

**HOW A COLLABORATION AGREEMENT MEDIATES THE DAILY PRACTICES OF
FRONTLINE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN WORKERS: AN INSTITUTIONAL
ETHNOGRAPHY**

By

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Abstract

While interagency collaboration among Children's Aid Societies and violence against women (VAW) agencies have been mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Service, little is known about these local collaboration agreements. This study seeks to explore how the Ottawa CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement mediates the work of VAW agencies to protect women and children. Using a purposive sample, a total of eight VAW informants were interviewed. Smith (1999) argued that people's everyday experiences are organized, often unknowingly, by the actions of people located outside the local setting and that this organization is textually-mediated. This study used institutional ethnography and the listening guide approach to critically examine the collaboration process. The results explore the narratives and standpoints as they relate to the informants' understanding of the agreement and their descriptions of doing collaboration. This study also adopts the mapping technique developed by institutional ethnographers to map social relations. The findings indicate that informants differed in their familiarity and knowledge of the contents of the collaboration agreement – only two informants indicated that they have reviewed and read the document. The findings also show that although most informants were able to describe positive experiences of collaboration, most also described negative experiences. This study concludes that the collaboration agreement has made VAW workers' work with women more focused and specific to helping women address Children Aid Society's concerns. The findings demonstrate that the collaboration agreement requires an update and further research is required to evaluate these collaborations and whether they improve outcomes for women and their children.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

If there's a domestic violence situation, the police are called. If there's children involved it's an automatic call to the CAS. They open up a file at CAS, that file is opened up in her name. It's not in his name. She's the one that's held on a higher account of trying to protect the children from him. (Christina)

These reflections of a violence against women (VAW) worker invite us to understand VAW workers' frustrations with the Ottawa Children's Aid Society's (CAS) responses to women who experience domestic violence. Domestic violence is prevalent across all jurisdictions in Canada and many children are exposed to domestic violence or are themselves abused (Statistics Canada, 2015b; Trocmé et al., 2010). Research into the effects of exposure to domestic violence on children and the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse started in the 1990's (Nixon & Cripps, 2013). The widespread awareness and evidence of the negative effects on children exposed to domestic violence has resulted in changes to Canadian child protection policies; however, child protection is legislated at the provincial and territorial level in Canada and each province and territory responds differently to child exposure to domestic violence. The Northwest Territories and seven provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland), have amended their statutory definitions of child abuse to include child exposure to domestic violence (Nixon & Cripps, 2013). In Ontario, the *Child and Family Services Act* does not explicitly define child exposure to domestic violence as child maltreatment; however, it is specified in the Ontario Risk Assessment Model as a provision of emotional abuse that may require intervention (Nixon & Cripps, 2013; OCAS, 2016).

These legislative and policy changes have broadened the mandate of child protection agencies to intervene in cases involving child exposure to domestic violence (Nixon & Cripps,

2013). As indicated in the above quote, child protection interventions based on child exposure to partner violence against mothers have disproportionately blamed mothers and not fathers for failing to protect their children (Nixon & Tutty, 2010). These actions have been criticized by VAW agencies as women are held responsible for men's violence. After recommendations made by the Domestic Violence Death Review Committee in Ontario (Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2015) and recognition that child protection agencies and VAW agencies share many of the same clients, the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Service has mandated that CAS and VAW agencies work collaboratively to increase the safety of both women and children and to hold perpetrators accountable for their abuse.

In 2003, a total of 44 local collaboration agreements were developed and in effect in Ontario (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2011). In 2004, the Ottawa CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement was signed by CAS and 13 VAW agencies. However, there is little research on these specific local collaboration agreements in Ontario and how they mediate the daily practices of CAS and VAW agencies when working with women who experience domestic violence. This research investigates the following major research question:

- How does a Collaborative Agreement mediate the work of violence against women agencies to protect women and children?

To explore this research question this study used institutional ethnography, a method of inquiry developed by Dorothy Smith, to critically examine the collaboration processes as experienced by a group of frontline VAW workers. The objectives of this research were to:

- a) Explore how the Ottawa Children's Aid Society and VAW agencies collaborate;
- b) Identify how the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement text affects the work that VAW agencies do with mothers who have experienced domestic violence; and

- c) Uncover the ruling relations that the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement text helps to organize between the Ottawa Children's Aid Society and VAW agencies when dealing with mothers who have experienced domestic violence.

