understanding of legislation and of each other's roles interfered with collaborative practice.

The results of this research will be of assistance in future training, as well as the development of interagency protocols.
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Chapter One

Introduction

Effective child protection social work requires the assessment of risk to children, as well as establishing a general picture of the family and its functioning. The concerns around privacy and the need for confidentiality in our society are balanced with the need for children to be protected, and for agencies to work together to achieve their common objectives in child welfare. These objectives are often difficult or impossible to achieve as necessary information can be limited or inaccessible. In particular, the ability to access information from police, share social work information, and work collaboratively can be hampered as confidentiality and information-sharing legislation is often misinterpreted and misunderstood by both social workers and police. Legal rules can be pliable; whether a particular legal rule will apply often depends on the arguments presented by one or the other side (Loewenberg & Dolgoff, 1992, p. 27). However, there is a need for an understanding of the legislation in order to argue effectively. Lack of understanding can result in inconsistent implementation and ineffective communication between the two agencies. Large gaps in service delivery can occur, often at the expense of the child.

Recent political and media attention has focused on the ability of the Ministry for Children and Families (MCF) to provide child protection services. The issues of “safety and well-being” and “best interests of the child” often get lost in a bureaucratic attempt to implement policy that can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The introduction of the Child, Family and Community Service Act (CF&CS) in January 1996 re-emphasized the responsibility of all citizens to protect the children of our communities. Although police
and social workers have different mandates, they share the same goal of protecting children. "An effective response to child maltreatment requires co-operative and co-ordinated action between child protective and law enforcement agencies" (Besharov, 1990, p.5). Both the CF&CS Act (B.C. 1996) and the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (B.C. 1992) outline the circumstances under which information can be shared between police and social workers. Consistent themes and clauses include statements such as "risk of significant harm to the public or an individual", "consistent purpose" and "on a need to know basis". However, there are no current protocols in place to provide clear direction to workers and police on the front lines. The absence of protocols leads to problems with interpretation of the legislation on a case by case basis. A thorough examination of current confidentiality and information-sharing practices is necessary to ensure that policy is being followed by both police and social workers, and that children are not being left at risk due to bureaucratic failings.

The Gove Inquiry into Child Protection

In May, 1994, the Government of the Province of British Columbia appointed the Honourable Judge Thomas Gove to make an inquiry into the child protection system in B.C. The request was the result of a report by the Minister of Social Services (now Ministry for Children and Families) on the 1992 death of five-year old Matthew Vaudreuil. Matthew and his mother had been involved with child protection services throughout his short life. There had been twenty-one social workers involved with the family, and at least sixty reports to the Ministry about his safety and well-being (Report of the Gove Inquiry, Executive Summary, 1995, p. 13). In July, 1992, Matthew was killed by his mother
Verna, who told police that she had put her hand over his nose and mouth to stop him from yelling. Verna pled guilty to manslaughter in 1994.

Judge Gove spent eighteen months examining the ways in which child protection services are delivered in B.C. He conducted public hearings throughout the province, received submissions, and met with individuals and groups involved in child welfare. His report, released in November 1995, includes not only an extensive review of Matthew's life and the circumstances that contributed to his death, but an examination of the child protection system, with a focus on the (then) Ministry of Social Services, the practice of its workers, and the legislation that guides workers decisions around the safety and well-being of children.

Judge Gove made 118 recommendations for changes to the delivery of child protection services. The recommendations encompass the philosophy of child welfare, investigations and ongoing case management procedures, staffing, training and legislation, to name only a few. Recurrent themes throughout the two volumes of the Report and the Executive Summary are the need for a more co-ordinated, multidisciplinary approach to child protection services, and the need for effective information sharing.

This research examines the confidentiality and information-sharing practices of social workers working with police in child protection investigations. I will make reference to the Ministry for Children and Families, the Vancouver City Police Department, and the Coquitlam R.C.M.P., as organizations that are responsible for child protection services in Vancouver and Coquitlam. In the Report of the Gove Inquiry into Child Protection (1995, Vol. 2), Judge Gove discusses the relationship between police officers and social workers, and identifies problems with information-sharing, as well as the lack of training on
interdisciplinary coordination, as key issues in the investigative process. He stated, “The Inquiry discovered that there is serious confusion and disagreement within the Ministry respecting access to and sharing of important case information” (Report of the Gove Inquiry, Executive Summary, 1995, p. 34).

The chapters that follow will examine theory and policy as they relate to police and social work organizations, and will present a review of the literature on collaboration and police-social work relations. Finally, the researcher’s own study is presented and analyzed, with recommendations for policy, practice and further research.
Introduction

Child welfare practice and service delivery in British Columbia have been undergoing major changes since the release of the Gove Inquiry into Child Protection (November 1995), and the creation of the Ministry for Children and Families in 1996. The move towards a more integrated, multidisciplinary approach to child protection has created a new set of obstacles and challenges for government and social workers alike. Recommendations from Judge Gove’s report and feedback from community organizations have indicated that increased communication amongst agencies and organizations involved in child protection is necessary in order to fulfill the mandate of the Child, Family and Community Service Act, and to provide better protection for the children of this province.

The Ministry for Children and Families and police departments (municipal and federal) are both mandated to provide child protection services. The ability and willingness of these organizations to collaborate and share information on child protection matters has been a long-standing problem, hampered by legislation and vague or non-existent policy. Members from both organizations have difficulty accessing information in an attempt to carry out their mandated duties. A thorough examination of the legislation and policies surrounding information sharing is necessary to determine if and how they contribute to the problem of collaboration between these identified organizations.
The Need for Privacy

"Instead of pursuing the false god of 'privacy', attention should be paid to identifying what specific interests of the individual we think the law ought to protect. And it is submitted that at the core of the preoccupation with the 'right to privacy' is the protection against the misuse of personal, sensitive information" (Wacks, 1989, as cited in Thomas, 1995, p. 13).

Central to the issue of sharing information is the view by society of the need for privacy in personal affairs and information. There is a growing concern among the public about the protection of privacy, as indicated in the results of a 1993 survey by Ekos Research Assoc. entitled *Privacy Revealed: The Canadian Privacy Survey*. The survey indicated that 40% of the approximately 3000 Canadians surveyed felt that their privacy had eroded over the past 10 years, 52% were extremely concerned about their privacy, and there was a general belief that there were not adequate safeguards to potential privacy (Ekos, p. 11). There were a number of factors that the respondents indicated influenced their concerns about privacy (Ekos, p. ii):

1) Their level of knowledge of the process and purpose of the information gathering;

2) whether the rules were understandable and the process explicit;

3) their level of control over the process;

4) the perceived rationale or benefit, and

5) the level of trust and legitimacy they held with the institution, organization, government or Ministry.
Canadians in the survey felt they had a strong responsibility for ensuring their own privacy, but also preferred government controls and a regulatory response. Eighty-three percent felt they should be asked for permission for their information to be passed from one organization to another, 87% felt they should be advised what the information will be used for when it is collected, and 72% felt it was extremely important to be in control of who can access the information about them (Ekos, p. 11). This addresses the issue of informed consent, in that persons are notified in advance that information is being collected, give permission before it is distributed, and are informed of the ultimate purpose of the information collection.

There is a need in society for social control over intrusion, and an ability to protect individuals from the overreaching control of others. Privacy has a role in social freedom, and there are social norms regarding privacy. We invade a person’s privacy when we disclose information that was entrusted to us not to reveal, or when there was a presumption of confidence (Schoeman, 1992, p. 148). Gossip leads to inclusion or exclusion of certain persons or groups, yet also permits or advances social knowledge (Schoeman, 1992, p. 150). This could be closely aligned to informal information sharing, as we convey information when we gossip, but not publicly. “Privacy for” suggests the pursuit of our own freedom and personal life without interference, while “privacy from” suggests restrictions on others’ access to a person (Schoeman, 1992, p. 156). This well-established social belief in privacy is extended to governments and organizations, and is the basis of much of the current legislation regarding freedom of information.
The Need for Information Sharing

The current move towards a more coordinated approach to child welfare in British Columbia requires the sharing of information regarding shared cases and families. If our goal is to attempt to establish as full a picture as possible of the child, their circumstances, and the family as a whole, then information held by different organizations must be shared to achieve this goal. In the 1998 BC Ministry for Children and Families handbook, *The B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect*, one of the stated purposes is to provide a collaborative response to child abuse and neglect by all service providers, which by definition includes social workers and police officers. However, conflicting rules, policies and legislation in both organizations make this task a difficult one at the best of times.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

As a need for privacy arises (psychological), it may be interpreted as a civil right in various ways (political) and finally claimed as a legal right in law (legal) (Thomas, 1995, p. 8). In 1992, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA) was introduced to address the public concern about information gathering, sharing, and access to information which is held by government and other organizations. It showed a commitment by government to make public bodies more accountable to the public and to protect personal privacy (Ministry of Attorney General, 1992, p. 2). It identifies a general right to the protection of privacy, and establishes strict standards as to how public bodies collect, use and disclose personal information. As well, it provided for the appointment of a Privacy Commissioner, whose role includes ensuring that exceptions to the rights of
access and privacy are applied narrowly (Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Annual Report, 95/96). I will not attempt in this chapter to fully analyze the legislation, but rather examine the sections that are relevant to information sharing between police and social workers in child protection matters.

FOIPPAA Disclosure of Information

Concerns around disclosure and information-sharing concentrate on that which occurs without consent, and therefore will be the focus of the next discussion. The principle of public interest being paramount and the balancing of public interest against the rights of privacy are addressed a number of times on the legislation. Part 2, Division 4, Section 25(1) of the Act states:

Whether or not a request for access is made, the head of a public body must, without delay, disclose to the public, to an affected group or people, or to an applicant, information

(a) about a risk of significant harm to the environment or to the health or safety of the public or a group of people, or

(b) the disclosure of which is, for any other reason, clearly in the public interest.

Public interest appears to be an overriding clause, in that in specified circumstances it can outweigh the need for confidentiality. The health or safety of an individual, not necessarily the individual to whom the information relates, is a compelling circumstance that can allow for the disclosure of information to someone other than the individual to whom it
relates (FOIPP Ontario, Manual, 1990). Part 3, Division 2, Section 33 of the Act states that:

- Personal information may only be used or disclosed without consent
- (c) for the purpose for which it was obtained or compiled, or for a use consistent with that purpose,
- (e) for the purpose of complying with a subpoena, warrant or order issued by the Courts, person or body with jurisdiction to compel the production of information,
- (n) to a public body or a law enforcement agency in Canada to assist in an investigation
  - (i) undertaken with a view to a law enforcement proceeding, or
  - (ii) from which a law enforcement proceeding is likely to result.

The Act defines that a use of personal information is consistent with the purposes for which it was obtained or compiled if the use has a reasonable and direct connection to that purpose, AND is necessary for a public body to perform its statutory duties or meet its responsibilities under an authorized programme (Ministry of Attorney General, 1992). The term “consistent purpose” is a common theme throughout the policies that have stemmed from this legislation, and will be discussed again later.

The Act also includes a section that allows for the refusal of information, and this is relevant to the issue at hand. Part 2, Division 2, Section 15(1) states that:

- The head of a public body may refuse to disclose information to an applicant if the disclosure could be reasonably expected to
(a) harm a law enforcement matter,
(c) harm the effectiveness of investigative techniques and procedures currently used, or likely to be used, in law enforcement, or
(g) deprive a person of a right to fair trial or impartial adjudication.

The disclosure of information cannot negatively impact the effectiveness of law enforcement activities.

Confidentiality of Police Information

Since the enactment of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act in 1992, police departments in British Columbia have been governed by these rules regarding the disclosure of information. Access to information is allowed only in ways that do not violate the rights of privacy of individual citizens (College of Law, Arizona, 1974). Police collect information in a variety of ways and from a variety of sources, but store them in one of two computer systems. The Records Management System (RMS) contains records of all cases originating from within the Vancouver Police Department. The Canadian Police Information Centre (C.P.I.C.) is operated by the R.C.M.P., and includes criminal records and outstanding warrant information.

In a 1994 Report to the Attorney General submitted by the B.C. Police Commission, the issue of confidentiality of investigative information was addressed. The Commission made numerous references to the Regulations and Procedures Manual of the Vancouver Police Department. As I was not able to gain access to that manual, I am
having to rely on quotes from the Commission’s Report regarding disclosure of information.

Section 13(3) of the manual states that “no member shall disclose any confidential information unless authorized” (Commission Report 1994, p. 16). Section 162 continues with “…all requests for criminal records from individuals and/or agencies outside the department shall be directed to the Inspector in charge of the Information Section”. With respect to C.P.I.C. information, section 115.1 states that:

Information that is contributed to, stored in, and retrieved from C.P.I.C. files is confidential, and must receive the degree of protection necessary to prevent disclosure to unauthorized agencies or individuals. Each agency having direct terminal access to C.P.I.C. files is responsible for the confidentiality and dissemination of information stored on the C.P.I.C. system. Members shall not disseminate C.P.I.C. information except to agencies legislatively responsible for law enforcement on a need-to-know basis.

