APPLYING A POLICE ENGAGEMENT MODEL TO CHILD PROTECTION SOCIAL
WORK – A VIABLE OPTION FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA?

by

Caleigh West

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Examining Committee

Irwin Cohen
Chair
Associate Professor, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice

_____

Amanda McCormick, Ph.D.
Senior Supervisor
Director, School of Criminology and Criminal Justice

_____

Alan Markwart
External Examiner
Acting Deputy Representative for Children and Youth

_____

Date Defended/Approved: April 23, 2019

Abstract

Child welfare services seek to help children, youth, and families following an event of child abuse or neglect, as well as attempt to prevent such events from occurring. However, the research gathered in this study suggests that child welfare intervention is rarely perceived as helpful by the general public. This perception has damaging impacts for the children, youth, and families that the system aims to protect, as well as for the workers offering these services. Another helping profession that has experienced comparable challenges is law enforcement. As such, this major paper explores initiatives previously undertaken by police to help repair their relationship with the community and reviews the outcomes that these efforts have generated. In an effort to unveil pathways of reconciliation between child welfare services and the community, interviews with professionals in the field were conducted to establish if the same initiatives used by police services could be adopted by child welfare services. The results of this study suggest that applying community policing and problem-oriented policing models to child protection social work would be beneficial. Based on the findings of this study, this paper recommends that applying community engagement strategies used by police agencies is a viable option for reform to child welfare services in British Columbia. Furthermore, this paper seeks to contribute to the growing field of research on bridging the gap between social work, law enforcement, and the community.

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Introduction

The well-known phrase, "it takes a village to raise a child" reveals that society understands that families are a part of multiple systems and, moreover, that exposing a child to healthy interactions with others in these systems is an important part of their development (Kesselring, De Winter, Horjus, Van de Schoot, & Van Yperen, 2012). A systems approach to child-raising also naturally builds in what is often much-needed relief for parents (Kesselring et al., 2012). However, western cultural norms have traditionally placed the responsibility of ensuring child safety and wellbeing solely on parents, and as such interpreting any intervention in this area as negative and intrusive (Kesselring et al., 2012). This phenomenon becomes especially concerning when a child has experienced or is at risk of experiencing abuse or neglect. Afifi, MacMillan, Boyle, Taillieu, Cheung, and Sareen (2014) reviewed data from the 2012 Community Health Survey and concluded that approximately one third of Canadians (32.1%) were victims of abuse and/or neglect as children. Statistics Canada reports a similar finding in their review of the 2014 General Social Survey on Victimization, which found that 33% of Canadians reported experiencing physical and/or sexual abuse in their childhood (Statistics Canada, 2017). Therefore, rather than being an issue that impacts only a small proportion of the population, child abuse and neglect are instead a prevalent concern that impacts not only those directly involved in child protection responses but the community as a whole. It is inarguably a tragedy when a child is exposed to abuse or neglect, unfortunately, such incidents can become further traumatizing as for many children and families the child protection response to these incidents is highly fear-inducing (Cameron, 2014).

Child protection services across North America are shadowed by a longstanding negative reputation (McFadden, Mallett, & Leiter, 2018). In British Columbia, this undesirable reputation

is alive and well and the wounds from a history of child protection errors remain fresh. The Representative of Children and Youth, a watchdog for child protection services in British Columbia, has produced numerous publications highlighting areas of concern in the government systems meant to safeguard children. One of British Columbia's most tragic incidents, where a child, his mother, and her parents were killed by the father in the family prior to taking his own life highlighted a plethora of these concerns (Representative for Children and Youth, 2009). The reports following this incident explained that the child welfare, criminal justice, health and, family law systems needed to improve their communication and information sharing to better assess and ensure safety (Representative for Children and Youth, 2009). Ten years later, the Representative for Children and Youth and their fellow advocates continue to voice pleas for improvement to the child welfare system. In March 2019, the Canadian Council for Child and Youth Advocates released "A Statement on Children's Rights in Canada", which explained that the government systems designed to protect children continue to fail in the upholding of children's rights by not providing channels for youth to advocate for their needs, not seeing the children in their care as often as required, and facilitating damaging numbers of moves between foster homes for children in care.

Should the province seek to improve this reputation and achieve a more effective child protection response model using the recommendations of Hughes (2006), Gove (1995), and the many reports by the Representative for Children and Youth, we must consider initiatives that strive to repair the relationship between child protection services and the community (Deukmedjian & Cradock, 2008). Researchers such as Fazzi (2019) suggest that the idea of strengthening the relationship between the community and child protection has been gaining more traction recently. Taking the time to repair this relationship would include a strategic effort

to reduce the trauma associated to child welfare involvement by hopefully reducing child maltreatment through prevention efforts, but would also involve educating the community on who child protection socials workers are and what their role is in hopes of changing the longstanding perceptions and fears. Inflicting trauma is not the aim of child protection services and is, in fact, counterproductive to achieving the goal of ensuring child safety and providing family support (Gibson, 2015).

Improvements to the relationship between communities and child welfare agencies may be especially beneficial for Indigenous families as child welfare services are historically related to colonization in Canada (Pan et al., 2013). Colonizing child welfare practices date back to the 1870s when residential schools were first established in Canada (Blackstock, 2011). During the timeframe where residential schools were active, there were at least 22 operating in British Columbia (Knickerbocker, 2015). Residential schools were religious boarding school programs that became mandatory for all Indigenous children to attend following an amendment made to the *Indian Act* in 1920 by Duncan Campbell Scott (Knickerbocker, 2015). Duncan Campbell Scott declared that the schools were necessary to "civilize" Indigenous people with the ultimate goal of "killing the Indian in the child" (Knickerbocker, 2015). The killing did not end with culture, however, as many young Indigenous people forced to attend residential schools died as the result of high rates of disease, abuse, and neglect (Blackstock, 2011). Despite these horrific outcomes, residential schools were also often used as placements when Indigenous children were removed from their home by child welfare services. While these removals were conducted in response to what were deemed child protection concerns at the time, they are now understood to have often occurred as part of systematic oppression (Blackstock, 2011). A surge of this type of removal and placement occurred in the 1960s following another amendment to the *Indian Act*

that authorized provincial child welfare services to operate on reserve, a period often referred to as the "60s Scoop" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996). In 2008, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper acknowledged that these acts were discriminatory and heinous in nature and issued a corresponding formal apology (Harper, 2008). Since then, some efforts for reconciliation have and are being made, although Indigenous children continue to represent a disproportionate number of children in care and the service provided to these families continues to be viewed as lacking in cultural sensitivity (Blackstock, 2011).

Lack of cultural sensitivity is a common critique of child welfare in the media (Zugazaga, Surette, Mendez & Otto, 2006). While criticisms are at times warranted, Zugazaga et al. (2006) suggest that the constant flow of one-sided media stories that only cast child welfare in a negative light is a misrepresentation that can have damaging effects. A 2005 study found that 92% of the 3,000 social workers in the United Kingdom that were surveyed reported that destructive media coverage had a negative impact on workplace morale (Community Care, 2005). The press has also been blamed for swaying public perception of social work towards fear (Aldridge, 1990). Therefore, neglecting to repair the image of child protection services allows the media to continue to place the blame for child abuse and neglect on the professional system instead of unveiling a clearer picture of who is perpetrating child abuse and neglect and why (McFadden et al., 2018).

Such challenges are not unlike problems faced by police that community policing initiatives have sought to address (Deumedjiann & Cradock, 2008). Deukmedjian and Cradock (2008) stated that community engagement initiatives had promised to rejuvenate both policing and child protection; however, a review of available literature suggests that the concept has yet to be adopted and tested specifically to child protection services. When considering that community

policing initiatives have been found to have at least some benefit on the public perception of police, it would be negligent not to explore the possibility that similar strategies may improve child protection services and consequently the safety and wellbeing of children and their families. As a result, this major paper will seek to understand whether the application of community policing and problem-oriented policing initiatives to child welfare services are a viable option for British Columbians and what the strengths and challenges of such an adaptation would be.

In order to conduct this analysis, it is important to understand that the negative light that often shines on child protection does not appear at random, but rather has been cultivated over history. Accordingly, it is important to understand the path that has led child welfare in British Columbia to where it is today. As such, the first section of this paper provides a literature review on child welfare both in its past and present state. Knowledge of this research allows us to move forward in an evidence-based fashion that maximizes known strengths and attempts to avoid previous mistakes. It is this reasoning that lends itself to the following literature review on community policing, which starts with a history of policing that provides the foundation for the models society has built upon until today. This history is followed by a deeper examination of four types of police community engagement initiatives that may be applicable to the way the child welfare profession could interact with the community in the future. As there is an absence of research on the direct correlation between community engagement initiatives and child welfare, the third section of this paper explains the methodology used in this study to gather qualitative data to explore this potential connection. The subsequent section then elaborates on the findings of this exercise and provides a discussion using these findings. The final section reviews the implications of this study. This concluding section also makes recommendations on

the application of this research to practice and other areas of study that may assist in the ongoing effort to improve child welfare practice.