Through interviews, textual analysis, and mapping the steps of collaboration, this study attempts to understand how the intersection and coordination of work processes and activities occur.

This thesis is organized as follows. Chapter 2 begins by defining domestic violence and child maltreatment. The literature examined in this chapter includes prevalence studies of the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child abuse and of child exposure to domestic violence, a review of the child protection responses to child maltreatment and child exposure to domestic violence, and a review of the literature on different collaboration models across several jurisdictions. Chapter 3 describes institutional ethnography as both the theoretical framework and methodology employed in this study and includes a detailed description of how the listening guide approach was used to conduct the data analysis process. Chapter 4 presents the results of this study specific to the frontline VAW workers' perceptions and experiences of collaborating with CAS. Chapter 5 maps the collaboration work between VAW agencies and CAS and provides a discussion into the theoretically driven concepts of institutional ethnography and how they relate to this study. Finally, Chapter 6 provides the conclusions drawn from this research, limitations of the study, as well as directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Scope of the Problem

This chapter begins by defining and exploring the prevalence of both domestic violence and child maltreatment in Canada. A review of the literature on co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment and the literature on child exposure to domestic violence is presented in order to understand why professionals and policy makers have amended child protection policies and legislation across Canada. This chapter explores the responses to such legislative/policy changes and its influence on child protection workers' responses to child maltreatment including mother blaming practices that resulted from such changes. To conclude, this chapter presents the current knowledge and models of interagency collaboration work among child protection agencies and VAW agencies and demonstrates how there is a gap in the literature when it comes to the Ontario collaboration agreements and how such agreements impact the everyday experiences of frontline VAW workers when working with women who are involved with CAS.

Defining Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment

In this study domestic violence is understood as woman abuse. In this study the term “domestic violence” is understood through a gender-based framework which reflects the power dynamics between men and women. Domestic violence refers to emotional, verbal, psychological, environmental, financial, social and harassing behaviour, religious abuse, physical violence, and sexual violence, whether it be threatened or actual, that is perpetrated by a man against a woman regardless of relationship status and relationship type (e.g. marriage, common law, or dating) (Forrester, 2011; Mulligan, 2009). This gender-based understanding of domestic violence appreciates that violence generally occurs within a broader context of male control and power that is supported by broader patriarchal social structures (Mulligan, 2009). Women also

perpetrate domestic violence against men and domestic violence occurs among same-sex couples; however, women are more likely to be victims of domestic violence by male partners, suffer harmful consequences and restricted options, and interact with child protection services (Moles, 2008).

Domestic violence is prevalent across all jurisdictions in Canada. In the 2014 General Social Survey (GSS) about 760,000 (4%) of Canadians self-reported being sexually or physically abused by an intimate partner in the preceding 5 years (Statistics Canada, 2015b). Women experienced more severe domestic violence than men and were more likely to report being sexually assaulted, choked, beaten, threatened with a gun or knife, grabbed, pushed, and slapped or shoved (34% versus 16%) (Statistics Canada, 2015b). Among those who reported spousal violence, 30% reported the abuse to the police. The most frequent reason for not reporting violence was “the belief that the abuse was a private or personal matter” (Statistics Canada, 2015b, p. 10). In 2014, police recorded more than 90,300 victims of domestic violence where nearly 80% of these victims were women (Statistics Canada, 2015a). These figures demonstrate that domestic violence is a social problem with many victims.

In terms of child maltreatment, there are many variations in the definition used across Canada as there is no federal child protection legislation; provincial and territorial statutes provide definitions and circumstances under which a child is determined to be in need of protection. According to the Canadian Incident Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect which analyzed cases reported to and substantiated by child protection agencies, child maltreatment includes 32 forms of maltreatment that are classified under the following categories: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional maltreatment and exposure to domestic violence (Trocmé et al., 2010). Child maltreatment is substantiated when following an

investigation, child protection workers confirm that abuse or neglect occurred. In Canada in 2008 there were approximately 85,440 confirmed child maltreatment investigations (Trocmé et al., 2010).

As demonstrated in this section, domestic violence and child maltreatment are areas with many victims and as a result these topics have been well documented in the literature. When we consider domestic violence and children maltreatment there are two topics that are often discussed: (1) the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment; and (2) child exposure to domestic violence.