If the goal of the policy is to provide guidance and promote uniformity in police practice (College of Law, Arizona, 1974), then this appears to have been achieved by limiting access to information to police only, and allowing all other requests for information to be reviewed and decided upon by the Inspector of the Information Section. This achievement, of course, is dependent upon strict adherence to the policy by members.
The Police Act of British Columbia (1980) and the accompanying Regulations identify areas where disciplinary action can be taken against a member of a municipal police force. Appendix A of the Regulations states that:

Any member of a municipal force commits a disciplinary default if he engages in any one or more of the following:

1) Discreditable conduct, that is, if he

   (d) contravenes the provisions of the Act or any rule or regulation made or enacted in accordance with the Act, or

5) Improper disclosure of information, that is, if he

   (a) without proper authority communicates to any person any information which he has in his possession as a member of a police force to the detriment of effective police operations, or

   (b) makes any anonymous communication to any police authority or any member of a police force.

Although there is a need for workable rules to govern police conduct, priority should be given to the formulation of administrative rules governing the exercise of discretion. Police departments have tended to keep policies ambiguous and invisible rather than risk discussion and controversy by developing overt administrative guidelines (College of Law, Arizona, 1974). However, with the introduction of FOIPPA, this ability has been legislated away from the police departments, who must now comply with the guidelines of the Act.
The Ministry for Children and Families

A number of government documents were examined in an attempt to identify and clarify Ministry policy on information sharing. Two major pieces of legislation, The B.C. Benefits Act (July, 1996), and the Child, Family and Community Service Act, 1996 (CF&CS) and their accompanying regulations were the principle foci of study. As well, there are policy manuals detailing both Acts, and The B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect, a 1998 handbook for service providers published by the Ministry for Children and Families.

The B.C. Benefits Act was introduced in 1996, replacing the Guaranteed Available Income for Need Act, 1979 (GAIN). The B.C. Benefits Act does not have its own confidentiality clauses, and defers to the Freedom of Information Act. The GAIN Act did have its own confidentiality clauses, and as it was in effect for seventeen years and governed practice re: information-sharing until recently, I feel it is worth discussion. Although neither of these two Acts directly apply to child protection, they provide for the collection and distribution of a large quantity of information on clients receiving Income Support Payments in the province, and information is often requested by police and social workers in child protection matters. The GAIN Act, Section 6(1) stated “Except as provided by the regulations, no person shall disclose to another person not legally entitled to it, information, respecting an individual, obtained in the administration of this Act”.

The regulations expanded on the issue of confidentiality in Section 7(2) to state:

The Director or an administrating authority may disclose information, respecting an individual, obtained in the administration of the Act and these regulations, provided such disclosure
(a) is to the police or next of kin in the event of death or an emergency, or  
(d) is required in order that court-issued warrants, summons, subpoenas, or notices of court-hearings may be served on a recipient or on a former recipient, in which case only the individual’s last known address may be given to police or to a sheriff,  
(e) is to a police officer  
   i) to assist in an investigation where there is a significant likelihood of harm to the safety of an individual or the public, and  
(h) is to the superintendent, as defined in Section 1 of the Family and Child Service Act (now Director, CF&CS Act), for the purposes of an investigation relating to a child protection matter under that Act.

The Income Assistance manual, Part 2, Section 6, further dealt with confidentiality. In #7 (b) “staff are required to report to police if they have knowledge that client’s actions may injure himself or others, or where the safety of a child, family member or the general public is involved”, and (d) “staff are to provide essential information to police when they are investigating a serious crime (such as murder or rape), and there is significant likelihood of harm to the safety of an individual or the general public”. As well, Section 13(d) stated that “in any cases of alleged child abuse, police and staff are expected to fully co-operate in the investigation and share any necessary information”.

The Child, Family and Community Service Act was introduced in British Columbia in January 1996, complete with its own set of confidentiality rules. For the most
part, information gathered and records made under the CF&CS Act are not governed by FOIPPA, but by Section 5 of the CF&CS Act. It states that the Director may, without the consent of any person, disclose information obtained under the Act if the disclosure is necessary to ensure the safety or well-being of a child (Section 79). This action is defined as "the director provides only as much information as is required for a specific purpose and only to those who need to know because they are...recognized in the community as organizations with community-wide responsibilities for the safety and well-being of children (includes police)". The question must be answered, "will the disclosure assist in protecting the child from abuse or neglect, or further the child's well-being?"

The CF&CS policy manual considers paramount the principle of a child's safety and well-being, and that children have a right to be protected from abuse, neglect and harm, or threat of harm, and states that this is a general consideration for determining whether to disclose information (Policy manual, p. 5.3-3). The manual further defines the circumstances by which "disclosures may occur in relation to safety where the director is...assessing information in a report or an investigation or assisting another person to protect a child. Disclosures may occur in relation to well-being ....where a child is in care following a removal under Section 30" (Manual p. 5.3-5). The director must review with the person to whom the information has been disclosed that it is confidential and cannot be disclosed further without the consent of the director. There is an assumption that when information is shared, the recipient has an obligation of confidence in handling it (Thomas, 1995, p. 65).

In an attempt to ensure the collaboration of agencies in child protection matters, the Ministry for Children and Families has rewritten their interagency handbook,
The B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect. It further expands on the issues of information sharing and confidentiality. It states that sharing and coordinating information are vital parts of the response to child abuse and neglect, and that the laws in the CF&CS Act are intended to address specific information concerns that arise in the context of child protection and preventative work (1998, p. 54-55). Social workers' right to necessary information overrides FOIPPA, but not the Young Offenders Act or client-solicitor privilege. Information may be disclosed by social workers without consent and without a request when it is necessary to ensure the safety or well-being of a child. This can occur at all levels of case work, and includes disclosure to police officers when it is related to a criminal investigation involving child abuse or neglect (The B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect, p.57). With respect to criminal proceedings, the Victims of Crime Act allows for the victim, child or parent to have information related to status of police investigations, charges, and release conditions of the accused (The B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect, p. 42). For children in the care of MCF, this right would extend to the child protection social worker. In order to protect and support the child, the child protection worker needs to know of any arrests, charges laid, detention, bail conditions or a decision by any investigator not to proceed further, and can be informed by Crown Counsel or the bail supervisor (The B.C. Handbook for Action on Child Abuse and Neglect, p. 44-45). Police officers who investigate allegations of child abuse or neglect should make every effort to ensure that a coordinated, interagency approach is followed, in accordance with Ministry of Attorney General policy and local protocols (Ministry of Attorney General, 1995). This policy provides clear guidelines for police and the Attorney General in situations where convicted offenders have re-entered
the community, are at risk of re-offending, or are suspected of having already re-offended. It adheres to the requirements of FOIPPA, and outlines procedures for reporting, sharing information, and levels of authority. Section 14 of the CF&CS Act addresses the duty to report, and states that any person who has reason to believe that a child needs protection must report the matter to a director, and that this duty applies even if the belief is based on confidential information and its disclosure is prohibited under another Act. This duty to report extends to police officers, and failure to report is considered an offence under the Act.

Information Sharing in Practice

Both police officers and social workers are involved in publicly sanctioned information collection. This is usually as a result of an intrusion into persons' private lives, but the intrusions are seen as justified as they are representatives of the public interest, or acting in the best interests of the person intruded upon (Thomas, 1995, p. 19). Information that is collected contains complaints (both founded and unfounded), sensitive history, services provided, attitudes of parents, judgments of workers and police, and collateral sources. Protection of confidentiality is important to the worker-client relationship, as this helps ensure a level of trust. It has been my experience that there is widespread disagreement as to the social worker's role in policing. Do social workers feel compelled to divulge crime, albeit petty, to police, or do they feel this would jeopardize their relationship with their client? Do they feel ethically responsible to disclose the whereabouts of their client if they know there is a warrant for their arrest? Efforts are often made to balance the merits of disclosure of information with the individual's right to
the protection of personal privacy (Beck, David, 1990, as cited in Zazulak, p.3), while attempting to protect the client and the public at the same time. Improper use of information or government authority can undermine the public’s confidence in the organization (Ombudsman, 1982).

The British Columbia Association of Social Workers (BCASW) Code of Ethics allows for the disclosure of information when “necessary to prevent a crime, or to prevent clients doing harm to themselves or to others” (Code of Ethics, Section 6.7.10). It continues to state that such disclosure should be made with reasonable care, and with the client’s knowledge, unless informing the client would impede the due process of law or violate the duty to warn others.

There are a number of common threads throughout the different legislation and policies regarding information-sharing. These include “compelling public interest”, “consistent purpose”, and a “need-to-know” basis.

Compelling public interest coincides with the principle in the CF&CS Act and policy that the safety and well-being of the child shall be paramount, and applies to both police and social workers. However, this is not to be considered in isolation, which brings in the issue of consistent purpose. Police cannot disclose information about a person’s criminal history or current charges unless it is consistent with the matter at hand. For example, during a joint sexual abuse investigation, it may not be relevant for police to disclose that the alleged offender has a criminal record for theft, but it would be significant to share that he had been charged with a sex crime. This would be information that would be consistent with the current investigation. This can then be linked to the “need-to-know” clause, which continues to address the relevance of the information to the case at hand. Is
there a reason that the information should be shared, whether or not it is a joint investigation? What information needs to be shared in an interdisciplinary setting, with other agencies, to enable them to carry out their role and mandate?

It appears from this review that despite strict regulations and laws governing the disclosure of information, there are rules in place that allow cross-boundary information sharing when it involves a child protection matter. The fact that there is still a problem between police and social workers leads me to two conclusions: (a) There may be a lack of interest in collaboration on these matters, possibly based on attitudes about each other’s organization or profession, and (b) there may be a lack of understanding of the confidentiality policies and how they can be implemented.

In relation to the former, protection and preservation of the worker-client relationship often takes precedent over involving law enforcement officers, and can be attributed to a lack of clear understanding of the mandate of police and the absence of a well-established trust relationship with them as community partners. From a practice standpoint, legitimate concerns over a client’s right to privacy as well as a lack of clear understanding of the policies and guidelines for disclosure of information can interfere with effective collaboration. The introduction of Freedom of Information legislation may have caused police and social workers to be so concerned with personal liability that it interferes with fulfilling their mandate of protecting children. It is, however, more likely that the problems with sharing information stem from a “fear in those who have to administer the Act(s) and provisions that they will be punished if they misapply the clauses in favour of giving access to information” (Beck, David, 1990, as cited in Zazulak, p. 3).
It is easier to say nothing than risk being wrong in the exercise of disclosure (Wilson, 1978).
Chapter Three

Literature Review

There is a significant amount of literature on both descriptive and empirical research on police-social work relations and their efforts to collaborate on child protection matters. A review of these previous studies and findings assisted with the analysis of the current working relationship between police and social workers.

The Need for Collaboration

In order to fully understand the current situation regarding information sharing between social workers and police, an examination of the history of their relationship and contributing factors needs to be made. Since the 1980's, there has been a recognition that the roles of both professions are changing. There has been an increase in police providing social services, not law enforcement (Holdaway, 1986), an increasing role for police in child protection investigations and inter-agency collaboration (Hill & Aldgate, 1996), and social workers are now more involved in social control, social policing and statutory work (Thomas, 1988). These parallel developments in police and social work indicate that neither can "go it alone", and need the support of their partner agency (Thomas, 1988, p. 120).

In 1970, Quinn Tamm, the Executive Director of the International Association of Chiefs of Police stated:

But the social climate of our times has immensely broadened this concept (of police maintaining peace and protecting life and property) to where police find
themselves the arbiter between rival social factions, where they find themselves involved in the most delicate problems of human relations in the rapidly changing social structure of our modern society. It is no exaggeration to say that the type of duties normally performed by social workers occupy as much as fifty percent of the long day of both police administrators and line officers. To meet these demands requires abilities, training and understanding far beyond what was ever conceived as necessary police characteristics in the not-too-distant past. Today any plan of action must be carefully considered from the standpoint of the human factors involved. (Whisenand & Tamaru, 1970, p. 93)

With a shared mandate of child protection, collaborative actions are necessary when function and tasks require police and social workers to work together. Ginsberg (1995, p. 156) writes of networking, defined as a “relationship between an individual and another individual, group or organization that provides a reciprocal benefit in terms of information/advice/knowledge or collaboration”. Carter, in her research for the Gove Inquiry, cited Lane (1982), “Agencies operating in isolation, from different and often conflicting philosophies and practice, can leave children at serious risk” (Carter, 1994, p. 116).