Child Protection Literature Review

Child Protection History

Child protection social work emerged as an official profession in North America in 1875 (Hämäläinen, 2016; Myers, 2006). Prior to 1875, there were no formal means of child protection services; however, friends, family, and church personnel would regularly intervene if a child was found to be orphaned, poor, abused, or neglected (Myers, 2006). Should these supports not be available or sufficient, then local officials would at times intervene under the principle of *parens patriae*, which provides the state with the legal authority to take responsibility for individuals in need of protection (McGillevray, 2011). As early as 1642, the state of Massachusetts enacted a law that gave magistrates the legal authority to apprehend a child should their parent not "train them up" adequately (Myers, 2006, pg. 12). Common responses to children found in need of protection during these times were derived from the English Poor Law, including: outdoor relief, apprenticeship, and indenture (Myers, 2006). Outdoor relief, a program that allowed children to remain in the family home with financial assistance provided by the government, was primarily used for families struggling with poverty (Myers, 2006). In circumstances when a child was removed from the home on either a voluntary or involuntary basis, they were often placed with a master under an apprenticeship program where they would learn and practice a trade (Myers, 2006; Schalk, Wallis, Crowston, & Lemercier, 2017). With some similarity, indentured slaves were children that were placed out of the home and who, to earn their room and board, were expected to complete working duties (Myers, 2006). The demand for child protection intervention continued to increase and there were insufficient resources to respond; many of the arrangements that were available enabled further abuse and neglect of the children accessing

their services (Myers, 2006). As a result, a more centralized service known as "almshouses" was created and became common practice throughout the 1700s (Holt, 2016; Myers, 2006). Almshouses were institutions intended for all those considered to be dependent, including children, as well as those considered to be physically or mentally unwell (Holt, 2016; Myers, 2006). Over time this type of environment was scrutinized for not being in the best interests of children, and consequently the 1800s saw the birth of orphanages as housing specifically for children was prioritized (Myers, 2006). By the end of the 19th century, it was reported that the United States had more than 100,000 children in the care of approximately 600 orphanages across the nation (Myers, 2006).

With the number of children requiring support more visible than ever, it was requested that Minister Charles Loring Brace direct his attention to assisting children in need in the state of New York (Myers, 2006). This led to the development of the private charity known as the New York Children's Aid Society in 1853 (Children's Aid Society, N.D.; Myers, 2006). This society partnered the concept of orphanages with increased education in industrial schools and lodging houses (Myers, 2006).

Although these programs were well-intentioned, they were primarily designed to assist children of poverty as opposed to those who were victims of abuse. This became apparent in the iconic case of Mary Ellen Wilson, a young girl who was indentured to a very abusive home (Jalongo, 2006; Myers, 2006). A concerned citizen brought this to the attention of Missionary Etta Wheeler, who refused to let the situation continue despite a lack of authority to intervene (Jalongo, 2006; Myers, 2006). In desperation, Ms. Wheeler approached the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and although Mary Ellen could not be protected under animal protection laws, an alternate law was found and used to authorize the removal of Mary

Ellen from her home on April 9, 1874 (Myers, 2006). Those involved in the rescue of Mary Ellen knew that she was not the only child in need of protection and subsequently founded the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in December of 1874 (Myers, 2006; New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 2006). The society responded to reported child protection concerns with a variety of interventions ranging from legal prosecution to offering education and support (Myers, 2006; New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 2006). Myers (2006) explains that this response model quickly caught on across the United States.

In 1891, the first Canadian Aid Society was opened in Toronto (Ontario Association of Children's Aid Society, N.D.). A legal mandate for child protection followed in 1893 when the actions of founder John Joseph Kelso led to the legislation of the *Child Protection Act* (The Child, Youth, and Family Policy Research Centre, 1991). Although these societies were a vast improvement, there were still children falling through the cracks. Gaps in service increased between the depression period of the 1930s through to the 1960s when times of war resulted in a lack of resources (Myers, 2006). The non-profit model could no longer sustain itself, forcing government agencies to step in and assume responsibility for the safety of children across North America starting in 1965 (Myers, 2006).

Child Protection Today

Today, government employed child protection social workers continue to carry the responsibility of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children across North America (Gibson, 2015). In Canada, child protection is the responsibility of the Provincial and Territorial Governments (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2018). This contributes to some variation across legislation from province to province, including the age in which someone can be considered a child at risk ranging between 16 and 19 years of age (Canadian Association of

Social Workers, 2018). However, much of the legislation parallels one another in that children who are exposed to abuse and neglect have the right to be protected (Sinha, Ellenbogen, & Trocmé, 2013). As such, there are laws in all areas of Canada that citizens have a duty to report if a child is believed to have been the victim of abuse and/or neglect or is at risk of abuse and/or neglect in the future. Social workers are employed to work around the clock, every day of the year, at all Canadian child welfare agencies to respond to these reports (Canadian Association of Social Workers, 2018). The reports are sadly ample, with the most recent data available suggesting that British Columbia's child welfare agency, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, receives approximately 3,000 reports monthly (The Province of British Columbia, 2010).

In British Columbia, the legislation that mandates child welfare is the *Child, Family and Community Services Act*, which delegates the Ministry of Children and Family Development ("MCFD") to ensure the safety and wellbeing of families who are identified as in need. There are 429 MCFD offices across the province. In addition to MCFD, there are also delegation agreements with 24 Delegated Aboriginal Agencies ("DAAs") with varying levels of authority (Province of British Columbia, N.D.). DAAs are one the many efforts of the provincial government to help address the disproportionate number of Indigenous children in care and to restore the historic responsibility of child protection to Indigenous communities (Province of British Columbia, N.D.).

Child Protection Agencies, including British Columbia's MCFD, state that the intention of the profession is to help children and families who are identified as needing support to reduce the risk of abuse and neglect of children. Therefore, it is reasonable that Giwa (2018) states that social work is a helping profession with empathy for families at its core. However, families often

require support during times of struggle and vulnerability, often creating a guarded environment that is very sensitive, yet critical for a social worker to enter (Horwitz & Marshall, 2015; Winefield & Barlow, 1995). Families may be defensive of their situation as they fear that exposing their circumstances may result in judgement or even worse, the removal of their child (Horwitz & Marshall, 2015). Acknowledging the reality of this fear is important, as although the goal is to preserve the unity of families, the safety of children is paramount and ensuring safety can require interventions that may be unpleasant for families, such as investigations, court orders, and in severe cases, removal of the child(ren) (Lamothe et al., 2018). The MCFD states that they are committed to using the least intrusive intervention available to mitigate risk (Province of British Columbia, N.D.). As mentioned previously, this has not always been the case for Indigenous families in British Columbia and during the 1960s many children were apprehended without just cause and forced to attend residential schools (Pan et al., 2013). Generations later, there remains a large part of society that has developed a lack of trust and an overall distaste for child protection services based on the experiences of their ancestors and ongoing injustices (Pan et al., 2013).

This distrust has likely been amplified by the negative outcomes experienced by many of the children and youth who are removed and placed into the care of the government. Children in care in British Columbia are four times less likely to graduate from high school, with a completion rate of only 24.5% (The Representative for Children and Youth, 2007). Unfortunately, children in care are more likely to be involved in the youth justice system for criminal activity than they are to graduate high school (The Representative for Children and Youth, 2009).

Furthermore, modern child protection social work has been criticized for being overly focused on paperwork, limiting social workers' abilities to tend to the actual needs of the families on their caseload (Ferguson, 2014). Ferguson (2014) describes this phenomenon as 'zombie social work'. Gibson (2017) explains that this demand for documentation has been steadily increasing since the 1970s and has reached a level well beyond professional need. The burden of paperwork has also been documented to have a negative impact on social worker job satisfaction (Gibson, 2017). According to the Canadian Association of Social Workers (2018), 66% of the responding child welfare workers stated that increased administrative requirements were a critical issue contributing to burnout. However, in British Columbia, the Representative for Children and Youth released a report titled "More Than Just Paperwork" in 2013, which criticized MCFD for not meeting documentation standards. The Representative for Children and Youth feels that proper documentation is the crux of preparing for the future of children in care as it helps hold the government accountable for proper planning that helps reduce the risk of children slipping through the cracks of the system. As theorized by the Representative for Children and Youth (2013) it is unlikely that social workers neglect paperwork with ill intent, and it is more probable that the current environment makes it challenging to meet standards. In fact, Gibson (2017) noted that unmanageable caseloads and the associated paperwork are some of the primary reasons that social workers leave the profession. The Canadian Association of Social Work (2018) surveyed 3,258 social workers across Canada and found that 75% of respondents reported experiencing unmanageable workloads.