Co-Occurrence of Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment

The co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment is well documented (Bourassa, 2007; Cox, Kotch, & Everson, 2003; Edleson, 1999; Falsom, Christensen, Avery, & Moore, 2003; Hazen, Connelly, Kelleher, Landsverk, & Barth, 2004; Herrenkohl et al., 2008; Jones, Gross, & Becker, 2002; McGuigan & Pratt, 2001). Edleson (1999) reviewed the available information in the United States on the overlap between domestic violence and child maltreatment where he found that in the majority of studies 30% to 60% of families where child maltreatment or domestic violence is taking place, the other form of violence is also present. The studies varied in the type of child maltreatment reported; however, most reported some form of physical abuse (Edleson, 1999). In another study, a sample of 442 children drawn from child protection service caseloads that had a substantiated abuse case in a large California County, found that 187 children (42.3%) came from families that had at least one incident involving domestic violence (Jones, Gross, & Becker, 2002).

McGuigan and Pratt (2001) conducted a longitudinal study in Oregon to determine the effect of domestic violence on child abuse (physical, psychological and child neglect). Using a

large sample of 2,544 at-risk families with a child 5 years old or younger, some form of child abuse was confirmed in 6.1% (n=155) of cases and domestic violence occurred in 38% (n=58) (McGuigan & Pratt, 2001). They found that domestic violence in the “first 6 months of child rearing greatly increased the likelihood of child maltreatment during the next 5 years” (McGuigan & Pratt, 2001, p. 879). Domestic violence preceded child abuse in 78% of the cases where co-occurrence was present (McGuigan & Pratt, 2001). These studies illustrate that child maltreatment and domestic violence co-occur in various samples, using a variety of measurement tools.

In addition to the prevalence studies on the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment, various studies have also found a variety of factors – such as drug abuse, unemployment, low education levels, young maternal age, mental illness, and criminal activity within the neighbourhood or family – that increase the risk of an overlap between child maltreatment and domestic violence (Cox, Kotch, & Everson, 2003; Jones, Gross, & Becker, 2002; Herrenkohl et al., 2008). Elevated rates of domestic violence and child maltreatment were found in families characterized by marital conflict, male unemployment, economic stress, norms of male dominance and the presence of a non-biological father figure in the home (Guedes, Bott, Garcia-Moreno & Colombini, 2016). Male perpetration of domestic violence and child maltreatment have been linked to alcohol and drug use, young age, depression, experiencing violence as a child, and attitudes that condone violence and support gender inequality (Guedes, Bott, Garcia-Moreno & Colombini, 2016). These findings suggest that it is critical for both child protection and VAW workers to recognize the risk factors and assess the possibility of co-occurrence of domestic violence and child maltreatment.

Child Exposure to Domestic Violence

An increased awareness of the overlap between domestic violence and child maltreatment has generated concerns of the possible negative outcome on children who witness violence against their mothers (Maiter, Alaggia & Mutta, 2013). In 2008, among the 85,440 confirmed child maltreatment cases in Canada, 34% involved child exposure to domestic violence (Trocmé et al., 2010). Child exposure to domestic violence was substantiated if a child directly witnessed physical violence, indirectly was exposed to physical violence, and/or was being exposed to emotional violence (Trocmé et al., 2010). More recently, in 2013, 43,067 child maltreatment investigations were substantiated in Ontario alone (Fallon et al., 2015). The primary form of maltreatment in almost half (48%) of substantiated cases was exposure to domestic violence (Fallon et al., 2015). These studies establish that exposure to domestic violence is prevalent across child maltreatment cases.

Child exposure to domestic violence was once narrowly defined as a child hearing or seeing a man assault the child's mother (Strega & Janzen, 2013). With a broadening definition, child exposure can also consist of seeing the mother's injuries, hearing conversations between adults about the violence, being used by the perpetrator as a tool to keep the victim from leaving the relationship/home, witnessing the aftermath following a violent event, such as being present during the arrest of a parent, going to a women's shelter or hospital with the mother, or being interviewed by a police officer or child protection worker (Beeman & Edleson, 2000; Holden, 2003; Strega & Janzen, 2013).