Hallett and Stevenson (1980) stated that:

There is anxiety on the part of every profession that the information they disclose to others will be abused, either by being passed directly to the client and even to outsiders with unfortunate results. However, it is apparent that when there is trust,
if individuals know and respect each other, less difficulties arise from confidentiality. (p. 99)

There needs to be an assumption that when information is shared, that the recipient has an obligation of confidence in handling it (Thomas, 1995, p. 65). Central to the issue of trust is the need for a common understanding, with a commitment to recognize the roles and functions of the other organization and its members (Caputo & Ryan, 1991). Pitcher, in 1972, spoke of the (then) present status of law enforcement in child maltreatment. He stated:

The definition of an acceptable police role in dealing with cases of child abuse has been particularly hampered by the tendency of some members of social work to stereotype all law enforcement officers as ‘authority’ figures whose mere contact with abusive families is undesirable due to a possible detrimental effect on subsequent family therapy. (Giovannoni & Becerra, 1979, p. 242)

Holdaway cited comments from two social workers that supported Pitcher’s belief, “there is also in our view an increased skepticism, mistrust, and sometimes openly hostile attitude between police and social workers” (1986, p. 143). Curtis and Lutkus found a range of responses in their survey of confidentiality practices of police social workers, from “there should be a full exchange of information between social workers and police”, to “give no more information than is necessary for police management of the case”, and “provide the police with the least possible information while serving the client” (1985, p. 356). These statements are echoed in more recent literature. Cruickshank (1995),
Besharov (1990), and Treger (1981) all discussed the need for enhanced police-social worker understanding and recommended increased training regarding delivery of services and differing philosophies, addressing areas of conflict, and dispelling myths. Their findings all support the position that there are still problems between the members of the two organizations based on attitudes and beliefs about each other and their professional role.

Thomas (1995) stated that a move towards a more coordinated approach to social services and child welfare requires the sharing of information regarding shared cases and families. However, what information needs to be shared with other agencies to enable them to carry out their mandates needs to be clearly defined and understood by the workers involved. As the needs of clients cross the boundaries of professional disciplines, each member must understand the functions and roles of the other members (Carter, 1994). Hallett and Birchall (1992) examined interagency collaboration, and noted that the "essence of collaboration is that the combination of skills produces an outcome which could not be achieved as effectively or efficiently by other co-operative means" (as cited in Morrison, 1996, p. 129). They continued by defining collaboration as a "process of working together formally and informally, and measuring changes in output of service and benefits, and determining what has been achieved" (as cited in Morrison, 1996, p. 129).

**Police-Social Work Co-operation**

Police and social work co-operation in child protection has been examined a number of times in the literature (Bellamy, 1984; Murphy, 1995; Treger, 1981; Thomas,
Treger identified five guidelines for a successful interdisciplinary team (1981, p. 427), which have been supported by other researchers:

1) Recognize and define realistic achievable, mutual goals with specific emphasis on benefits for each profession.

   Bellamy (1984) also found that there was a sense of benefit by police that involvement with MCF would affect their workload, in that there may be less return calls to a residence, or that preventative work would be started with younger children.

2) Define roles, with an emphasis on the uniqueness and similarities of each profession.

   Wilson and Pence in their study noted that having clear roles and responsibilities and clarifying expectations limited conflict between members (Besharov, 1990, p. 33).

3) Mutual commitment and positive attitudes. Caputo and Ryan found that success can often be dependent on the willingness of the members (1991, p. 32).

4) Identify and work towards resolution of critical areas i.e. communication and decision-making.

5) Understand and cope with social change. Social change can create anxiety, challenge established norms and relationships, and create conflict and disequilibrium in a system (Treger, 1981, p. 430).

With a clear picture of the need for collaboration in the policy and literature, and a brief examination of the problems in practice, it then becomes important to examine the
potential obstacles to information-sharing and coordinated efforts by police and social workers. Both Stevenson (1989, as cited in Morrison, 1996) and Murphy (1995) examined barriers to multi-disciplinary work and collaboration:

1) Perspective and priority: There are differences in how police and social workers view the problem of child abuse, as well as how it fits in as a priority in each of their organizations. This affects how the problem is responded to, as well as the amount of time that is committed to it.

2) Roles and stereotyping: Members have their own history, "jargon", value system and humour, and are viewed by others based on their organizational culture. Strong, unofficial and informal rules and ways of thinking within organizations affect the relationship and are difficult to change.

3) Status and power: There are differences in training, occupational status and public image, as well as power within the relationship and organizations. "Within a process that aims to prevent the abuse of power with regard to children, it is important not to mirror the abuse of power within the system" (Murphy, 1995, p. 50).

4) Communication: Information is power, and disagreements arise as to what should be shared, what value the information has, and whether it is viewed as a breach of confidentiality. Garner (as cited in Garner & Orelove, 1994) states that when communication is absent or incomplete, mistakes are made. Butler-Sloss (1988) stated that "it is unacceptable that the disagreements and failure of communication of adults should be allowed to obscure the needs of children" (as cited in Murphy, 1995, p. 13).
5) Mutual benefit: The reasons for collaboration must be clear, there must be a balance of costs and benefits for each organization, and sufficient resources should be in place to support the organizations working together.

Professional Ethics

Ethical dilemmas present themselves for social workers regardless of the legislation in effect. Protection of confidentiality is required in the worker-client relationship, and there must be a level of trust to ensure that the disclosure is truthful (Thomas, 1995). Clients may be unwilling to reveal personal information if they feel it will be shared, and the profession and its reputation may be damaged if clients believe social workers will not keep all in confidence (Rhodes, 1986). Shardlow stated “in much of the literature confidentiality is presented as a problem for the practitioner trying to ensure that professional ethics and legal requirements coincide” (1995, p. 77). He continues with a quote from Gutheil (1990), “What does one do if the law dictates one path, and one’s ethical mandates point another way: e.g., when the law compels a disclosure of sensitive information and one’s ethical promptings urge a silence?” (as cited in Shardlow, 1995, p. 78).

Finding the correct balance between client’s right to privacy and the rights of other people and of society to certain information (Loewenberg & Dolgoff, 1992, p. 70) requires workers to examine the often competing values of justice and equality, confidentiality and protecting life (Loewenberg & Dolgoff, 1992, p. 9). Preserving a trust relationship and protecting society is often a difficult task. Rhodes asked, “Does the good of the client take precedent over confidentiality? “Does the overall good of society
require us to break a confidence?" (Rhodes, 1986, p. 64). At times a practitioner may follow the law and still be guilty of unethical behavior, yet there is a general assumption that human service professionals have an ethical duty to obey the law (Lowenberg & Dolgoff, 1992, p. 27).

The legal and organizational limits to keeping confidences, as discussed in Chapter 2, can be in conflict with ethical considerations. Often requests for information are not related to child protection, but would serve to protect society. If the need for the information is not "consistent with the reason for which it was collected", but is needed for the greater good of society, then the social worker is faced with an ethical dilemma. Situations exist where children are removed from their homes because parents are involved in a criminal matter, where without police involvement there would have been no child protection concerns i.e. when a parent is arrested for a traffic warrant. As well, is the sharing of information part of the joint police-social work investigation? For example, when police are requesting the address of a female client placed in a Transition House, do they want to speak with her because there has been joint police-social worker involvement in a case of domestic violence, or do they want her as a material witness in a murder investigation? There are ethical and legal differences in these requests.

Confidentiality presents moral and practical dilemmas (Hallett & Stevenson, 1980). The Board of Registration for Social Workers in the Province of British Columbia is the body responsible for the regulation of practice of social work in B.C. However, adherence to the Code of Ethics and registration through the Board is voluntary. Complaints made about a social worker's breach of confidentiality can only have consequences through the Board if the social worker is a registered member. The B.C.
Association of Social Workers can advise members on confidentiality matters, and make recommendations to the Board. It is not only the disclosing of information that can have legal consequences; failure to disclose to an individual or society can also have legal ramifications. Social work practice is regulated through a series of committees made up of registered social workers. The Board examines each complaint individually, and does not have an articulated standard of practice. The starting point in the examination of the complaint is to set out the reasonable expectations of a professionally trained social worker to interpret the Code of Ethics. The Board is appointed by the Cabinet as recommended by the Minister of Children and Families as representative of the Cabinet. The Social Workers Act (1968) states that the Board has the authority and mandate to regulate practice. This is separate from, and extends beyond, the authority of the government and the B.C. Government Employees' Union. MCF has recently printed standards of practice for Ministry social workers without consultation with the Board, and it is significant to note that the new standards have no reference to confidentiality as it relates to information-sharing with other organizations (Practice Standards for Child Protection, 1998).

Organizational Obstacles

Criticisms of the ability of MCF and police to collaborate and share information were evident in submissions to the Gove Inquiry to Child Protection in British Columbia (1995). Cruickshank (1995, p. 15) noted that almost every police submission to the Inquiry cited “misunderstandings about confidentiality as a barrier to effective work in child abuse cases”. Vancouver Police detectives reported to Judge Gove that social
workers did not understand what they could disclose, were unprepared to disclose information that could implicate a range of individuals, and were reluctant to provide written reports even when requested by police. Sgt. Munro of the R.C.M.P. detachment in Ft. St. John, echoed this and added, "the public is not being served when the information is suppressed because of bureaucratic interpretations" (Cruickshank, 1995, p. 15). Again, with the absence of current protocols, it is difficult to assess whether requests for information made by either organization are legitimate and therefore allowable under the legislation. Although there was limited data collection in this area from MCF, the social worker trainers stressed the need for police to learn and follow protocols (now being revised), and a need to clarify the application of FOI and remove any restraints that may exist in the sharing of information (Cruickshank, 1995, p. 22).

In his 1995 research for the Gove inquiry, Cruickshank examined police qualifications and training as they related to child protection work. A 1992 National Police Training Workshop identified the core competencies of police officers who work with persons who are vulnerable to abuse. The need for inter-agency co-operation was the most important issue identified. To begin with, officers must be aware of the relevant agencies with responsibility for various vulnerable populations, and they must be willing to work in a multidisciplinary context focused on case-based solutions. (Cruickshank, 1995, p. 4-6). Cruickshank also found that police get more training, more support from supervisors, and more graduated responsibility than social workers. It was clear that police do not accept trial and error learning as acceptable (1996, p. 7).

The R.C.M.P. Fairmont Training Academy in Vancouver offers advanced training to R.C.M.P. members, and includes a course on child abuse investigative training.
Ministry of Children and Families social workers as well as Crown prosecutors are also invited to participate in the training. Interagency co-operation and protocols are discussed, as well as perceptions of social workers and police, advantages and disadvantages of working together, principles, the child welfare mandate, and police protocols. Vernon R.C.M.P. established their own protocols with their local MCF office in 1990. Section 12(f) of those protocols states “as evidence gathered by police might be of assistance in a CF&CS proceeding (child protection), even though it is not sufficient for a criminal proceeding, the police will make such information available wherever possible to the social worker”. Inspector Hill of the Vernon R.C.M.P told the Gove Inquiry that:

All information can be shared if in the public interest. Limited or non-existent sharing can lead to disastrous results of reported child abuse not being properly investigated. Sharing of information is imperative in child abuse investigations, and the necessary policy needs to be put in place to ensure full disclosure takes place.

(Cruickshank, 1995, p. 15)

Police submissions and meetings (both R.C.M.P. and Municipal police) with the Gove Inquiry showed that they would welcome a high-degree of integrated services at the local level.

Formal and Informal Communication

Defining risk to children and assessing the need to share or disclose information according to the legislation can be ambiguous and require professional
judgment and expertise. It is possible that legislation and policy are too vague to allow for social worker and police discretion on a case-by-case basis. The same could hold true for MCF and their social workers, as discretion allows workers to examine information-sharing on a case-by-case basis. "The degree to which the 'out-on-the-streets' exchange of information can be regulated is very much down to the individual worker's understanding of concepts like privacy and confidentiality. Central to this exchange, of course, is the nature of the task at hand and the degree of information that there is a 'need-to-know' when it comes to an exchange" (Thomas, 1994, p. 160).

Organizational policies and protocols set out the approved formal methods of communication between agencies. Joint child protection investigations require the exchange of personal information and clearly defined policies and procedures to assist in clarifying the expectations of each organization and its members. However, from a practice standpoint, the literature indicates that informal communication is the most used, and appears to be more important and effective (Bellamy, 1984, p. 85-97). Knowledge of each other from previous contacts appears to increase the positive side of the working relationship, and increase communication (Bellamy, 1984). Informal relationships result from personal contacts and established trust and respect, which takes time to develop. Staff turnover, transfers, and accessibility of police and social workers to each other (especially when shift work is involved) can make informal relationships more difficult to establish (Caputo & Ryan, 1991). Wilson and Pence (as cited in Besharov, 1990) recommended the establishment of formal police-social worker teams, believing that much conflict is overcome through familiarity and trust. Waterhouse and Carnie (as cited in Hill & Aldgate, 1996) supported this belief and found that despite differences in
orientation, collaborative working relationships developed and professional boundaries were maintained in the context of mutual familiarity and trust.