Turnover rates of social workers are a significant concern in child welfare practice (Gibson, 2017). In British Columbia, the 2018 BCGEU staff survey of 880 MCFD employees revealed that 85% of respondents reported that staff in their workplace had left over the past

year, resulting in 62.5% of respondents reporting that their workplace had unfilled vacancies. Other reasons that contribute to premature departure from the profession include: bureaucracy, unrealistic objectives, lack of autonomy, limited organization support, and low salaries (Canadian Association of Social Work, 2018; Gibson, 2017). Zosky (2010) further explains that social workers not only juggle these challenges but also the conflicts associated with role ambiguity between being both an authority and a helper. This unrealistic expectation sets child welfare social workers up to feel inadequate in their trade (Zosky, 2010). When social workers attempt to lead change in an effort to minimize role ambiguity or to address other challenges in the field of child protection they are often stonewalled by their organization, resulting in further feelings of defeat, which again contributes to reduced job satisfaction and burnout (Gibson, 2017).

In addition, Lamothe et al. (2018) found that hostility and violence were other significant causes for social worker burnout. This is especially concerning considering Brandon, Bailey, Belderson, Gardner, Sidebotham, and Dodsworth (2009) stated that the findings of their study suggested that approximately 75% of those needing to work with child protection services are seen as uncooperative and hostile. The frequency and impact of these scenarios are further exemplified by Cooper, Hunt, Goddard, Littlechild, and Wild's (2016) study of 590 child welfare workers in the United Kingdom, which found that 50% of survey respondents had been threatened by those they worked with on a regular basis. For many workers, these threats were actioned upon, resulting in 18% of respondents being physically assaulted and 10% being held captive (Cooper et al., 2016). Based on the severity of these events it is perhaps not surprising that 66% of survey respondents stated that the stress from these incidents had lasting impacts on

both their professional and personal lives (Cooper et al., 2016). The impact on mental health and well-being that this stress can have is discussed below.

Although trauma exposure is often unavoidable when following required duties, there is a lack of systems in place to both prepare and respond to those social workers who are impacted (Salloum, Kondrat, Johnco & Olson, 2015). Cooper et al.'s (2016) previously mentioned study found that only half of the individuals who felt impacted by trauma also felt that they received adequate support from their organization. These numbers are shocking when we consider that being impacted by trauma has a significant influence on the well-being of the individual, the organization and the safety of the children that they serve to protect (Salloum et al., 2015).

An evidence-based trauma response model used commonly in other professions is Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) (Everly & Mitchell, 2011). CISM originated from a program titled the Assaulted Staff Action Program that has been adapted over the last 50 years to what it is today (Everly, Flannery & Eyler, 2002). CISM is described as "a comprehensive, integrative, multicomponent crisis intervention system. CISM is considered comprehensive because it consists of multiple crisis intervention components, which functionally span the entire temporal spectrum of a crisis" (Everly and Mitchell, 2011, pg 1). Everly, Mitchell and Eyler (2002) completed a meta-review of eight studies that measured the efficacy of CISM, all of which concluded that CISM leads to statistically significant positive outcomes. Despite being evidence-based, there is no evidence that CISM or related principles are being used in the field of child welfare in British Columbia at this time. However, some social work agencies in Australia are using CISM, and Pack (2013) reports that they have been found to be very effective. British Columbia's child welfare services were also not recognized in the provincial Bill 9- 2018 Workers Compensation Amendment Act ("Bill 9"), which was passed on May 14,

2018. Bill 9 recognizes the following professions as being more likely to experience trauma in the course of their work: correctional officers, police officers, sheriffs, firefighters, and emergency medical assistants, more commonly known as paramedics. Bill 9 states that people working in these fields who are presenting with a mental health condition related to trauma must be presumed to have endured such trauma as part of their occupation, and consequently further explanation as to the reason for additional assistance should not be required. Neglecting to include child welfare workers in Bill 9 is another example of not recognizing or providing the needed support for child welfare workers who experience the lasting adverse impacts that are associated with critical incidents in a child protection workplace. The impacts of this stress may be exasperated by a lack of sufficient follow up offered by the organizations.

A common negative outcome of unaddressed trauma exposure for workers is burnout (Burbonnais, Jauvin, Dussault, & Vezina, 2007). Burnout manifests itself in many ways, including physical symptoms, such as: headaches, gastrointestinal upset, muscle pain, sleep disruption, fatigue, and increased susceptibility to flus and colds (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Burnout also has negative implications on the individual's mental and emotional wellbeing; it is common for workers experiencing burnout to have decreased work performance, higher rates of tardiness and absenteeism, and an overall lack of professional commitment (Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Furthermore, when a social worker is experiencing burnout, they may present as lacking empathy towards the families that they work with (Lamothe et al., 2018). Similar findings have been identified for other public safety personnel, with 45% of 1,072 police officers stating that feelings of burnout have led them to feel a lack of care towards the problems posed to them at work and the impact that these problems have on the people that they serve (Gershon, Barocas, Canton, Li, & Vlahov, 2009).

When symptoms of burnout persist following an acute traumatic event or repeated exposure to trauma they can manifest into a mental health condition known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Jo et al., 2018). Additional symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder include stimulus avoidance, thought intrusion and flashbacks, perpetual feelings of aloneness, poor emotional regulation, and dissociation (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). First responders are at a heightened risk of being diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder with an estimated diagnostic rate of between 5% to 32% compared to 4% of the mainstream population (Klimley, Van Hasselt, & Stripling, 2018). Social workers are rarely included in the dialogue around heightened risk for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, yet a recent study of child welfare workers across eight of the United States conducted by the Quality Improvement Center for Workplace Development (2019) revealed that between 35% to 75% of child welfare social workers exhibited symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, depending on their agency and location.

The high rate of social worker burnout and turnover inevitably contributes to a variety of systemic problems, such as an inordinate number of inexperienced staff, strained communication, and limited supports offered to families (Cameron, 2014). These strains have persisted despite many attempts at reform and they do not go unnoticed by the communities and families that the social workers aim to serve (Cameron, 2014; McFadden, et al., 2018).

Despite the high levels of stress and burnout, practicing what many child protection workers see to be "true" social work, such as building relationships and helping others evoke change, results in reporting of increased job satisfaction (Canadian Association of Social Work, 2018). In fact, having the opportunity to participate in these types of work experiences was found to counteract the negative impacts of ongoing trauma exposure. Therefore, increasing the

opportunity for this type of work through a more community-focused approach could be one

potential strategy to reduce burnout, while also improving the reputations of social workers

within the communities that they serve.

Community and Problem Oriented Policing Literature Review

Community and Problem Oriented Policing Origins

Social work is not the first public serving profession to cultivate the uncertainty of those

they seek to serve. In fact, many parallels can be found when comparing the challenges that have

been encountered by police agencies in Canada (Deukmedjian & Cradock, 2008).

Professional policing emerged in the 19th century following the establishment of the

Royal Irish Constabulary in 1814 by Sir Robert Peel (Chriss, 2011; McKenna, 2000). The model

of law enforcement during the era immediately following the introduction of this structured form

of policing is often referred to as political policing (Chriss, 2011; McKenna, 2000). This title is

granted based on the heavy influence that government had over policing at this time, which

resulted in politically motivated initiatives that often led to corrupt and unjust service (Chriss,

2011; McKenna, 2000). Furthermore, the role of the police could vary drastically from

community to community and with any change in leadership (Chriss, 2011; McKenna, 2000).

Unsurprisingly, the public took issue with this model of police practice and as such, reform

towards what is known as the professional policing era took place at the end of the 19th century

(Chriss, 2011; McKenna, 2000). The professional policing era attempted to recover the

reputation of the police by creating police academies that trained officers with common ethics

and practice guidelines (Chriss, 2011; McKenna, 2000). Establishing an ethical framework for

police fuelled initiatives that created an independence between the police and the government

(Chriss, 2011; McKenna, 2000). It is during this era that police began to leverage technology to

aid with their duties, and as a result police began to be able to distance themselves further from

the public. Chriss (2011) explains that this disbandment was likely done with the good intentions of minimizing corruption, but it resulted in the loss of preventative policing and created a primarily reactive law enforcement environment. As society entered the 20th century, this strictly 'crime fighting' model was no longer sustainable as crime rates continued to soar (Chriss, 2011). In addition, as an awareness of civil rights was developing, the public began to question the paramilitary methods of choice by police (Chriss, 2011). Police credibility was crippled in the 1960s following what the public saw as an unnecessarily harsh law enforcement response to the Vietnam protests (Ratcliffe, 2016; Rosenbaum, 1998). It was also during the 1960s that the term 'Terry Stop' was coined (Torres, 2015). A Terry Stop is also known as a stop-and-frisk and refers to a process where police may stop and search anyone that they believe to be suspicious (Torres, 2015). This tactic almost immediately caused upset in the eyes of the public as it was seen to be racially biased and a violation of human rights (Torres, 2015). Therefore, the public did not only disagree with the methods being used for riot control and Terry Stops but also questioned whether or not police were evolving with society. The divide between the people and the police became more evident than ever, especially in pockets of communities with higher populations of individuals who considered themselves to be marginalized (Ratcliffe, 2016). In addition, the demand for police services began to escalate exponentially, and innovation was necessary to keep pace with the growing needs of society (Anucha & Schwartz, 2014). Solution seekers within policing began to understand that the state of society and crime are interlinked.