It is clear from this review of the literature that information-sharing between organizations is important to assessing risk and protecting children. This research has examined what factors are associated with the confidentiality and information-sharing practices of Ministry for Children and Families intake social workers in their interaction with law enforcement agencies.
Interagency Collaboration

Over the past few decades, social, political and environmental changes have resulted in the emergence of more complex social problems, requiring organizations involved in the provision of social services to work more interdependently to address the needs of clients and society. Abramson and Rosenthal (1995, p. 1479) define collaboration as “a fluid process through which a group of diverse organizations undertake a joint initiative, solve shared problems or otherwise achieve common goals. It is characterized by mutual benefit, interdependence, reciprocity, concerted action, and joint production”. Interdisciplinary collaboration is defined as “the process by which the expertise of different categories of professionals is shared and coordinated to resolve the problems of clients” (Abramson & Rosenthal, 1995, p. 1479).

A common recurrent criticism of the Ministry for Children and Families is the lack of interagency collaboration in investigations and on-going case management with high-risk families. There are a number of variables that impinge upon effective collaboration:

1) Rules and regulations around information-sharing and client confidentiality, and a lack of clear understanding of the policies of each agency;

2) A lack of awareness of the interdependence of organizations;

3) Power issues and role competition; and
4) The hierarchical structure of many of the involved organizations

A review of current literature indicates that collaboration in social services agencies is necessary to fulfill the mandates of service delivery, to protect children, and to share scarce resources in times of economic change. Effective multidisciplinary work can prevent tragedy (Jones, 1991), reduce fragmentation of services (Hochstadt & Harwicke, 1985), and increase communication and cooperation between organizations (Baglow, 1990).

In order to address the problems with collaboration between social workers and police officers, it is necessary to examine the structures of their identified organizations and the theories that contribute to an understanding of these structures.

Classical Theory of Organization

Classical theorists such as Weber (1952), Fayol (1949) and Mooney (1931) viewed organizations as a tool for accomplishing goals and objectives (as cited in Scott, 1967). There is significant literature on organizational theory which makes reference to an organization as a group of people involved in a system of coordinated activities, working cooperatively towards a common goal, with some form of authority and leadership. Classical organizational theory identifies a number of foundations necessary to the goals of the organization. There must be a common purpose, communication among members, and a willingness to serve. The organization must have in place procedures for mobilizing and coordinating the subgroups within the structure and there must be agreed upon common objectives.
From these foundations, the classical principles of organizations were established:

1) A well-defined division of labour among members, with some form of coordinated action for achieving organizational goals.

2) Scalar and functional processes. The scalar principle is the matching of the capacity of the individual to the authority of the task, while the functional principle refers to the specialization of each department and how this is viewed in terms of its relationship to the whole organization. This provides for vertical and horizontal growth, with a hierarchical structure and unity of command.

3) A clear structure and well-defined relationship among activities.

4) A span of control, determining the ratio of staff to supervisor.

Organizations built with these principles and characteristics are viewed as functional, and the influence of human behavior on the organization is not considered. There is an assumption in theory that individual behavior may cause deviation from the values of the organization and must therefore be minimized in order to reduce conflict.

**Bureaucracies: Formal Organizations**

Weber’s classic theories of authority and bureaucratic organization can best be used to illustrate the structure of police departments and the Ministry for Children and Families. Mintzberg (1983, p. 2) defines the structure of an organization as “a sum of the
total ways in which labour is divided into distinct tasks, and then its coordination achieved among these tasks”.

Weber’s theory of bureaucracy identifies the ideal framework of an organization, necessary to achieve organizational goals and maintain efficiency and control:

1) Organizational tasks are distributed among the various positions as official duties. There is a well-defined division of labour, with a high degree of specialization.

2) Offices or positions are organized into a hierarchical authority structure. There is a formal status structure, with clear lines of communication.

3) A formally established system of rules and regulations must be in place, and rigidly enforced. These will govern all official decisions and actions, and they are to be applied uniformly. Organizational goals are to be explicit.

4) Members are expected to assume an impersonal approach in their contact with clients and other members, and in their application of rules. Clients are to be treated as cases.

5) Employment by the organization constitutes a career for its members. Staff selection is based on their qualifications that are relevant to the objectives and standards of the bureaucracy (Blau & Scott, 1962).

Weber states that deviation from this ideal framework reduces the efficiency of operation. In his view, these organizing principles maximize rational decision-making and administrative efficiency. He sees bureaucracy as the most efficient form of administrative
organization, as specialists make correct decisions and disciplined performance results in the achievement of the organizational goals (Blau & Scott, 1962). Whisenand and Tamaru (1970) argue that police depend on the organizational structure that a bureaucracy provides. They need both horizontal and vertical integration of their functions (scalar and functional processes), as well as stability, continuity and predictability in their internal operations and environmental function. They believe that the goals and objectives are the basis of police organizations.

Herbert Simon (as cited in Blau & Scott, 1962) sees administrative organizations primarily as decision-making structures. Effective administration requires rational decision-making, and decisions are rational when they are the best alternative for reaching the organizational goals. Hierarchical structures limit choices, and permit all decisions to be based on factual rather than value premises (Blau & Scott, 1962). The decisions are therefore about means rather than ends.

Weber differentiates between power and authority in his theory. Power is defined as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance” (as cited in Blau & Scott, 1962, p. 27), while authority is “the probability that certain specific commands from a given source will be obeyed by a given group of persons” (as cited in Blau & Scott, 1962, p. 28). Legal authority, as defined by Weber, is based on a belief in the supremacy of the law. It assumes the existence of a formally established body of norms and conduct organized for the rational pursuit of specified goals. Both police departments and the Ministry for Children and Families are legal authority structures (Blau & Scott, 1962, p. 30).
Bureaucracies have maintained their existence in society over time. They are most effective in relatively stable, unchanging environments. Strict rules, regulations and policy lead to consistent application and outcome and make it possible for organizational goals to be achieved. A bureaucracy that is meeting its objectives ensures that clients are served efficiently and treated equitably, which is important for public confidence and justice (Ginsberg, 1995).

Blau (1962) discusses four basic categories of stake holders relevant to formal organizations: members or rank and file participants; owners or managers; the public in contact; and the public-at-large. His classification is based on an examination of who is the prime beneficiary of the organization, and he sees four types of organizations resulting from this examination:

1) Mutual-benefit associations, where the prime beneficiary is the membership.
2) Business concerns, where the owners are prime beneficiaries.
3) Service organizations, where the client group is the prime beneficiary.
4) Commonwealth organizations, where the prime beneficiary is the public-at-large (Blau, 1962, p. 43).

The Ministry for Children and Families is a service organization, according to Blau’s definition. The welfare of the clients is the primary concern, and judgments must be made in the clients’ best interests. Problems arise in service organizations around the provision of professional services. Clients’ “best-interests” may not always coincide with organizational goals, and the professional must balance the needs of clients and ethical responsibilities with the objectives of their organization.
The public-at-large is the prime beneficiary of police departments, as well as the body responsible for maintaining external democratic control over the organization through civic elections and representation on the Police Board. However, the internal bureaucratic mechanisms of the police department must be maintained to enhance efficiency and to meet the objectives of the public-at-large. As well, the public-in-contact is often a source of danger to the public-at-large, and both must be dealt with by police (Blau & Scott, 1962).

Weinbach (1998) expanded on Blau’s categories of stakeholders, and spoke of task environments. Dill (as cited in Weinbach, 1998, p. 22) defined an organization’s task environment as those parts of the environment that are “relevant or potentially relevant to goal setting and goal attainment”. Bureaucracies can protect themselves from the criticism of “hostile” task environments by communicating a sense of control and accountability through the use of organizational principles (Weinbach, 1998).

Organizations as Systems

Both modern organizational theory and systems theory include an examination of human behavior and its impact on the organization. Specifically, they both consider individuals and their movement in and out of the system, the interaction of individuals with their environment, the interaction among individuals, and general growth and stability problems of the system (Scott, 1967). Parsons’ analysis of formal organizations involves the application of the general theory of social systems. He sees that all social systems must solve four basic problems: adaptation, in that the system must accommodate the demands from the environment; goal achievement, wherein objectives
must be defined and the resources secured to attain them; integration of members to coordinate and unify them; and latency or maintenance over time of the system’s motivational and cultural patterns (as cited in Blau & Scott 1962).

Parsons views formal organizations as a mechanism for mobilizing power in the interests of achieving collective objectives (as cited in Blau & Scott, 1962). Whisenand and Tamaru (1970), using systems theory, found that the activities of police units are linked to other units, and to external agencies. There is an interaction between the systems, and between the system and the environment. They stated “In viewing the police organization as a subsystem, we quickly observe that it is naturally involved in a complex set of interface patterns with other systems that are external to their particular organizational boundary” (Whisenand & Tamaru, 1970, p. 79).

Modern organizational theory accepts a systems analysis as a starting point in its examination of organizations. It sees systems as striving to achieve stability, growth and interaction. It considers the strategic parts of the system, the nature of mutual interdependence, how the parts of the system are linked, and the identified goals (Scott, 1967). The parts of the system are identified as: the individual, and the personality, motives and attitudes that they bring to the organization; the formal parts of the organization, and how the interrelated patterns of jobs provide structure; the informal aspects of the organization; status and role arrangements; and the physical setting. These parts are seen to be interacting, and the life of the organization is sustained by a linking process of communication, balance and decisions (Scott, 1967).

Within formal bureaucracies, informal systems emerge and contribute to the culture and social structure. Social relations are structured, and the conduct of the
members is guided by shared beliefs and orientations (Blau & Scott, 1962). Attitudes, group norms, and acceptable standards regarding work output are established, and anxiety and competition can be balanced out by a support system. Classical theory fails to recognize all the dimensions of the organization and the impact they have on attaining organizational goals. An examination of the criticisms of organizational and bureaucratic theories will assist in identifying the problems inherent with interagency collaboration.

**Neoclassical Critique of Organizational Theory**

Neoclassical theorists examine organizations in terms of how they are affected by human relations and behavior. Scott (1967) identifies a number of problems with organizations, based on the following premise.

A well-defined division of labour intensifies interdependence between members. The narrow specialization of members requires more managerial coordination, and Scott recommends participation in decision-making as a means to get workers more involved in their work. The classic theoretical assumption of scalar and function processes equates the capacity of the individual to the authority of their tasks and functions. Neoclassicists reject this equation as they feel that an individual’s capacity to make a perfect match to task cannot be assessed. Relations between capacity and authority cannot be established, nor can a compensation be made for the imbalance within formal organizations. Traditional management provides for clear cut division of roles, yet human behavior can disrupt organizational plans. Logical relationships can be altered, and internal friction and conflict may arise among persons performing different functions within the system.
Neoclassicists dispute the span of control principle, and would rather consider the quality and effectiveness of the supervision. They argue that supervision does not need to be as “close” as classicists believe, but rather consider the ideal span as one which reduces tight control through delegation of authority and decentralization of structures. General or democratic leadership leads to more human productivity and higher rates of achievement of organizational goals (Scott, 1967). Woodward states that organizational theory need not be as prescriptive as the classical theory claims is necessary (as cited in Scott, 1967).

Critique of Bureaucratic Theory

Weber has often been criticized for presenting an idealized conception of bureaucracy. He focuses on the strengths and effectiveness of his theory, but neglects to examine the dysfunction of the elements discussed previously in this chapter (Blau & Scott, 1962). For example, although hierarchy of authority promotes discipline and makes coordination possible, it can also discourage members from taking responsibility for their actions. Another criticism is that Weber is preoccupied with the formal aspects of bureaucracy and ignores the informal and unofficial patterns that develop (Blau & Scott, 1962). This is a dynamic aspect of formal organizations, as the informal patterns can dramatically alter the formal structure that is presented as crucial to maintaining the status quo of the organization.

Parsons noted that Weber failed to distinguish between the authority of administration (hierarchy) and authority of expertise (as cited in Rosengren & Lefton, 1970). Weber believed that the authority of the superior should always win out, as their
judgment is best, but this is not necessarily accurate as position is not always based on professional ability. Blau and Thomson suggest that expertise and professionalism may result in more efficient and satisfying modes of organizing work than classical bureaucratic approaches (as cited in Rosengren & Lefton, 1970).