With this understanding, police began to remove the gap between the public and the police. This led to The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society Report released in the United States by President Johnson's Crime Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice in July 1965, which some consider to be the first formal recommendation of community

engagement in policing (Ratcliffe, 2016). Unfortunately, in the decades to follow, the fear of crime in North America was tangible and consequently, trust in the police continued to diminish (Loader & Mulcahy, 2003). In attempts to regain a sense of legitimacy, community engagement initiatives became common practice to help reduce this sense of unease. By the 1980s, police departments across the United States had adopted the term "community policing" as part of their business models (Giwa, James, Anucha & Schwartz, 2014). It is from this point forward that this term became the defining name of the third and current era of policing. However, it was not until the 1990s that community policing was instituted in Canada (Giwa et al., 2014). This is evidenced by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police ("RCMP") Commissioner Office Reports that articulated a business model focused on enhancing community engagement to improve public safety initiatives (Ratcliffe, 2016). Community policing continues to be mentioned in the mandate of the RCMP, as well as the Ontario Provincial Police, the Quebec Sûreté, as well as many, if not most, municipal police agencies (Forcese, 2002).

Community policing may have at first been an easy role to place officers that were not wanted for or able to partake in regular policing duties, by providing them with the simple task of cheerful conversation with shop owners; however, community policing has evolved substantially since that time. Community policing is now a strategic multifaceted aspect of policing that works with the public to identify, assess, and respond to the problems in the communities they serve (Giwa, James, Anucha & Schwartz, 2014). As such, community policing is now believed to be of value and is consequently a widely accepted practice both in Canada and worldwide (Giwa et al., 2014). Despite the vast adoption of community policing there continues to be a lack of an agreed upon definition of this term (Giwa et al., 2014). The lack of a unanimous definition has corresponded with inconsistencies in properly implementing

community policing strategies (Giwa, 2018). However, Fleras and Elliott (2002), suggests that a fairly agreeable definition of community policing is "a commitment by the police to prevent crime by collaborating with an interested public" (p. 141). This paper has adopted this definition when referring to community policing.

Despite the varying definitions of community policing, the principles of the model are relatively consistent across communities. Community policing allows those in the community to play a role in developing their agenda (Giwa, 2018). This collaboration on the direction of policing allows for the agenda of the police to be more tailored to the needs of that specific community at a particular time (Johnston, 2000). When these needs are being met, the community correspondingly views the police as a more valid service, and furthermore, when this sense of legitimacy increases people may be inclined to obey the law and assist in maintaining a lawful society (Segrave & Ratcliffe, 2004). Therefore, community policing success cannot be measured strictly in statistics of crime rates and response times as the primary value stems from its ability to build effective working relationships between police and the public (Richard, Williams & Thomas, 2005) and community policing may in fact increase crime rates as people may be more willing to come forward to police with their concerns (Taylor & Charlton, 2005). When this cycle of reporting crime and seeing police respond to these concerns occurs the positive views of policing increases and fear of crime decreases (Taylor & Charlton, 2005). Goldstein (1987) further states that this joint effort between community and law enforcement increases transparency, which in turn increases police accountability.

As community policing stems from relationships, the successes have been found to be transferable across many different community types. For example, many of the initial studies were completed in large urban areas, such as Chicago and New York (Pate & Shtull, 1994;

Skogan, Hartnett, DuBois, Comey, Kaiser, & Loving, 1999), yet Adams, Rohe, and Arcury (2005) found similar positive outcomes across small to midsize communities across North Carolina in their 2005 study. Despite the contrasting locations for these studies, they all reached similar conclusions that community policing correlates with increased feelings of ease and safety for those in the community and increased participation in self-protection (Adams et al., 2005; Pate & Shtull, 1994; Skogan et al., 1999). However, Rabot (2004) points out that community policing initiatives must adapt from community to community and must not remain stagnant.

Outside of North America, Kumar (2012) found that a study on community policing initiatives in Janamaitri, India also yielded positive results, such as: enhanced police performance, more positive views of the police, and an improved sense of safety among citizens. In Taiwan, similar results were found in Kuo and Shih's 2018 evaluation of their community policing program titled 'Our Paichusuo', which means "field station" in Mandarin. Of note, this evaluation also found an additional positive outcome of enriched job satisfaction for police. The improved contentment with work was attributed to the community policing program allowing more flexibility, increased variety of work, and an added sense of meaning to the duties required (Kuo & Shih, 2018). In some areas, such as the United Kingdom, community policing is at times referred to as Neighborhood Policing (Tuffin, Morris, & Poole, 2006). Regardless of the different name, the strategies and positive outcomes are similar.

Although there are many indications that community policing programs and initiatives repeatedly produce beneficial outcomes, it would be naive to not consider common challenges, as we cannot address these areas without first identifying them. First, communities are complex ecosystems with diverse needs and consequently there will not always be consensus on what requires police attention (Johnston, 2000). Solely engaging with those already inclined to be

talking to the police can result in a community where only the needs of this specific group are being met, which is neglectful as those more willing to speak with the police are often those less involved in the criminal justice system (Johnston, 2000). Therefore, police must engage with subcultures within the community to ensure that both their approaches and their agendas reflect diversity and cultural sensitivity (Giwa, 2018; Johnston, 2000). Depending on the group of individuals and their history working with police, some subcultures will be more or less comfortable with community policing initiatives, as for some the mere presence of police may be perceived as a threat (Giwa, 2018). As a result, working effectively with communities requires dedicated officers who are committed to the principles of community policing. Unfortunately, the plethora of skills needed to work in collaboration with a community as a police officer are not always recognized, which can result in the position not being valued and therefore not receiving the most eligible candidates and a lack of support for those who do assume the role (Goldstein, 1987). Furthermore, without a cultural shift of acceptance from within the police agency there is likely to be further issue with achieving deliverables due to a lack of resources as well as a lack of multi-unit problem solving. Therefore, community policing needs to be a cultural shift for the police agencies and the communities as a whole in order to be truly functioning at its full potential.

Community policing should also be used in tandem with other policing strategies to achieve its full potential. For example, the core of community policing is primarily focused on crime prevention, yet it is known that not all unlawful activity will cease and as a result, policing agencies often also use problem-oriented policing, which recognizes that responses must be both preventative and reactive (Goldstein, 1990; Ratcliffe, 2016). Problem-oriented policing is comprehensive in that it analyzes problems from a victim, offender, and location perspective

(Rogers, 2010). Once the problem is understood, police using problem-oriented policing frequently use the methodological tool SARA (Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment) (Ratcliffe, 2016). Problem-oriented policing recognizes that not all responses will be a traditional police response, such as an arrest and instead, partnerships with other community stakeholders are imperative to finding the most applicable and the most ethical reaction to a given issue (Rogers, 2019). Police partnerships that stem from community and problem-oriented policing also lend themselves to intelligence-led policing, as gathering valuable intelligence necessitates an integrated approach (Deukmedjian & Cradock, 2008). Ensuring the safety of the community can, and should be, achieved using a variety of methods, many of which could be transferable to the social work profession. The following section of this paper will outline those methods within policing that have been found most effective based on the research to date.

Effective Police Engagement Initiatives

Youth Engagement

The younger years of an individual's life are believed to be the most formative and impressionable time during the lifespan (Widom, 2017). In British Columbia, the legal definition of a minor is an individual under the age of 19 years. However, the younger years can often be further broken down into subsections. For the purpose of this study, those under 12 years of age will referred to as children, those from 12 years of age to 17 years of age as youth, and those from 18 years of age to 25 years of age as young adults.

There is significant research to suggest that those who have adverse childhood experiences, such as abuse and neglect, are more likely to engage in violence and crime as they develop into their youth and young adulthood (Felitti et al. (1998); Fox, Perez, Cass, Baglivio, & Epps, 2015; Mumford, Taylor, Berg, Liu, & Miesfeld, 2019; Widom, 2017). This is consistent with Hirschi and Gottfredson's (1983) age-crime curve, which suggests that criminal activity

typically does not commence until the age of 12 years old, unlawful activity then rises abruptly until the age of 19 years old when it begins to taper off. We see this curve in Canada, as youth represent 7% of the population, but they are believed to commit 13% of crimes based on the Statistics Canada Reported Crime Survey from 2014. While much of the youth crime is committed by the larger group of adolescent-limited offenders, crime that is committed by adults is often perpetrated by a relatively small group of chronic repeat offenders known as life-course persistent offenders (Moffitt, 1993). There are many programs to help guide youth through this often-challenging time while also aiming to reduce crime rates. In addition, youth are often described as the generation of the future, and therefore youth engagement programs have a unique opportunity to potentially influence society moving forward and decrease the number of adult offenders. As such, police engaged in community and problem-oriented policing have recognized youth as an important category for engagement and crime prevention work.

Youth engagement programs facilitated by police often include: school liaison officers, youth mentorship partnerships, deterrence programs, and athletic initiatives (Leroux & McShane, 2017). The research on the outcome of these programs varies. However, of the studies reviewed, the findings all indicated some positive correlation of youth engagement efforts by law enforcement.

For example, one factor that may influence heightened youth crime rates is substance use. Consequently, a very common youth deterrence program that is practiced in 53 countries, including in North America, is the Drug Abuse Reduction Education ("D.A.R.E") program (Cohen, Plecas, & Watkinson, 2013). The D.A.R.E program was founded in 1983 by the Los Angeles Police Department in collaboration with the Los Angeles Unified School District (Montvilo, 2019). The program curriculum embodies First Lady Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No"

campaign, and as such strives to decrease the demand for alcohol and illicit drugs by informing school-aged children and youth of the associated risks (Howell, 2003). This education is provided in the classroom to students and their parents by specialized police officers (Montvilo, 2019). Cohen et al. (2013) completed a systematic review of the D.A.R.E program and found that although evaluations differed in both their credibility and findings on whether the program is achieving its desired outcomes, the vast majority of findings found that program participants reported feeling better educated on drug resistance techniques and healthy stress management. Of particular importance for this study, Donnermeyer and Phillips (2005) further found that D.A.R.E participants had an improved perception of police.

Another similar youth deterrence program is the Gang Resistance Education and Training ("G.R.E.A.T.") program (Papachristos, 2013). G.R.E.A.T. followed in the footsteps of D.A.R.E. in 1991 when launched by the Phoenix Police Department in conjunction with education and state officials (G.R.E.A.T., N.D.). G.R.E.A.T prides itself on being evidence based and has consequently had ongoing evaluations. The most recent evaluation found was completed by Esbensen, Osgood, Peterson, Taylor, and Carson in 2013, which found that although G.R.E.A.T. does not have a significant impact on the overall crime participation of its participants, the program is achieving its primary goal of reducing gang involvement and again is reported to improve the youth's view of police.

It is therefore not surprising that Rabois and Haaga's 2002 study, which reviewed a police basketball program for at-risk youth, also found that although the program did not achieve its overall goal of improving the youths' perception of police as a whole, it did create a positive connection between the youth and the specific officers in the program and had a more significant positive impact on the officers' perception of youth overall. When an officer has a more positive

view of the youth, they may be more compassionate should they encounter them breaking the law. This is important as Fine, Cavanagh, Donley, Steinberg, Frick, and Cauffman (2016) state that a way a youth is treated during their first arrest is fundamental in shaping their perception of procedural justice, which is the degree to which one perceives that justice is being carried out fairly. Overall, the studies reviewed on this subject (e.g. Cohen et al., 2013; Donnermeyer & Phillips, 2005; Esbensen et al., 2013) share the overall theme that those youth who are exposed to more positive contact with police are more likely to have a better view of police and work in collaboration with them when necessary (Leroux & McShane, 2017). This is an important lesson for the field of social work to attend to.

Social Media

A more recent strategy of community engagement by police is the use of social media (Williams et al., 2018). The Federal Bureau of Investigation explained that the police need to be where the people are, and the people are on social media (The Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010). Perrin (2015) reports that 65% of adults across varying income levels are active on social media, while Williams et al.'s (2018) study found that 95.4% of police departments used Facebook and 66.4% used Twitter. According to Twitter, the RCMP "E" Division, which has jurisdiction across British Columbia, launched their Twitter Account under the name 'BCRCMP' in 2009, and have subsequently made 22,300 posts to their 60,300 followers and the more general public. Many of the municipal police forces in British Columbia are also on Social Media. The Vancouver Police Department has social media accounts for their agency as a whole, as well as for specific units and staff. To help manage all of these accounts Vancouver Police Department employs social media officers who are specially trained on how to use the varying platforms to their full potential (Vancouver Police Department, N.D.). The most common social

media platforms used by police are Twitter and Facebook (Williams et al., 2018), however, other social media networks used by police include: YouTube, Flickr, Ning and Instagram (Demircioglu & Chen, 2018).

Social media is a tool that assists with quick and broad information dissemination. As a result, police have leveraged their social media accounts to assist with: public safety announcements, community engagement, public relations, and notification of community event occurrences (Williams et al., 2018). Williams et al. (2018) further found that these different types of posts yield different responses; for example, posts familiarizing the community with police staff were found to be the most 'liked'. However, the reactions to all types of posts have been found to be generally positive or neutral according to Hofmann et al. (2013). In fact, Porumbescu (2016) and Grimmelikhuijsen and Meijer (2015) found that police social media use aided the public perception of law enforcement agencies and consequently improved the legitimacy and trust of the police. This may be because the public has long valued transparency (Demircioglu & Chen, 2018). Social media allows for strategic transparency, as police and businesses alike can use it to share the information that they wish, to help shape their image and improve their brand. This can be especially helpful to get out in front of a negative media report or to clarify inaccurate information provided by another source (Williams et al., 2018).

Those who see the police in a positive light are more likely to follow law enforcement activity online (Williams et al., 2018), which has resulted in some research questioning how effective social media is in actually changing the public's opinion of police (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2015). However, even if not shifting public perceptions of the masses, social media is an inexpensive tool for sharing information and building or further enhancing relationships with the community (Meijer, 2014).

The effectiveness of the dissemination of information on social media has also assisted in solving crime and locating individuals (Hertzberg & Steinberg, 2012). As the greater public make use of social media, these platforms may also be a means of intelligence-gathering for law enforcement. Furthermore, when an individual is missing or at large, police can upload their photograph to motivate the public to help locate the individual. The RCMP provide a success story of this strategy on their website where they explain that in 2014 they posted a photo of a man by the name of William Holt who was wanted on numerous warrants, and upon seeing his own photo all over Facebook, William chose to turn himself in (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2015).

Although not as thoroughly researched, social media use by police may be especially helpful in rural areas, as the internet could help reach those individuals in areas that would be geographically challenging for police to engage with. Another potential unintended positive outcome of police social media use is a spark of healthy competition and camaraderie with fellow police agencies. An example of this competitive camaraderie is explained by Dangerfield and Bartko (2017); in the spring of 2017, Manitoba was struck with a late-season snowstorm. Vancouver Police Department saw this as an opportunity to turn to Twitter with the following message: "Dear Manitoba, we're sorry to hear you're still having snow. Sincerely, Vancouver. P.S., did anyone mention we're hiring?" and a variety of photos flaunting police enjoying the sunny weather in British Columbia. Manitoba Police Department did not skip a beat and quickly responded with a tweet stating: "Dear Vancouver Police Department, it's okay, the snow melts quickly off the lawns of our affordable houses.". This banter continued and pulled Edmonton Police Department into this entertaining

interprovincial communication across police forces that is often otherwise unseen by the public but when they do so, it can make the police seem more approachable.

Culturally Sensitive Initiatives

Community policing recognizes that for policing to be effective they need to be seen as part of the community (Giwa, 2018). Pan et al. (2013) state that police efficacy also hinges on being viewed as unbiased and fair administrators of the law. Unfortunately, the bond between police and the Indigenous communities of Canada was severed for many Indigenous peoples and their families when police were used to enforce unjust policies stemming from the *Indian Act* of 1876 (Pan et al., 2013). Therefore, it is not surprising that 57% of Indigenous people report a lack of trust in the police (Environics Institute, 2010), compared to 25% of the rest of the population (Latimer & Desjardins, 2007).

Based on the above information, and a national effort towards reconciliation, many Canadian police agencies have focused on partnerships with Indigenous communities as part of their community policing initiatives (Giwa, 2018). Some of the most notable efforts to work in collaboration with Aboriginal communities are those of the Vancouver Police Department through their Diversity and Indigenous Relations Section (Giwa, 2018). This designated section is committed to working in the best interests of Indigenous people. The Vancouver Police Department is attempting to demonstrate this intent through programs such as: SisterWatch, a program designed to reduce the risk of violence against women in the Downtown East Side; Pulling Together Canoe Journeys, a culturally based canoe journey where police and Indigenous families work together; and the Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services Society's youth cadet placement, a three-month internship for an Indigenous youth to work towards a career in law enforcement (Vancouver Police Department, N.D.). Furthermore, the Vancouver

Police Department works closely with the Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre and other related agencies. Vancouver Police officers make it a priority to attend Aboriginal cultural events alongside their community partners, when appropriate to do so (Vancouver Police Department, N.D.).