Bureaucratic systems are fundamentally non-adaptive and ill-suited to changing their strategies (Mintzberg, 1983). Their systems are closed and their goal is to satisfy the standards of the organization instead of the clients. Human relations theorists argue that reliance on formal structures (including standardization and direct supervision) is misguided and possibly dangerous to the psychological health of the worker (Mintzberg, 1983). As well, Coch and French (as cited in Scott, 1967) state that resistance to change can manifest itself in reduction of productivity, high staff turnover, and frustration and aggression amongst members. Efficiency is a key goal in bureaucracies, while personal and individual satisfaction carries little weight. Industrial humanists look at restoring the individual’s opportunity for self-realization at work, and feel that bureaucratic organizations deprive individuals of this chance. Netting, Kettner, and McMurtry (1993) identified a number of problems with bureaucratic structures. Learned incompetence (Merton, 1952, as cited in Netting et.al., 1993) is the bureaucratic principle of strict adherence to rules and regulations. This can lead to a reliance on policy and written manuals that can result in workers being unable to think logically or creatively about problems. This effects service at the micro level, as client situations may not necessarily fit into the “norm”, yet their need is none the less significant.

Bureaucratic disentitlement is described by Lipsky (1984) as situations where clients fail to receive services to which they are entitled due to decisions based on
organizational considerations rather than service needs (as cited in Netting et. al., 1993). There is a frequent failure of bureaucracies to separate the means from the ends, which also has consequences at the micro level. Rigid rules lead to autocratic behavior, and uniformity produces rigidity in client relations.

Goal displacement is identified by Hasenfield (1983) as another problem with bureaucracies (as cited in Netting et.al., 1993). Workers lose sight of the organization's missions and goals and the organization is preserved simply for the sake of preservation. Merton (1940) also spoke of goal displacement, and saw this as a shortcoming of Weber. He stated that administrative efficiency can impede process, and strict discipline and rules lead to an end, all the while overlooking the means for accomplishing the goals. Adaptation or change to new situations is prevented, which in the long run interferes with operations at the meso level (Blau, 1968). In contrast, goal succession looks at the adaptation of organizations to meet changing needs, and recognizes that the mobilization of efforts across boundaries comes with an understanding of each other's organizations and the inherent obstacles.

Professional Bureaucracy

Professionals working within a bureaucratic organization are faced with issues of dual accountability to their organization and to their profession. The significance of this difference is brought into sharp relief when examining persons who are subject to both forms of social control (Blau & Scott, 1962). Blau examines the differences and similarities of professional and bureaucratic orientations.
1) Professional decisions are governed by universalistic standards and ethics, and require specialized training, not generalized wisdom. This is not significantly different from bureaucratic administration, where there are a set rules and regulations, and labour is divided and specialized.

2) Relations with clients are characterized by affective neutrality, and everyone is treated equally.

3) Professional status is achieved by an individual’s performance, not generally ascribed to them.

4) Decisions must not be based on the practitioner’s self-interest, but on the best interests of the client (for professionals), or the best interests of the organization (to meet organizational objectives).

5) There is a distinctive control structure in a professional system, which is fundamentally different from the hierarchical control exercised in bureaucratic organizations, as professionals voluntarily organize themselves within their associations and agree to abide by the code of ethics (Blau & Scott, 1962, p. 61-62).

Mintzberg (1983) also examined professional and bureaucratic orientations. He noted that professionals work relatively independently of colleagues, but closely with clients, and sees diagnosis as a fundamental task. Power is at the bottom of the hierarchy over work and operations, and judgment is required. The standards of a professional bureaucracy are generated largely outside the organization by the professional associations and the power of expertise. Complex yet stable personal service organizations can fit into
the definition of professional bureaucracies provided they work at applying standard programs to well-defined problems. They still have an inflexible structure, however Mintzberg did feel that professionalism and bureaucracy can coexist in the same structure, provided there is both internal and external professional autonomy.

Organizational Growth and Change

As stated earlier, bureaucracies are most effective in stable, unchanging environments. However, in today's society, this is not the situation for either police departments or the Ministry for Children and Families. Both are subject to social, political and environmental pressures. As both are large, tightly controlled systems, internal and external pressures threaten the organizations' status quo. In an open system, there is ongoing interaction with the environment, which assists with the system's viability and ability to change. Open systems respond to the external environment by a number of forms of morphogenesis; by temporarily adjusting the system, by directing the system toward more congenial environments, or by permanently reorganizing aspects of the system to deal more effectively with the environment. All of these responses require self-regulation, self-direction, and self-organization (Lockett & Spear, 1983). In contrast, closed systems aim for morphostasis, to preserve or maintain their given form.

Organizational theory states that the size and shape of an organization is a function of the environment and the problems it must solve in order to survive in an ever-changing environment. The larger the organization, the more difficult it becomes for it to achieve its goals, as there are burdens placed on communication and the external environment can become hostile to its size and growth.
Hall (as cited in Lockett & Spear, 1983) states that changes in organizations occur when there is direct pressure from external forces, leading to a deflection from the original goals, when pressure occurs from internal sources, or when there are changed environmental and/or technological demands. The organization must change or adapt to these pressures or the result will be goal displacement.

Ragins (1995) says that for organizational change to be successful, it must occur at three levels:

1) Cultural, referring to the basic assumptions, beliefs and ideologies of the system;

2) Structural, in that changes must be made to the formal reporting relationships, hierarchical levels, span of control, task functions, and patterns of interaction,

3) Behavioral, dealing with the attitudes and perceptions of members, role expectations, and the overall work climate.

As well, the nature of the change needs to be assessed, and an examination made of the resources available to assist the organization to adjust to the change.

Alternatives to Bureaucratic Structures

Organizations with hierarchical structures are viewed as less desirable, in that they foster conflict among members, promote domination and control, and efficiency becomes a goal in itself (Iannello, 1992). Natural and open systems theorists have shown that hierarchies impede work, and can interfere with tasks that are complex or ambiguous (Iannello, 1992). The Ministry for Children and Families is faced with the task of dealing
with exactly that, in that client situations are often complicated and changes in society are creating situations that are unclear and not addressed in current policy. Contingency theory argues that the internal features of an organization must match the demands of the environment to adapt effectively (Iannello, 1992). An examination must be made of the internal structures, and the processes and ideologies of the society in which the organizations exist (Iannello, 1992).

Alternatives to bureaucracies are necessary to address the social, political and environmental changes that are occurring, as client services need to be altered to meet the new demands. This is difficult in bureaucracies for all the reasons already presented. A number of authors have offered alternatives to allow for better service delivery and increased worker satisfaction and morale. Iannello (1992) argues that productivity would be increased if workers were involved in decisions, had control over their jobs, and were given organizational information relative to their goals. Iannello offers consensual organization as an alternative, which is consistent with cooperation, collaboration, and new management theory. Included is the belief that authority rests with all members, rules are minimal and ethically based, attempts are made to be egalitarian, and division of labour is minimized. In this model, horizontal communication replaces the traditional hierarchical structure.

New management theory speaks to participative management, where decision-making power is given to lower-ranking groups, and authority is delegated and decentralized. Weinbach (1994) states that participative management can promote a better consensus between individual’s goals and the goals of the organization. While the narrow
lens of bureaucracies focuses only on the goals and standards of the organization, alternative theories incorporate the needs of the members and the client population.

The collaborative model is presented by many authors, including Kraus (1980), as an alternative to the hierarchical system. Collaborative actions are necessary when the functions or tasks of organizations require the members to work together towards a common goal. Collaborative organizations are open systems, non-hierarchical, and utilize shared power and responsibility. They recognize the differing fields of perceptions of the members, but also the common values, beliefs and goals. There is importance placed on process, interdependence, and conflict resolution strategies (Kraus, 1980). Problem solving requires cooperation, support, participation, feedback, interdependence, and some form of mutual benefit. Pluralism is a core operating philosophy in collaboration, recognizing the interdependence between the individual and the group, and that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

When applying organizational theory to practice, Litwak (as cited in Rosengren & Lefton, 1970) addresses the different types of organizational linkages, and the ways organizations can join together. Power is linked to availability of resources, and coordination of organizations means more access to resources, provided there is the ability to use them more effectively. Organizations must be structured to best meet the goals, and linkages with other organizations can facilitate this end.

“The primary purpose of an organizational structure is to provide a framework for human co-operation and transactions necessary for the attainment of sought after goals. Further, an organization must be structured to obtain, translate, understand
and communicate information that will help to improve the rationality of decisions which are based on future expectations” (Whisenand & Tamaru, 1970, p.97).

Litwak (as cited in Rosengren & Lefton, 1970) defines interdependence as two or more organizations taking each other into account in order to best achieve their individual goals. He feels, however, that complete interdependence or dependence can lead away from interorganizational linkages. There are many organizational goals that can be achieved without interdependence with another organization, and it is important to look at the specific times or events that require a merger, resulting in partial interdependence. With respect to police departments, total interdependence with the Ministry for Children and Families is not necessary to meet most of their organizational goals. However, in child protection, collaboration assists with service delivery and meeting the specific shared goals of both organizations. Where organizations are aware of their interdependence, formal linkages appear to be the most effective (Rosengren & Lefton, 1970). Expert staff can be assigned specific tasks to meet the shared goals, and given professional autonomy over their work. When each organization has something to gain by collaborating, facilitative interdependence and mutual benefit occurs.

Obstacles to Collaboration

It appears from the foregoing arguments that collaboration is an effective method of improving services to clients, while attaining organizational goals. However, the structures of large organizations can create obstacles to collaboration. Both the Ministry for Children and Families and the police departments are hierarchical structures,
and are often rigid and inflexible, resistant to change, secretive and self-protective. Boundaries of authority result in "turf" issues, and an unwillingness to share information. Closed systems have difficulty with the exchange of information, and the mutual benefit of the exchange needs to be recognized to identify the self-interest each organization can have in collaboration. Competing or conflicting values can cause either organization to assume that they "know best", and want to control the process rather that proceed cooperatively. As well, differences in perception of the problem, be it "criminal or sociological", can affect the willingness to work together to come to an agreed upon solution or course of action. Change can threaten the perceived position or status quo that the organization has, and prevent a willingness to cooperate on matters that are of significance to both parties.

Bureaucracies do not need to be totally overthrown as they are a necessary structure in today's society. Recognition of the existence of interagency linkages as Litwak recommends, however, can help in the creation of formal arrangements between the organizations. Reform of the organizations to include recognition of the impact of human behavior on the systems appears to be a realistic alternative to traditional bureaucratic thinking. Such reform would also facilitate collaboration and cross-boundary information-sharing.

The theories critiqued in this chapter argue either for the preservation of bureaucratic structures, their modification, or their total dissolution. Broadening the lens of organizational theory to include the impact of and needs of workers, and the needs of clients would assist in facilitating interagency collaboration. A "simple" restructuring of the internal environment, without considering the external social, political and
environmental forces will not result in sufficient change to meet the demands of our changing society.

Organizational theory and an understanding of bureaucratic structures can assist in this examination of the ability of social workers and police to share and access information. The influences that human behavior and informal systems have on organizations needs to be recognized, as neoclassicists argue, and will be addressed in the research study.
Chapter Five

Methodology

This is a descriptive study of the confidentiality and information-sharing practices of Ministry for Children and Families social workers involved in child protection cases with law enforcement agencies (Vancouver City Police Department and Coquitlam R.C.M.P.). The researcher received written approval from MCF Regional Operating Officers in Vancouver and Coquitlam to conduct a survey of their intake social work staff. The Regional Operating Officers also approved the researcher conducting interviews with six social worker staff to examine specific examples from their practice that would reflect their working relationship with police (Appendix A). It was the researcher's original intent to limit the study to Vancouver intake social workers and their relationship with the Vancouver Police Department, but at the request of the Regional Operating Officers, the study was expanded to include Coquitlam intake social workers and their relationship with the Coquitlam R.C.M.P., in hopes that a comparative analysis could be made.

A preliminary request was made to the Vancouver City Police Department by the researcher to survey police members regarding their information-sharing practices with MCF social workers. As well, the researcher requested approval to use anonymous case examples from her own practice that were representative of collaborative efforts, both positive and negative. The request was submitted to the Chief Constable of Police, who then forwarded it to the Information and Privacy Unit of the Vancouver Police Department. Details of the researcher’s plan of study, as well as professional and
educational background were included as requested by the Department (Appendix B).

The researcher was advised in writing that the request was reviewed by the Police Department in accordance with the privacy provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and that the request had been denied (Appendix C).

The researcher decided to continue the study with an examination of the practice and perceptions of intake social workers in their dealings with police. A reciprocal examination of police practice and perceptions of social workers was not possible.

Worker training and an understanding of the legislation and policies that govern information exchange has been identified within the systems as critical to ongoing case management. As well, collaboration with law enforcement agencies is seen as an integral part of assessing risk to children. The results of this research will be made available to MCF and may be of assistance in future training or protocol development.

Participants

The participants for this study consisted of forty-one intake child protection social workers employed by the Ministry for Children and Families in Vancouver and Coquitlam, in a total of five offices. They are responsible for assessing and responding to all new complaints of child abuse and neglect. Intake social workers were chosen as they were considered to be representative of the MCF social work population employed in child welfare. As well, the researcher's own experience in the field has shown that intake social workers have more contact with law enforcement agencies and therefore more opportunity to request and share information. The intake social workers were recruited using non-probability, convenience sampling. Non-child protection workers were excluded
from the sample as they do not have the same employment experiences as child protection workers.