It should be noted that Indigenous culture is one of the many cultures that make up British Columbia's diverse population and similar initiatives can be found to help build rapport with a variety of different ethnic and cultural groups (Vancouver Police Department, N.D.) For example, the RCMP developed a "newcomers" guide in 2015, following British Columbia and Canada as a whole becoming home to many refugees fleeing countries that may have different laws and views of the police (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2017). To ensure the guide was evidence based and crafted with empathy and understanding, four Arabic speaking RCMP members went to Jordan to gather first-hand information (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2017). The guide is now available in French, Arabic, Simplified Chinese, Punjabi, and Farsi (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2017). Surrey RCMP has also expanded the guide into live information sessions where community members are able to directly interact with their local law enforcement. As of 2017, these information sharing events and relationship building events have been offered in Arabic and Korean (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2017).

Multi-disciplinary teams

Police cannot tackle the issues of any given community on their own and as such it is recognized that at times collaboration with outside sources can be tremendously helpful in combating community concerns that overlap with criminal justice (Hickle, 2018). As the idea of collaboration has gained more traction, police partnerships with other community agencies are becoming a best practice recommendation (Cohen, Plecas, McCormick, & Peters, 2015; Hickle,

2018). Although this type of partnership is not a true form of community policing, it does create healthy networks of professionals that can better implement comprehensive community programs (Hickle, 2018).

Child and youth advocacy centres, which have been found to greatly improve child abuse investigations (Shaffer, Smith, & Ornstein, 2018), are an example of a multi-agency partnership. Child and youth advocacy centres emerged out of Alabama in the mid-1980s and consist of multi-disciplinary teams often including police, social work, victim services, probation, and medical professionals who work in a trauma-informed and child-focused location (Department of Justice Canada, 2018; Shaffer, Smith, & Ornstein, 2018). There are currently over 300 child and youth advocacy centres across the United States and approximately 35 centres across Canada (Shaffer, Smith, & Ornstein, 2018). The number of child and youth advocacy centres has risen considerably since the opening of the first Canadian child and youth advocacy centre, the Zebra Centre, in Edmonton, Alberta in 2002 (Shaffer, Smith, & Ornstein, 2018). The growing popularity of these types of centres is encouraging as this approach to working with children and families during what is often one of the most vulnerable times of their life has yielded considerably different results of satisfaction from the families receiving service compared to regular child protection or police involvement. For example, the Department of Justice Canada (2018) completed a survey of 36 clients who had accessed a child and youth advocacy centre and found that 83% reported a "good" or "very good" experience and that 100% of the participants reported that the centre was welcoming, including those who voted their experience as "not good". Increased satisfaction is likely related to the convenience that a co-located centre provides families by decreasing time spent with different players of an investigation and the travel time required to see those varying professionals (Shaffer, Smith, & Ornstein, 2018). In addition, those

who receive service through a child and youth advocacy centre have substantially increased access to service for the child including better access to forensic medical examination, mental health services, and faster criminal justice results (Shaffer, Smith, & Ornstein, 2018). Improved service delivery may be the result of increased productivity resulting from minimizing the duplication of work. For instance, the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre in Calgary, Alberta states that the centre enables increased productivity estimated to save $550,000 annually (Shaffer et al., 2018).

Similar teams have been curated to help respond to and reduce the risk of domestic violence, such as the Regional Domestic Violence Unit in Victoria, British Columbia or HomeFront in Calgary. These are co-located teams of police, victim services, and child protection social workers that share a focus on victim support and offender management for the highest risk domestic violence files (HomeFront, 2015; Saanich Police Department, N.D.). Similar teams exist in New Westminster and Abbotsford (Rossiter, 2011). Whetstone (2001) reviewed 4,000 domestic violence police files, some of which had been handled by a specialized unit while the others were responded to by patrol members and found that dedicated units achieved increased arrest and conviction rates as well as improved victim satisfaction when compared to the patrol response approach. This is consistent with the findings of Grasely et al. (1999), who reported that 83% of victims who received service from a specialized domestic violence unit that partnered with additional supports felt they received quality service, compared to only 38% of victims supporting similar satisfaction when patrol members responded to an incident of intimate partner violence.

Much like domestic violence, homelessness is a growing concern facing many Canadians (Hipple, 2017). Individuals suffering with mental health and addiction are at an increased risk for

homelessness (Hipple, 2017). Sadly, children who have aged out of care are also more likely to experience homelessness as pointed out by the 2014 Representative for Children and Youth Report titled "On Their Own". Therefore, when teams of mental health workers, social services and police were created, for example, the Homelessness Protection Unit in Indianapolis, they were found to be better equipped to work with this at-risk population. Scott-Parker et al. (2019) found similar results when reviewing the North Coast Interagency Road Safety Working Group, which brought together police, city council, transportation professionals, and the local university to target reducing driving offences committed by youth. These are some examples of a variety of multi-disciplinary teams that police participate into help better interact with the community. As noted, child welfare workers are also members of some multi-disciplinary teams, which may indicate that the child protection profession is beginning to acknowledge that they too must make efforts to better interact with the communities in which they work. Furthermore, as active members of these teams child welfare workers will likely be exposed to the community engagement initiatives discussed above.

It is clear that there are a number of examples of community policing initiatives that can be easily adapted by the field of social work to enhance the relationship with the community. However, as there is limited to no research on the current appetite for this type of work approach in child protection, the following section of this paper presents the current study that seeks to understand if there is a need and want for enhanced community engagement efforts in child welfare from a professional lens.

Current Study

Methods

The aim of the current study is to identify the existing perceptions of child protection social work in British Columbia and explore how adopting initiatives similar to community

policing could impact this perception and child protection social work as a whole. The above

literature review provided a strong foundation for this study. However, there is a lack of research

on the direct link between community policing and child protection that would help to examine

how these initiatives can directly enhance the connections between child protection social

workers and their communities. In an attempt to explore this association, this study used semi-

structured interviews to gather qualitative data on the topic. These interviews were conducted

between March 4th, 2019 and March 18th, 2019 and were completed one-on-one between

participants and the primary researcher. Due to the potentially sensitive subject matter, all

interview participation was kept confidential. Participants were informed that their involvement

would be preserved as confidential on the information sheet provided prior to the

commencement of any interview (Appendix 1). The information sheet also outlines that all

participation is voluntary and as such, is followed by a written consent form.

The interviews were structured around 11 open-ended questions that allowed the

participant to provide detailed responses (Appendix 2). The interviews began with gathering

some contextual information around the background of the participant, then transitioned to

focusing on current perceptions and initiatives, and concluded with forward-thinking questions.

The final question then allowed participants to provide any relevant thoughts that they wished to

share that may have not been provoked by the previous questions. The researcher manually

transcribed all interviews to capture all information provided. The answers that were gathered

were then analyzed and coded to group similar answers in an effort to find themes in the data and

to produce the findings that have been summarized in the following chapter.

Sample

As the primary researcher on this project works in the field of child protection in the area

where the research was conducted a decision was made to collect participants using a snowball

sampling method to avoid bias (El-Abed, 2009). Therefore, each participant recommended others who they thought would be valuable contributors for future interviews. Using this process minimized the risk of selection bias that may have impacted the validity of the findings.

Interviews were conducted with five participants for this study. All participants were from British Columbia and either worked in the South Vancouver Island or in the Lower Mainland. Participant's roles ranged from front line child protection social workers, policy analysts, and police officers. Years of experience in these roles ranged from a year and a half to 30 years, with the average number of years being 12.

Results

Current Perception of Child Protection Social Work

There was a consensus from all participants that the current perception of child protection social work is overwhelmingly negative. The respondents elaborated that there continues to be a lack of information on the modern role of child protection and as a result misinformation is distributed, which fuels stereotypes. One respondent explained that social workers are labelled as "baby snatchers", which demonstrates that child protection is not seen as helpful but is instead viewed as a threat. Four out of the five respondents mentioned that this sense of obstructive invasiveness holds especially true for Indigenous communities. One respondent explained that the sense of "theft and lack of care" was cultivated from the previously mentioned decades of mistreatment involving child protection including Residential Schools, the 60s Scoop, and what is now being referred to as the Millennial Scoop. Another respondent explained that these discriminatory practices have resulted in a deep-rooted fear that child protection is an ongoing effort of colonization. The findings also suggest that this is the image that is portrayed in the media and that MCFD does nothing to defend their reputation and any promotional efforts are non-existent. Consequently, this negative perception continues to flourish. With that said, two of

the five respondents mentioned that although the overall opinion of child protection is unfavourable, there can be recognition from the community for individual social workers who go above and beyond to best serve the families that they work with.

Similarly, when the participants were asked if they thought MCFD was currently implementing any community engagement initiatives, three of the five respondents stated that some social workers will attend community events but that this is not common practice for the ministry as a whole. One respondent pointed out that even when these workers do attend events it can often go unnoticed as, unlike police or paramedics, social workers do not wear a uniform, making them less identifiable. Another respondent stated that even when MCFD has been invited to attend community events there are times that they do not even reply, suggesting that they have no time or interest in community engagement.

Some respondents recognized that MCFD does liaise with other community partners through multi-disciplinary units and shared assessment teams. As explained above, this is not a direct form of community engagement but is a complimentary practice as it demonstrates a willingness to collaborate and a recognition that no one agency can comprehensively support the needs of a community on their own.

Views of Community Engagement Initiatives

Despite the apparent lack of current community engagement initiatives, there was a consensus across all of those who engaged in this study that community engagement initiatives would have a positive impact on both the perception of child protection and the safety of children. The reasoning for these beliefs varied. The themes that arose in relation to the improvements on perception were that it would demonstrate that child protection agencies are willing to be a part of their communities, instead of outsiders waiting to swoop in to blame and intervene, and would allow for opportunities to educate the community on how child protection

is meant to be a helpful service. However, the answers gathered stressed that it is imperative that child protection agencies are open to two-way communications with the community. As phrased by one respondent:

> "I think that part of [community engagement] is that it demonstrates a shared commitment to community wellness and healing, so instead of the child protection social worker being the interloper coming in to do a removal and leaving, it seeks to achieve a long term sustained relationship and seeks to ensure the well-being of the child and the family and the community. [It] also offers the opportunity for people impacted by our work to share what their experiences are, and the more that people feel their voices are being heard, the more they feel that they are shaping the work that is being done. It is really important to create and hold a space for people to be heard and for what they are saying to be meaningfully addressed."

Therefore, the findings suggest that relationship building has to be at the core of community engagement for child protection agencies. Further, these relationships must be mutual and genuine, which would require a shift from a top-down to a bottom-up approach to the work. The findings suggest that a change of this nature could have a constructive impact on the reputation of child welfare services both in British Columbia and beyond.

Establishing a healthy relationship between the community and child protection services was also mentioned by two of the five participants as a factor that could result in improved child safety. These respondents each explained that with relationships come trust and when people begin to trust child protection agencies, they will be more likely to report concerns for child safety, which would allow for more opportunities to provide support and safety planning with families in need of the service. When this response does require the serious intervention of needing to remove children from the home, one respondent stated that should child protection agencies develop a network of relationships that this would also help them ensure enhanced emotional and physical safety through finding placement options with healthy kith and kin.

Other respondents stated that improved child safety correlates with child protection community engagement initiatives as it allows for more opportunities to provide support and

education to families that could result in the prevention of abuse or neglect in some families. One of these respondents further explained that this shift towards preventative practice and away from solely reactionary responses would allow for some families to address their areas of risk without the full involvement of a MCFD incident. Avoiding a child protection incident would not only reduce risk of harm for the children involved but would also promote the independence of family. In addition, avoiding the need for an incident allows for the resources that would have needed to be allocated to that family to be redistributed to other families or areas of need.

It is perhaps not surprising then that when the participants of this study were asked what type of community engagement initiatives may be the most successful for child protection agencies one of them mentioned providing education on supports and resources. The answers gathered suggest that this can be done in both a formal and/or non-formal way. However, regardless of the formality, it is important to be mindful of how people are invited to participate. One participant explained that "being intentional about invitation and the work that is intended to be completed reinforces that their participation really matters and that we want to hear what they have to say, and we are making a commitment to them". Two of those interviewed stressed that this invitation to engage with the ministry must be cast wide, which one participant stated must include those who do not have transportation or childcare as those are often the voices that go perpetually unheard. Therefore, another participant explained that it is hard to pinpoint which community engagement service would be most effective for child protection as different initiatives will appeal to different people, and consequently variety is fundamental. Some potential programs mentioned include canoe pulling, youth programs, and multicultural supports. All of the participants indicated that they would personally be interested in playing a role in child protection community engagement initiatives if they were given the opportunity. The desire to

want to be a part of this type of practice ranged from believing that working in collaboration with the community is the best way to support families, to hoping that it would reduce the fear associated to child welfare, which may result in an enhanced ability to provide service. Furthermore, two of the five respondents stated that they would want to be involved as they felt it would improve their own wellbeing. As one worker phrased it "the political and the professional become the personal" and therefore, both workers mentioned that finding aspects of child welfare that are supportive and recognized as such are "what fills their cup back up". Therefore, one respondent theorized that providing more opportunities for this type of work within child welfare could potentially reduce burnout and staff turnover.

Two of the five respondents acknowledged that building the relationships and community connections that are needed for establishing effective community engagement initiatives for child protection will take significant time. During this time, it would be near impossible to not make missteps along the way. Therefore, acquiring the patience and the perseverance needed on both the individual and organizational level to let these bonds form is one of the challenges noted by the participants of this study. It is wallowing in this stage of discomfort and risk that led to at least one of the five participants noting that they think gathering the support from leadership that would be needed to get the initiatives off the ground would be a significant challenge. Other respondents noted that should that support be obtained, there will be additional bureaucratic hurdles to overcome, such as the passing of policy amendments. One participant explained that achieving policy changes will be difficult as relationship building is complex unique work that cannot often be simply summarized into a document format. Therefore, the government must find a way to "hold the space for complexity and ambiguity".

As such, child welfare agencies will need to put themselves in a fairly vulnerable position to explore the possibility of additional community engagement initiatives. One participant stated part of this vulnerability needs to be understanding that not all communities may want further community engagement initiatives from their local child welfare agency. As a result, this respondent suggested that agencies would need to be cautious to avoid pressing an unwanted agenda, especially within Indigenous communities where this could be perceived as further colonizing. The same participant encouraged mindfulness around confidentiality, as if the community begins to know the faces of the social workers in their area, it could become more apparent who in the neighborhood they are going to see. It is important to recognize the potential challenges and shortcomings of community engagement initiatives to ensure that these areas can be adequately addressed.

Discussion

This major paper sought to understand whether the commonly found negative views of child welfare services exist in British Columbia and if the application of community policing and problem-oriented policing initiatives to the province's child welfare services would be a feasible option for repairing this image and ultimately the relationship with the public. As speculated, findings from this study are aligned with the themes that emerge from the literature. There is a consistent understanding that the perception of child welfare services is poor and has damaging impacts on the ability to practice as a child protection social worker in British Columbia. The results of this study suggest that community engagement initiatives are an untapped resource that could be leveraged to help genuinely improve the relationship between child welfare services and the community.

As previously mentioned in the literature review, the primary areas of successful community engagement initiatives evidenced in policing are social media use, youth engagement programs, cultural programs, and multi-disciplinary team participation. It should be noted that multi-disciplinary teams are not directly community driven (Hickle, 2018). Multi-disciplinary teams are also the only initiative that child protection service agencies in British Columbia are commonly involved in, according to this study. However, multi-disciplinary team participation could be a gateway to adopting other community engagement initiatives. For example, the multi-disciplinary team at Zebra Centre Child and Youth Advocacy Center in Edmonton has a strong social media presence and has posted positive messages about social work on their Instagram account (Zebra Child Protection Centre, N.D.). However, at this time there is no ability to fully recognize any of the child welfare agencies that they work with, as they do not have their own social media accounts that can be linked to. As a result, it is recommended that child welfare agencies, such as MCFD, create their own social media accounts. As the Government of British Columbia already has their own Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook accounts, there are already policies and practice guidelines written on how to start a government social media account which could be applied to MCFD (Province of British Columbia, N.D.). The type of social media account recommended by this study should not be confused with the covert social media accounts created under pseudonyms that Breyette and Hill (2015) explain are commonly used by social workers to monitor the activity of their clients. On the contrary, the social media accounts recommended by this study would be public accounts created for the purpose of information sharing. As such, once these accounts are established MCFD and DAAs could use social media to share their messaging to a broader population, including harder to reach groups.

One part of the population that could be highly impacted by a child welfare social media presence is youth, as Lenhart (2015) explains that 92% of youth are online daily. This is important as another key finding of this study is that some of the most promising community engagement work is done with youth. Therefore, child protection social workers should not only be getting to know the youth in their community during times of duress and instead should carve out time to develop relationships with a variety of youth in the community. As social workers and youth get to know each other through participating in activities such as recreational sports or cultural events, it is suspected that similar outcomes experienced by police who engage in these types of activities would emerge including enhanced views of the other groups and lasting relationships outside of the context of the program.

Some youth programs may benefit from being culture specific. The findings of this study suggest that this may be especially true for Indigenous teens as the programs will need to create space to acknowledge the hurt and distrust that lingers between child welfare services and Indigenous communities. Furthermore, it is recommended that culturally specific community engagement programs offered by child welfare services are offered to Indigenous communities as a whole. It is imperative that these programs are offered and not imposed to ensure that they are not viewed as a new effort of colonization.

Acknowledging that social workers are already burdened with more work than they can complete (Gibson, 2017), should child welfare services in British Columbia wish to adopt community engagement initiatives it may be beneficial to create specific positions designed to lead this reform. The individuals in these positions should be highly skilled in relationship building as they will need to not only build connections with those in the community but also with their colleagues to help ensure a variety of child welfare professionals are able to engage in

community initiatives as incorporating community work into a child protection caseload may help increase job satisfaction (Canadian Association of Social Work, 2018).