Of the 41 social workers in the sample, 32 completed the questionnaires, yielding a 78% overall response rate. In Coquitlam, all 8 workers responded (100%), while in Vancouver, the response was 24 out of 33 (73%). Of the six social workers who volunteered and consented to be interviewed, five were able to meet with the researcher and complete the interview.

Measure

Drawing from the literature and theory, a five-page questionnaire that addresses experience, training, knowledge of policies, and attitudes towards police involvement with families was developed by the researcher specifically for this study (Appendix D). Nominal and 5-point interval scales were used in the questionnaire, and participants were asked to rate their level of agreement with each statement or question. The use of a questionnaire was chosen as it permits anonymity and creates the least threatening method for workers to disclose their practice. It was also the least time-consuming for the participants, as extra demands on worker's time was expressed as a concern when research approval was granted by the Regional Operating Officers. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-three questions including closed and open-ended questions. Included were four items about training, six involving practice, two examining knowledge, two addressing ethical concerns, three assessing attitudes, and two examining perception of cooperation and relationships. As well, there were three demographic questions and an
area for participants to comment on current policy and training and make recommendations for change at the end of the questionnaire.

As this questionnaire was designed specifically for this research, there is no data available as to its reliability. Similarly, there is no indication that the results would be significantly different or the same if tested on similar populations at a later date.

A separate consent form was included with the questionnaire, requesting volunteers to participate in in-depth interviews with the researcher (Appendix E). Workers were advised that they would be asked to discuss a case example of their choosing that was reflective of their relationship with their law enforcement agency. They were also advised that they would be requested to identify problems/enhancements of police involvement, as well as make any recommendations for protocol development or training.

Pretest

The questionnaire was pre-tested on nine child protection social workers who were not included in the sample group. Feedback was received from all pre-test participants. Minor changes were made to the ordering and text of the questions, and some response categories were altered to make them exhaustive. Participants reported that they had no difficulty understanding the questions or what information was being requested. The pretest indicated that the measure has face validity as the questions about behavior, practice, attitudes and knowledge were answered with participants reporting they had a clear understanding of the concepts. The measure appears to have content validity as each concept is queried a number of times. One question that was designed to be a test of knowledge was removed from the questionnaire after the pretest. The responses would
not have provided any valuable data as there was not a clear right or wrong answer to the questions. Other feedback from the pretest was incorporated into the final design of the questionnaire.

The interview process and sample questions were not pre-tested with these participants.

**Procedures**

The researcher attended the team meetings in each of the MCF intake offices. The four Vancouver teams met together, and the questionnaire was administered to them collectively. The researcher met with the Coquitlam team and administered the questionnaire one week later. Participants were advised that although approval had been received from their ROO’s, their participation in the survey was voluntary and refusal to participate would not jeopardize their employment. The participants were advised in advance by their Team Leaders that the questionnaire was going to be administered at their meeting. After introducing the study and distributing the questionnaire, the researcher left the meeting. The questionnaires took approximately 20 minutes to complete, and participants left them in a box for the researcher to collect afterwards.

The researcher attended the offices again approximately two months later to conduct the interviews. Three social workers in Coquitlam and two social workers in Vancouver were all interviewed separately, at their work locations. The interviews lasted forty-five minutes on average.
Analysis

Participants self-reported on their knowledge and practice as it relates to confidentiality and information-sharing in child protection. After data collection, frequencies were calculated on all the variables using the SPSS computer programme, and a descriptive analysis completed. A correlation matrix was computed to determine association between variables. Calculations were also completed where there was indication of a statistically significant association between variables (p < .05), and t-tests were run on variables to examine if there were differences between the two regions where the social workers were employed (Vancouver and Coquitlam). Parametric statistics were utilized based on assumptions of normal distributions and minimum sample size requirements. The qualitative data (written comments and interviews) was analyzed separately by looking for patterns and consistent themes (Glasser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Anastas & MacDonald, 1994).
Chapter Six

Results

Quantitative Analysis

The years of service of the intake workers surveyed for this research ranged from .5 to 21, with a mean of 4.6 years (SD = .95). Over half of these workers have two or less years of employment with MCF, with only 13% having in excess of ten years of service (as can be noted in Table 1).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>0-2 years</th>
<th>2.1-5 years</th>
<th>5.1-10 years</th>
<th>over 10 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coquitlam</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18 (57%)</td>
<td>6 (19%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
<td>4 (13%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Seventy-five percent of the respondents reported that they had received in-service training on confidentiality and information-sharing policy and legislation. Of those who received training, 72% reported that the training covered the Child, Family and Community Service Act while 57% reported that it included the Freedom of Information Act. Forty-seven percent felt that the training was adequate or more than adequate.
Responses to ratings of knowledge of confidentiality clauses in the legislation and knowledge of police requirements re: disclosure of information showed similar results. On average, workers reported that they had adequate knowledge in these areas, with only two workers (6%) reporting that they had no knowledge of what police were required to disclose to them. There was a strong association between years of service with MCF and knowledge of the Child, Family and Community Service Act confidentiality clauses (r = .68, p < .01), indicating that the more experienced workers felt that their knowledge of the Act was greater.

The number of requests for information that workers made to police ranged from .25 to 15 times per month, with a median of 3 requests per month. There is a moderate correlation between the number of requests made to police for information and the workers own rating of their knowledge of the Child, Family and Community Service Act confidentiality clauses (r = .35, p < .05). This indicates that as worker knowledge of the legislation increases, so does the number of requests to police for information. When asked how often they felt they were denied information by police that by law they were entitled to, 80% of workers responded that this occurred sometimes to not at all (3 and below on a scale of 5).

Police requests for information from social workers were much lower, averaging less than once per month (M = .97). However, some offices have agreements in place that all requests from police are directed to the Team Leader, which may account for the infrequency of requests to the intake social workers.

The most frequent method that workers reported they used to access information from police was also the method by which they achieved the greatest success at accessing
information. A phone call to a known police member was the most often used method of accessing information for 42% of the workers, and they reported that they were successful at gaining the necessary information 83% of the time. A phone call to the non-emergency police number was rated the next most often used method of requesting information (28%), but was successful only 14% of the time. Table 2 indicates the frequency that workers used the different methods of accessing information from police (rated as “often”), and the percentages they were rated “very successful”. As well, there is a low rate of requests made face-to-face with police and to Car 86 despite their relative high rate of success. This may be attributed to access of these methods. Social workers rarely have an opportunity to speak with a police officer in person unless they are involved in a joint investigation. As well, Car 86 is an After Hours Child Abuse Response Unit, limited to the City of Vancouver, and is not available to Coquitlam social workers.

Table 2

Methods of requesting information from police and their success rates (mean scores)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Often used (in %)</th>
<th>Success rate (in %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Call to known member</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call to non-emergency</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call to 911</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request to Car 86</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written request</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When reporting on their reasons for requesting information from police about a client or family, suspicion of a crime and concerns for personal safety were rated by all workers as influential (3 and above on a 5 pt scale), with 87% reporting they would call police if planning on removing a child from the home. All of the workers reported that the history of police involvement with a family was important to their assessment of child protection, with 55% reporting that it was very important.

When asked for information on a family by police, 48% of workers reported that they co-operate often, with only 4% reporting that they often refuse to give the police information. Workers reported that their disclosure was influenced by their involvement in a joint investigation with police (100%), the request being within legal guidelines and the worker understanding the reason for the request (94%), whether they knew the police member making the request (93%), and the availability of their Team Leader for consultation (90%).

Although 94% of workers reported that their ethical concerns influenced their decision to disclose information to police (3 and above on a scale of 5), 84% reported that involving the police was not of great concern re: jeopardizing their relationship with their client (3 and below on scale of 5). There was a significant difference in the latter responses of the Vancouver (M= 2.7, SD = .9) and Coquitlam social workers (M = 2.0, SD = .9), $t (31) = 1.96, p < .01$, indicating that Vancouver workers were more concerned that police involvement may jeopardize their worker-client relationship than Coquitlam workers.

Finally, workers were asked to rate their overall relationship with their law enforcement agency. Eighty-seven percent rated the relationship good to excellent, with
only one worker (3%) rating it poor. However, there was a statistically significant correlation between the regional responses. In Coquitlam, 75% of the workers rated their relationship with the Coquitlam RCMP as above average to excellent while 63% of Vancouver workers rated their relationship with the Vancouver Police Department as average to poor ($r = .43$, $p < .05$) (see Table 3).

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship with Law Enforcement Agency (by region)</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Adequate</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vancouver</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coquitlam</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Qualitative Analysis

Questionnaire Comments

Workers were given the opportunity to comment on two questions in the questionnaire. Concerns that police involvement may jeopardize their relationship with their clients was responded to by 20 workers (63%). Workers reported that they are aware of their legal responsibilities to report all crimes, and believe in informing clients when and why police have been involved. Although they commented that police involvement can at times add tension to situations and make developing a relationship with the client more difficult, safety and protection of the children always takes precedence. Workers believed
that the police would handle shared information in confidence and that there was a balance of costs and benefits in sharing information.

A final question regarding current training and legislation was responded to by 14 workers (44%). Of these 14 workers, 8 (58%) felt that more training was needed, in particular, joint training with the police. Clarification of the legislation and a better understanding of what can and cannot be shared by either organization was believed to be important for social workers. A Vancouver worker said: “It is very hard to get information from Vancouver Police. I am not aware of their role, and find that they know little about our job”. One worker commented that legislation and training was only a starting point for practice, and that more easily accessible guidelines were needed. Another recommendation was that specific police members be assigned to liaise with social workers, as there was a belief that “if you know the person, they are much more likely to give information”. One final comment summed up a workers experiences with information-sharing: “We are supposed to be working with the community”.

Interviews

Coquitlam Ministry for Children and Families

Three Coquitlam intake social workers were interviewed by the researcher to discuss specific case examples and their relationship with the Coquitlam R.C.M.P. All three spoke highly of their working relationship and the formal arrangement they have for sharing information. Workers stated that they contact police to check on drug, weapons, assault or violence charges, and to confirm collaterals and their own safety.
The Intake MCF Office and the R.C.M.P. in Coquitlam have formalized an arrangement whereby the police members in G.I.S. (General Investigation Section) are available to front line social workers for information requests. As well, the G.I.S. members may contact the MCF Team Leader to request information within legislative guidelines for their investigations and child protection matters. These procedures are a result of negotiations between the MCF Team Leader and the G.I.S. Sgt in Coquitlam. There was a recognition on the part of both local levels of the organizations that there were obstacles to accessing and sharing information, and that procedures needed to be implemented to enable their respective members to co-ordinate their efforts to provide enhanced child protection services to the families in their communities. The social workers interviewed reported that they have a high level of satisfaction with this arrangement. Although the police members may not always be immediately available or may not have all the details the social worker is requesting, they do call back with the information within a reasonable length of time. This formal arrangement has resulted in informal relationships between the police and social workers. Workers reported that there was trust based on a history of working together and a professional knowledge of each other. As well, it was learned that the police had recently organized a “police contact party”, and invited MCF staff. Also present were fire department staff, probation officers and paramedics. The social workers who attended were able to meet and connect with other professionals they may come into contact with in the course of their duties and found the experience quite positive.

If the information provided by the G.I.S. members indicated to the workers that they needed police to attend with them on a call, then they would call 911 emergency to request police attendance. Workers stated that they have had both good and bad
experiences with police patrol personnel and stated that they do not have the same level of trust or established relationship with these police. Typically, there are efforts made to discuss cases before entering the home, and to clarify their roles with each other and the clients. One worker reported that there can be confusion where there is a dual mandate i.e. when there are both criminal and child protection matters to be investigated, as there is not any one person in charge of the situation.

The workers interviewed had no concerns about involving the police in their cases. They are clear with their clients as to the reasons for police presence. They did not feel that it interfered with their ability to work with their clients. With respect to information-sharing, workers reported that there is a fair amount of worker judgment and discretion with the legislated guidelines, and that when working jointly on a case, all necessary information needed to be shared to ensure that mandates were fulfilled. Workers felt confident in the professionalism of the police officers and in the belief that they would not disclose information to others. They saw that they are all under the same oath of confidentiality, and understood their ethical responsibility and accountability for public safety and child protection.

The one concern expressed by all three workers interviewed was that there is inconsistency in the reporting of child protection matters to MCF by police patrol members. They stated that often they will get involved with a family and find that police have attended numerous times in the past for related concerns (i.e. domestic violence), and yet have not contacted MCF. Workers attributed this to a difference in perception and definition of what constitutes abuse and the factors related to child protection. Workers stated they would welcome a higher degree of information-sharing with respect to the
families they worked with, not just the reporting of immediate risk. Efforts are being made by the Team Leader and the G.I.S. Sgt. to address these concerns and ensure a higher rate of reporting by patrol.

Finally, one worker advised that she had recently joined MCF after having worked for a child protection agency in Ontario. She stated that in response to a widespread ritual abuse investigation, the police department created a Child Abuse Branch (CAB) that was available to the child protection social workers for joint investigations or back-up on calls. The police members were trained in the legislation, and "knew child abuse inside and out". The worker stated that there was familiarity and trust with these members, and a clear respect for each other's roles and responsibilities. Joint training with the police and social workers was a regular and ongoing occurrence, and the relationships extended outside of the workplace to parties and social functions. The worker felt that the creation of specialty positions within other police departments would enhance the ability of the two organizations to work together.

Vancouver Ministry for Children and Families

Two of the three Vancouver intake social workers who volunteered were interviewed by the researcher (the third was called to Court on the date set for our meeting). Both of them described cases where there were serious problems with communication both prior to and during the call. Both calls had a criminal element (historical sexual abuse and alleged physical abuse), and both involved persons with a history of criminal involvement.
One worker reported that there were problems arranging the timing of the investigation, and that police were angry and impatient about the process. She stated that the police were confrontational with the parent, and escalated the situation without allowing the worker to deal with the parent and provide her with the necessary information about the allegation and actions taken. The worker stated that she made efforts to speak with the police officers in attendance but was unsuccessful as they were “running the call”. There was an apparent lack of respect for the worker and her role, consistent with previous research that speaks to the need for an understanding of each other’s roles and mandates (Murphy, 1995).

The other case presented to the researcher involved an investigation that escalated to the point that there were safety concerns for the workers present. Police attended, and although the situation calmed down almost immediately, the worker felt that the police undermined her authority by “playing down the concerns, and attempting to ‘bond’ with the parent”. She stated that the police were “really nice cops”, and very co-operative, but that there was no discussion of the situation and no safety plan developed. She felt that there was a lack of understanding about the social workers’ role in child protection, and that the lack of communication did not allow for any clarification of the matter at hand.

Both workers stated that they access information from a known member in a specialty squad, and that calls to 911 or the non-emergency number are “useless”. They did, however, have different levels of trust with the police. One worker advised that she feels there is a professional relationship regardless of previous contacts, and that she trusts the police will respect the information she shares with them and not misuse it. She was comfortable with the “out-on-the-street” exchange of information, and did not have any
ethical concerns or "worries about getting in trouble". In contrast, the other worker expressed serious concerns about "getting in trouble", and stated that there was one incident where she was pressured by a police officer who threatened her reputation if she did not disclose the requested information. She stated that she has "questionable trust" with the police, and is concerned that they will not respect the information she shares and may possibly misuse it. She did state that there are a few police members she knows and trusts from previous contacts, but feels this is the exception not the rule. Police members familiar with MCF and the child protection system were described as more trustworthy, as there was a better understanding of the role of the social worker and the rules and policies they work with.
Social workers' perceptions of their ability to work collaboratively with law enforcement agencies and share confidential information in the course of child protection work have been examined in this study. Although the majority of workers had received training in the legislation as is relates to confidentiality, slightly less than half reported that the training was adequate or better. Workers reported that more training was needed to address specific examples and cases in order to clarify legislation. Workers also felt that joint training with the police would be beneficial, as this may lead to a better understanding of each other’s roles. On average, workers reported that they felt their knowledge of the legislation was adequate, with a higher rate of knowledge for the more experienced workers. This indicates that there is a significant amount of “on-the-job” learning as experience increases. As over half the workers had less than two years experience with MCF, they would have had less opportunity to learn through their practice. Consequently, they rely more heavily on their training. Concerns regarding “learned incompetence”, as discussed in Chapter 4, need to be addressed in training to reduce workers reliance on policy and manuals in their beginning years of practice.

Intake child protection workers must be able to assess risk to children and cope with the demands of child protection investigations. In submissions made to the Gove Inquiry into Child Protection, it was noted that in many offices intake and assessment are seen as beginning positions, and are staffed by social workers with the least experience (Gove Inquiry, Vol. 2, p. 151). It is interesting to note that a 1994 study by MCF
(previously the Ministry of Social Services) sampled intake social workers across British Columbia and found that 36% had less than five years of service with the Ministry (Gove Inquiry, Vol. 2, p. 152). The high percentage of workers in this study with less than two years experience is clearly outside of the provincial statistics from 1994, and may be an indication of higher staff turnover in the past few years.

The high percentage of new social work staff in MCF makes the development of effective informal communication networks difficult as there has not been sufficient time for workers to foster relationships of trust and familiarity with police. However, it is apparent from the Coquitlam MCF data that when Management has created protocols for information-sharing, new workers have more opportunity and less difficulty establishing working relationships.

The methods that social workers use to access information indicate that informal relationships result in the greatest success and that using formal channels is often the least satisfactory. Modern organizational theory recognizes the contribution that informal systems make to the structure of organizations, and sees this as an important dimension in the achievement of organizational goals. Results regarding requests to a known police member, face-to-face contact, or contacting the Car 86 liaison police officer supports the findings in the literature that where there is a pre-established relationship of trust, disclosure is less difficult. As well, comments that more joint training with the police is necessary could indicate an interest in developing a better working relationship and understanding of roles. Common values, beliefs and goals are necessary for a collaborative model to be useful, but this research also supports Waterhouse and Carnie’s findings that
despite differences in orientation, familiarity and trust contribute to the success of the working relationship (as cited in Hill & Aldgate, 1996).

Concerns that police are seen as authority figures and their involvement could have a detrimental effect on the worker-client relationship were not generally supported in this study. This could be due in part to the nature of the intake social workers job. The role of the intake worker is to respond to and assess complaints. They do not maintain long-term relationships with their clients. Social workers are now more involved in social control, social policing, statutory work and investigations (Thomas, 1988, p. 125). Therefore, the emphasis appears to be on doing what is necessary to protect themselves and the child, and involving the police is often seen as a crucial component of that process. This is further supported by the workers rating the history of police involvement with a family as important to their assessment of child protection.

Ethical concerns were identified as very important when deciding to disclose information, however legal responsibilities, trust in the police officer and availability of their Team Leader for consultation all assist workers in the decision to share information.

The differences in the overall quality of relationship with the law enforcement agencies between Vancouver and Coquitlam may be attributed to the relative size of their respective police agencies and communities, and the ability of the workers to develop informal relationships with the members. Social workers in Vancouver can work their whole career without ever meeting the same police officer twice, while in Coquitlam this is unlikely to happen as the police detachment is significantly smaller. In a 1984 study of the relationship between Ministry social workers and the Vancouver Police Department, it was noted that “knowledge of each other from previous contacts appears to increase the
positive side of the working relationship, increase communication, and establish trust” (Bellamy, p. 97).

The in-depth interviews conducted with the social workers from Vancouver and Coquitlam did indicate that there were significant differences in the attitudes towards and relationship with the police in the two communities. The workers in Coquitlam spoke positively of their professional relationship with the police, both in terms of information-sharing and overall contact. The protocols arranged by the Team Leader and G.I.S. contributed to this attitude and there was an overall sense of trust and familiarity with the police. In contrast, the Vancouver workers reported that there is not that same trust and familiarity as a general rule, and collaboration on child protection calls can be difficult when there is not a pre-established relationship with the police members in attendance.

Overall, the results indicate that workers recognize the importance of developing and maintaining lines of communication with their law enforcement agencies, but the methods for accomplishing this are not always clear. Workers appear to have developed their own methods of accessing information based on their related success rates, and resolve their own information-sharing conflicts on a case-by-case basis. The establishment of protocols with the police, or the creation of a liaison position between the two organizations may enhance the ability of the systems to work together more effectively.

With respect to the researcher's inability to involve the Vancouver Police Department in the research, it is unfortunate that despite their voiced concerns to the Gove Inquiry that there is a need for clearer guidelines and a better understanding of information-sharing between police and social workers, they chose not to participate. In the course of my six years working in a team position with the police, I am very aware that
front-line police officers have difficulty accessing information from social workers and often turn to informal channels or call upon a worker that they know and trust. However, the decision to not participate is consistent with the theories examined in this study, as their traditionally closed system and bureaucratic behavior would not welcome any intrusion from an external source. Perhaps there is a belief that if members find their own ways to work with each other, either within or outside legislative guidelines, then it best be left alone.

In contrast, the high level of co-operation and participation of MCF, both at Management and front-line levels, challenges the closed-system characteristic typical of bureaucracies. The creation of the Ministry for Children and Families and the introduction of the Children's Commission in British Columbia has placed the child protection system in a state of transition with less rigid boundaries. Increased collaborative case management and external accountability have resulted in more cross-discipline information-sharing, and MCF has recognized that these are necessary steps in ensuring the safety of children.

Limitations of Study

As this study surveyed only intake child protection workers, caution must be used in generalizing the results to other child protection social workers, either in Vancouver or other parts of the province. Also, the smaller intake population in Coquitlam compared to the number of workers in Vancouver who participated makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about their similarities or differences.

With respect to professional ethics, data were not gathered to determine whether the respondents held professional status, in that they had either a social work degree or
were registered with the Board of Registration of Social Workers. Although professional social workers are bound by the Social Work Code of Ethics, MCF social workers who are not professionally educated or registered are still bound by the confidentiality provisions of the legislation and policy. However, an analysis of the responses of workers with varying professional status could not be performed as level of education and/or social work registration was not queried.

Recommendations for Further Research

For future research, examining the practice of the police and their ability to access information from MCF social workers may provide a more balanced study, as many of the concerns addressed in the literature relate to the interaction between the two organizations. The researcher would need to recognize that different Municipal and R.C.M.P detachments have their own systems in place for information-sharing with MCF, and that the size of the community and police department appears to influence the establishment of both formal and informal working relationships.

Consideration should also be given to expanding the study to include all MCF child protection social workers, not just intake workers. This would shift the focus from the investigative stage of the child protection matter to an examination of on-going information-sharing practices between social workers and police. As well, gathering information regarding professional status/education would enhance the study, as an analysis could be then be made of the contribution of this variable to responses.
Recommendations for Practice

There are a number of recommendations for practice resulting from the review of the literature and the analysis of the research conducted for this study.

1) Protocols need to be created to specifically address the information-sharing practices of police and social workers. Management of both MCF and the police departments need to establish agreed-upon methods for requesting and accessing information, with input from the front line workers who will be required to implement these protocols. Clear guidelines were identified by the respondents as necessary for their understanding of the relevant legislation and its application in practice. In his research for the Gove Inquiry, Cruickshank recommended that “there must be immediate clarification of what information in a child abuse matter can be and must be shared with police” (1996, p. 22).

The Child, Family and Community Services Manual has an appendix that discusses province-wide protocols with the police. The emphasis is on the legal requirements of the police and social workers to report matters of child abuse and crime, and the authority of the police under the CF&CS Act to take child protection action. It states that local areas must develop their own procedures for referrals, joint training, feedback and requests for assistance.

2) The relevant sections of the Child, Family and Community Service Act and the Freedom of Information Act need to be clarified with respect to their application in practice. Respondents reported that it was important for them to have a better understanding of the legislation. “With respect to confidentiality, there is a desperate need for clarity about FOI and CF&CS Act” (Cruickshank, 1995, p. 16).
3) Training on information-sharing and confidentiality needs to be offered on a continuous basis to ensure that all social work staff have had the opportunity to receive the training.

4) Confidentiality training should be offered in joint sessions with police members with specific emphasis on the practical application of the legislation as it relates to child protection investigations and ongoing case work.

5) Cross-discipline training should be established to enable workers and police to become more familiar with each other's roles, mandates, philosophies and perspectives. This would also assist in developing familiarity with other systems and their members, and provide a forum to identify and address areas of conflict. A lack of understanding of each other's roles has been identified in previous research as a barrier to effective collaboration (Cruickshank, 1995, Besharov, 1990, & Treger 1981). Management needs to recognize that the results of joint training can lead to better service delivery and cost-savings, as collaborative efforts can reduce the amount of time that each separate organization is spending servicing the same clients.

6) Specialized police-social worker units or liaison positions should be established at the local level. This research has supported previous findings that having an established, trusting relationship enhances the ability to work together and share information more effectively. Staff must be assigned who are interested in working with the partner organization and who have the interpersonal skills necessary to work collaboratively. Again, this could result in more efficient service as workers would be able to access resources and information more effectively. However, there must be a commitment from Management, and the resources in place to sustain the positions or programmes.
7) Local MCF offices would benefit from liaison with the Community police offices and their members, as this would not only assist in developing professional relationships with community partners, but also for identifying community concerns that are cross-discipline. As previously stated, the size of both the police department and MCF in Vancouver make it difficult to develop familiarity and trust among the members, but working with sub-units and creating smaller community linkages would assist with this goal.