Increased job satisfaction could result in enhanced morale within child protection agencies, which may have a positive impact on staff retention. This consistency of workers could then have a positive ripple effect back on the relationship with the community. Therefore, this study has promising implications for the field of child welfare and those they seek to serve and protect. However, any community engagement initiatives that are implemented should receive evaluation to ensure that there is transferability from police community engagement initiatives to child protection community engagement initiatives. Measuring outcomes and sharing results will also help areas beyond British Columbia assess if a similar adoption of community engagement initiatives could be effective in their jurisdiction.

Limitations

Although the findings of this study were informative and could have a meaningful impact on child welfare practice, it is important to identify the limitations of this study to help guide future research in the area. The primary limitation of this study was the small sample size. Although a small sample size was ideal for conducting one of the first studies on community engagement initiatives in child protection, as it allowed for findings to be produced in a short period of time without the expenditure of a surplus of resources, we must consider that these findings are not representative of the views of all British Columbians working with child protection services. In fact, although the research attempted to avoid participant selection bias by using a snowball methodology, the ultimate elimination of bias is unlikely. When participants were asked who they thought should be considered for future interviews they may have intentionally or unintentionally picked individuals whose views and values were aligned with community engagement, which would create a lack of diversity in the sample.

This sample also only spoke to those involved with child welfare in a professional capacity. In the essence of community engagement, it will be important for future studies to canvas the public on their views of the strengths and concerns associated with child welfare adopting community engagement initiatives. It is also recommended that future studies explore alternative child welfare models as we must consider that although the response to adopting community engagement initiatives was overwhelmingly positive in this study, it was the only potential solution offered.

One area where the sample certainly lacked diversity was the geographic location of participants; all participants were from South Vancouver Island or the Lower Mainland and therefore the sample represented a more urban population. In future studies, it will be important to capture the voices of those working and living in the remote areas within British Columbia to ensure that community engagement strategies are reflective of the needs of all areas of the province.

Conclusion

The purpose of this major paper was to establish an understanding of any parallels that exist between the perception of police and child welfare services and if similar initiatives could be used to engage with the communities in which they work in a positive way. A review of the literature highlighted that police and child welfare agencies have shared comparable challenges in reference to community perceptions and relationships. Based on this finding, this study sought to determine if community policing initiatives that have been used to reconcile community ties could be applied to child protection services. The findings suggest that child welfare services could benefit significantly should they borrow a page out of the book of community policing. There is no need to reinvent the wheel and instead with some minor adaptations the community

engagement strategies used by police could be adopted by child welfare services. Therefore, it is recommended that child welfare services develop their own versions of the effective community policing initiatives that have been reviewed in this paper, including developing youth and cultural engagement programs, creating a presence on social media and participating on teams focused on responding to the needs of the community. The outcomes of this study suggest that adopting these community engagement initiatives in child protection would improve the perception of the profession, which could result in improved staff retention, reduced trauma and ultimately enhanced child safety, making this a strategic approach that should not be ignored. Furthermore, much like community engagement initiatives in policing, this model should be partnered with other strategies to ensure a comprehensive approach to practice. Therefore, it is recommended that future research and practice directives focus on community engagement initiatives in a child protection context to ensure that we continue to gather evidence that can be used to help guide a better relationship between child protection services and the community.

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Appendix 1 – Information Sheet and Consent Form

Information Sheet for Participation

Application of Community Policing Initiatives to Child Protection Social Work Project

My name is Caleigh West, and I am a master's student from the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of the Fraser Valley. For my major paper, I am examining whether concepts from community and problem-oriented policing could be applied to child protection social work. As part of this project, I will be conducting one-on-one interviews with individuals working in the criminal justice system in positions that often provide services that relate to child protection. You have been identified as a potential participant for this project.

The information you share during the interview will be an important part of analyzing whether elements of community policing that have helped enhance the relationship between police and the community could be applied to child protection social work. However, participation in this project is voluntary and you will need to provide written or verbal informed consent to participate prior to us beginning the interview today. You are free to decline participation without penalty by your superiors; all participation will be kept confidential.

Your participation in this project will involve the completion of a one-on-one interview concerning your experience with child protection social work and using these experiences to consider the application of community engagement initiatives. The interview questions will focus on the related themes of potential strengths and challenges of applying community engagement initiatives to child protection social work.

It is anticipated that the interview will take approximately 60 minutes of your time. You can withdraw your participation and information from this project at any point, and you can choose not to answer any questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. You can withdraw your information following the completion of this study by contacting myself, Caleigh West, or the supervisor for this project, Dr. Amanda McCormick using the contact information below. Please note that you can only withdraw your information up until March 15, 2019 as at that point, the data will be anonymously aggregated and analyzed to inform the final report.

The interview will not be electronically recorded, and you will not be personally identified in the final report or any publications or presentations associated with this project. Your individual responses will be kept confidential and your name, position, and organization will not be directly linked to any information that you provide today. The signed informed consent sheets will be stored in a locked cabinet only accessed by Caleigh West until they are confidentially shredded one year after the completion of this project. The information you provide during the interview will be transcribed into an electronic file where we will assign you a unique identifier that only the researchers will be able to associate with your name; this information will be kept in a separate password-protected excel spreadsheet accessible only to the university researchers. The electronic datasets will be retained by the researchers indefinitely to allow for academic publications and presentations to be developed.

Any information that you can share based on your experiences will help to inform the final report and presentations regarding the community engagement in child protection process in British Columbia. The final report will be posted on our website for public download, at http://cjr.ufv.ca. The information you provide may also be used to develop future academic articles and presentations. There are no anticipated risks to your participation.

The ethics of this research project have been reviewed and approved by the UFV Human Research Ethics Board. If you would like more information about the methods or results of this study, please contact myself, Caleigh West at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or Dr. Amanda McCormick at 604-557-4081 or Amanda.McCormick@ufv.ca. If you have any concerns regarding your rights or welfare as a participant in this research study, please contact the Ethics Officer at 604-557-4011 or Research.Ethics@ufv.ca.

- Please separate this page and leave it with the participant -

Participant Informed Consent

Application of Community Policing Initiatives to Child Protection Social Work Project

Your signature on this form will signify that you have received the Information Sheet that describes the procedures, risks, and benefits to your involvement in this study, that you have had an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project. Please carefully review the following:

- I have read and understood the procedures, risks, and benefits of this research as described in the *Information Sheet*.

- I understand that this interview will take approximately 90 minutes of my time today.

- I understand that once I have completed the interview today, my participation in this project has finished.

- I understand that I can withdraw my participation from this project up until January 30, 2019 and if so, the information I provided will not be used to inform the final report and presentation.

- I understand that the research material will be held confidentially by the University of the Fraser Valley and that I will not be personally identified in any way by the research project.

I agree to participate in this research project:

Name (please print)

_____

Today's Date |____|____| |____|____| 2019
                       D   D   M   M

Signature   _____

- Please separate this page and seal it in the UFV envelope for return to UFV -

Appendix 2 – Interview Questions

1. What is your role?

2. How long have you been in this role?

3. What do you think the current public perception of child protection social work is?

4. Do you think MCFD currently uses community engagement initiatives? If so, what are they?

5. Do you think that increasing community child protection initiatives would have a positive, negative, or no impact on the public's perception of child protection social work?

6. Do you think that increasing community child protection initiatives would have a positive, negative, or no impact on the ability to ensure child safety?

7. What are the potential benefits of increased community engagement initiatives for child protection?

8. What are the potential challenges of increased community engagement initiatives for child protection?

9. Are there any community engagement initiatives that you think may be more beneficial than others?

10. Would you want to be involved in child protection community engagement initiatives? What is your reasoning?

11. Do you have any final thoughts or comments that you would like to include?

Appendix 3 – Ethics Approval

Certificate of Human Research Ethics Board Approval

Master's Supervisor	Department	Protocol #
Amanda McCormick	Criminology & Criminal Justice	1141C-19

Master's Student
Caleigh west

Title of Project
Applying a Community Policing Model to Child Protection Social Work – A Viable Option in British Columbia?

Sponsoring/Funding Agency
N/A

Institution(s) where research will be carried out.
University of the Fraser Valley

Review Date:	Approval Date:	Approval Term:
13-Feb-19	26-Feb-19	26-Feb-19 - 25-Feb-20

Certification:

The protocol describing the above named project has been reviewed by the UFV Human Research Ethics Board, and the procedures were found to be in compliance with accepted guidelines for ethical research.

Michael Gaetz, Chair, Human Research Ethics Board

NOTE: This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above-noted term provided there are no changes in the procedures or criteria given.

If the project will go beyond the approval term noted above, an extension of approval must be requested.

33844 King Rd., Abbotsford, BC V2S 7M8 • Tel: 604-504-7441 • Fax: 604-855-7614 • Toll-free (in Canada): 1-888-504-7441 • **www.ufv.ca**

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