Implications for Social Work

Social workers need to be aware of their ethical position as it relates to information-sharing and confidentiality and balance this with the need to protect children and society. Attitudes towards police need to be recognized and addressed if there is to be any form of a positive working relationship with them and their organizations. Further training should be accepted and attended. Developing a clear sense of the role of both police and social workers and the ability to articulate that to the police will reduce the risk of conflict before it arises. Social workers entering the field of child protection would benefit from recognizing that professional networks improve the effectiveness of interagency communication, and actively seek out the means to create these relationships. As well, social work educators should encourage students to view child protection from a team approach, and incorporate interdisciplinary studies into their programming.

Management needs to be made aware of the problems with collaboration and information-sharing with police and recognize that workers rely on informal means of communication to access necessary information. The informal patterns of communication
that have developed appear to have contributed to, not threatened, the status quo of the organizations by enhancing working relationships and understanding of each other’s roles. Although bureaucratic theory sees informal patterns as having a negative affect on the formal structure of organizations, this research does not support that aspect of the theory. Protocols need to be developed that not only provide guidelines for collaboration but also allow for the development of informal relationships between police and social workers. As informal means of communication have been shown to be the most effective, Management must create an environment and opportunity to allow for familiarity and trust to develop, as not all social workers are in a position to create these alliances themselves. Protocols in and of themselves will not provide an effective resolution to the information-sharing problem.

Conclusion

Collaboration in child protection between the Ministry for Children and Families and the police departments needs to be recognized by their respective managements for its potential contribution to increased service delivery and reduced duplication of efforts by their members (Abramson & Rosenthal, 1995).

There are currently no official information-sharing protocols between the Ministry for Children and Families, and the Vancouver City Police Department. Negotiations are presently occurring at the federal level with the RCMP and MCF, and will progress to the Municipal police forces in the near future. The establishment of clear guidelines, training for staff in both organizations, and a focus on the “common goal” of
child protection will facilitate the sharing of information and enhance service delivery to the children of the province.

In conclusion, although this research supports previous findings of the need to develop good working relationships (Bellamy, 1984), establish working protocols and joint training (Besharov, 1990) and address misunderstandings about confidentiality (Cruickshank, 1995), the organizations involved appear to be slow to recognize and respond to these concerns and recommendations. In her 1996/97 Annual Report, the B.C. Children’s Commissioner Cynthia Morton stated, “It is crucial that MCF…… and the justice system….continue to meet and find ways to communicate more effectively with the goal of better serving and protecting children who are at-risk of abuse or neglect. New agreements on information sharing will be effective if understood and implemented by front-line staff and practitioners throughout our communities”. Moving beyond these statements to a deeper understanding of the elements necessary for effective collaboration may indeed result in an achievement of these goals.
Bibliography


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Appendix B

Chief Constable R.J. Canuel  
Vancouver City Police Department  
2120 Cambie St.  
Vancouver, B.C.  
V5Z 4N6

Janet Douglas  
**********  
Vancouver, B.C.  
*******

March 10, 1997.

Dear Sir,

I am writing to request approval from your department to conduct research in the area of information sharing between the Vancouver City Police Department members and social workers employed by the Ministry for Children and Families. I am currently completing the first year of the two year part-time Master's of Social Work programme at the University of British Columbia. My thesis is addressing the issue of collaboration between VCP and MCF as the two organizations responsible for child protection in B.C.

I have been employed by the Ministry for Children and Families (Ministry of Social Services) for the past seventeen years. For the past five years I have been one of the social workers in Car 86, the child protection unit jointly staffed by VCP and MCF. I have had the opportunity to work in partnership with your members, in an attempt to provide a collaborative approach to child welfare. It has come to my attention repeatedly over the years that there is confusion over confidentiality laws and policies, and that this often interferes with the ability of both police and social workers to carry out their mandated duties.

Specifically, I am requesting approval to:

1) conduct a survey questionnaire of your members (not limited to patrol) in an attempt to gather information regarding their understanding of the information sharing laws and policies, as well as identifying problem areas in their attempts to access information from MCF.

2) use anonymous case examples from my own practice, and from police reports to which I am privy by virtue of my employment. These would be specific examples of when
information was shared or not shared, the differing outcomes in cases dependent on the foregoing, and circumstances where I am aware that there was conflict in a child protection investigation based on the inability of either social workers or police to access information about clients. Personal identifying information (names, birthdates, addresses) would not be used, however, details specific to the case would need to be discussed, and may include the individual’s criminal history or current charges.

Please note that my research is subject to institutional approval by the University of British Columbia, according to the Human Subjects Protocol (Ethics Committee) which require the deletion of all identifying information and ensure that research subjects suffer no deleterious effects.

Thank-you for consideration. If there are any questions, I can be reached on my pager at ***_****

Yours sincerely,

Janet Douglas
Dear Participant,

Re: Evaluation of confidentiality and information-sharing practices of Ministry for Children and families social workers

You are being requested to participate in a survey research project to examine the practice of Ministry intake social workers regarding their sharing of client information, and ability to access confidential material from police departments when conducting child protection investigations and ongoing case work. The research is being conducted by Janet Douglas, MSW student, UBC School of Social Work (contact: pager , under the advisement of Dr. Richard Sullivan, professor, UBC School of Social Work (contact: 822-4278). This survey is being administered in Vancouver and Coquitlam, and has received the approval of the Regional Operating Officers for both areas. The results of the research will be used as part of the investigator’s master’s thesis, and will also be made available to the Ministry for Children and Families for use in training and protocol development if deemed appropriate.

The attached questionnaire is totally voluntary. You may refuse to participate at any time. The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete, and completion of it will indicate your consent. As well, workers are being given the option of volunteering to meet with the investigator should they have a case example that they would be prepared to have examined in more detail at a later date. This is explained in more detail at the end of the questionnaire. The questionnaire is anonymous; please do not put your name on it. Your identity is not noted and therefore your responses are strictly confidential.

Please return your completed questionnaire to the envelope on the front table.

I thank-you for taking the time to assist with this research.

Janet Douglas.
Questionnaire

1) Are you currently employed as a social worker in:
   (a) Vancouver ________
   (b) Coquitlam ________

2) Which law enforcement agency do you primarily interact with?
   (a) Vancouver City Police ________
   (b) Coquitlam RCMP ________
   (c) Other (please specify) ________________________

3) Please indicate your length of employment (in years) as a social worker for the Ministry for Children and Families: ________ years

4) Have you received any in-service training on information-sharing and confidentiality policy and legislation?
   (a) Yes ______
   (b) No ______
   If No, proceed to question #8

5) Which legislation did this training cover (check as many as apply):
   (a) Freedom of Information Act ______
   (b) Child, Family and Community Service Act ______
   (c) Other (please specify) ______

6) How long was the training:
   (a) Half-day ______
   (b) Full-day ______
   (c) Other (please specify) ______

7) How adequate did you find the training?
   Totally adequate ________
   Not at all adequate ________
   5 4 3 2 1

8) How many times per month on average do you request information from the police? ________
9) How many times per month on average do police request information from you?

10) Which methods do you use to request information from police?

   a) Phone call to 911: 
      Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   b) Phone call to non-emergency number:
      Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   c) Face-to-face:
      Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   d) Phone call to a police member you know:
      Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   e) Written request to the Information and Privacy Section:
      Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   f) Request to Car 86:
      Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   g) Other (please specify) ______

11) How successful are you at accessing information using each of these methods?

   a) Phone call to 911:
      Very ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   b) Phone call to non-emergency number:
      Very ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   c) Face-to-face:
      Very ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   d) Phone call to a police member you know:
      Very ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   e) Written request to the Information and Privacy Section:
      Very ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   f) Request to Car 86:
      Very ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   g) Other (please specify) ______

12) Which methods do police use when requesting information from you?

   a) Written request:
      Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   b) Phone call:
      Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   c) Face-to-face:
      Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   d) Producing a warrant:
      Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
   e) Other (please specify):
      Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
13) How would you rate your knowledge of the confidentiality clauses in the Child, Family and Community Service Act that guide your exchange of information with law enforcement agencies?

Excellent knowledge                  No knowledge
5                                      4
3                                      2
1                                      1

14) How would you rate your knowledge of what police are required to disclose to you when assessing a child protection matter?

Excellent knowledge                  No knowledge
5                                      4
3                                      2
1                                      1

15) When asked for information by police, how do you respond?

(a) Co-operate as fully as possible, providing all available information
    Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
(b) Request more details as to their reasons for the request
    Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never ___
(c) Request that they apply in person or writing for the information
    Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never
(d) Discuss the matter with your supervisor
    Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never
(e) Deny knowing the client
    Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never
(f) Refuse to provide any information
    Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never
(g) Other (please specify) ______________________________
    Often ___ Sometimes ___ Never

16) To what extent do each of the following influence your decision to disclose information to the police?

(a) Proof that it is the police requesting the information:
    Very influential                      Not influential
    5                                      4
    3                                      2
    1                                      1

(b) A written request:
    Very influential                      Not influential
    5                                      4
    3                                      2
    1                                      1

(c) Supervisor available for consultation:
    Very influential                      Not influential
    5                                      4
    3                                      2
    1                                      1
(d) Involved in a joint investigation with police:
Very influential: 5 4 3 2 1

(e) Professional relationship with police officer (i.e. knowledge of him/her from previous involvement):
Very influential: 5 4 3 2 1

(f) Their request is within legislative guidelines:
Very influential: 5 4 3 2 1

(g) You understand the reasons for their request:
Very influential: 5 4 3 2 1

(h) Other (please specify): __________
Very influential: 5 4 3 2 1

17) To what extent do your ethical concerns influence your decision to disclose information to the police?
Very influential: 5 4 3 2 1

18) To what extent do you feel that police involvement may jeopardize your relationship with your client?
Always: 5 4 3 2 1

How does this influence your decision to disclose information? (please explain)

19) How important is the history of police involvement with a family to your assessment of child protection?
Very Important: 5 4 3 2 1

Not at all Important: 5 4 3 2 1
20) How often do you feel you are denied information by police that by law you are entitled to?

- Always
- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1
- Not at all

21) To what extent do the following influence your decision to call police for information about a client/family?

a) Allegation that a criminal offense has occurred:
- Very influential
- Not influential

b) Concerns for personal safety:
- Very influential
- Not influential

c) Pending Family Court case:
- Very influential
- Not influential

d) Planning to remove a child(ren):
- Very influential
- Not influential

e) Other (please specify):
- Very influential
- Not influential

22) How would you rate your overall relationship with your law enforcement agency?

- Excellent relationship
- Poor relationship

23) Do you have any comments on the existing training and/or legislation regarding confidentiality and information-sharing with law enforcement agencies?
Dear Participant,

Thank-you for having taken the time to complete the questionnaire. To further enhance my research, I am soliciting social workers to volunteer an additional hour of their time (at your convenience) to participate in an in-depth interview to discuss specific examples from your experience of confidentiality and information-sharing with police. These can be situations that had either a positive or negative outcome from a practice standpoint. If you have a case example that you would be prepared to discuss in more detail, and are interested in volunteering an hour of your time, please read and sign the following consent form, or see me at the end of the questionnaire. As well, I am available by pager (604) 822-2255.

Informed Consent Form

Re: Evaluation of confidentiality and information-sharing practices of Ministry for Children and Families social workers

Principal Investigator: Dr. Richard Sullivan, Associate Professor, UBC School of Social Work, 822-4278

Co-Investigator: Janet Douglas, Graduate Student, UBC School of Social Work, (pager).

Purpose: To examine, in-depth, specific examples of information-sharing and confidentiality practices of Ministry for Children and Families social workers when co-ordinating child protection investigations with law enforcement agencies.

Study procedures: You will be asked to provide a summary of a case (of your choosing) and your involvement, without disclosing any identifying client information. The interview questions will focus on the positive and/or negative aspects of your collaborative efforts, and any recommendations you may have for training and/or protocol development.
The information collected in the interview will be kept in strictest confidence. It will be assigned a number code, and will be destroyed after analysis. You have the right to refuse to participate, or withdraw at any time during the interview. I will be available to answer any questions about the interview, and as well you may contact Dr. Richard Spratley, Director of UBC Research (822-8598), if you have any concerns about your rights or treatment.

Janet Douglas, MSW student

Consent

I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at anytime without jeopardy to my employment.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

I consent to participate in this study.

Subject signature ___________________________ Date __________

Witness Signature ___________________________ Date __________

Interview Questions

1) Please describe your case to me, with emphasis on the aspects of it that relate to confidentiality and information-sharing with the police.
2) Can you identify areas where your case involvement was enhanced by police involvement and information? Any obstacles?
3) Do you have any recommendations regarding information-sharing and confidentiality practices that would assist in training and/or protocol development?