In the last three decades there has been a significant increase in research arguing that witnessing domestic violence can be damaging to a child's physical and emotional well-being (Bedi & Goddard, 2007; Bourassa, 2007; Chan & Yeung, 2009; English et al., 2009; Holmes,

2013; Kitzmann, Gaylord, Holt, & Kenny, 2003; Margolin & Vickerman, 2011; Øverlien 2009; Sousa et al., 2011; Wolfe et al. 2003). Child exposure to domestic violence has also been linked to negative developmental outcomes, negative cognitive functioning and physical functioning (Beeman & Edleson, 2000). Using longitudinal data obtained from 1,315 adolescents from Chicago, Fagan and Wright (2011) found that exposure to domestic violence is a risk factor for problem behaviour such as delinquency and adolescent drug use. Others have also found negative long-term behavioural effects on children exposed to domestic violence at early ages, and compared to children not exposed to domestic violence, children exposed to domestic violence between birth and 3 years of age were found to exhibit more aggressive behaviour 5 years later (Holmes, 2013).

The effects of witnessing domestic violence can vary depending on the age and gender of the victim (Clement et al., 2008; Fagan & Wright, 2011). For example, exposure to domestic violence was found to increase the likelihood of drug use for females but not for males (Fagan & Wright, 2011). In a review of 60 studies in the United States, Evans, Davis, and DiLillo (2008) found that the relationship between externalized symptoms (e.g. physical aggression) and exposure to domestic violence was significantly stronger for males than for females who were more likely to demonstrate internalized symptoms (Evans, Davis, & DiLillo, 2008).

Although there is extensive research on children's exposure to domestic violence, there is no clearly established direct causal relationship between exposure and long-term or short-term harm (Strega & Janzen, 2013). An association between exposure to domestic violence and negative behavioural outcomes does not mean that exposure causes negative behaviour. Some children exposed to domestic violence may experience negative consequences and others may be more resilient to the damaging effect of witnessing violence (Herrenkohl et al., 2008; Magen,

1999). Little is known about what makes some children resilient to the negative effects of exposure to domestic violence; however, some suggest that it is due to a combination of positive coping skills, intelligence, and environmental factors such as having access to resources and support networks (Magen, 1999; Rutter, 2006). There are many factors that can impact the extent and nature of harm experienced by children exposed to domestic violence and exposure to domestic violence alone is a poor predictor of negative effects (Bedi & Goddard, 2007). In fact, according to a meta-analysis, four studies found that the co-occurrence of child abuse and exposure to domestic violence significantly increased the level of behavioural and emotional problems compared to exposure alone suggesting that there are other factors that result in behavioural and emotional problems in children who are exposed to domestic violence (Wolfe et al., 2003).

The substantial evidence of harmful effects for children who are exposed to domestic violence has influenced some professionals and policy makers to consider exposure to domestic violence as child maltreatment and to incorporate exposure to domestic violence into child protection definitions of abuse (Echlin & Marshall, 1995; Mills et al., 2000). Child exposure to domestic violence has been perceived as a social problem that requires legislative responses (Nixon, 2011).

Responses to Child Maltreatment and Child Exposure to Domestic Violence

Due to the reported negative consequences of witnessing domestic violence, child protection legislation and policies across many jurisdictions have been changed to include child exposure to domestic violence as a form of child maltreatment (Black, Trocmé, Fallon, & MacLaurin, 2008; Nixon, 2011) and is equated with other forms of violence that may require the removal of children from their home. Canada in particular has no federal child protection

legislation; child protection is legislated at the provincial and territorial level and there are some variations in how child exposure to domestic violence is legislated (Nixon & Cripps, 2013). The Northwest Territories and seven provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland), have amended their statutory definitions of child abuse to include child exposure to domestic violence (Nixon & Cripps, 2013). In Ontario the *Child and Family Services Act* does not explicitly define child exposure to domestic violence as child maltreatment but it is incorporated by way of the Risk Assessment Model as an emotional abuse provision (Nixon & Cripps, 2013; OACAS, 2016). In 1998, the province of Ontario introduced the Risk Assessment Model to assist child protection agencies to collect standardized information on which judgements are made concerning the types and nature of services that families and children require (Barber, Shlonsky, Black, Goodman, & Trocmé, 2008; OACAS, 2016; Whitehead, Chiodo, Leschied, & Hurley, 2004). The model consists of three assessment instruments: (1) the *eligibility spectrum*, which is used to determine if an incoming report requires services, (2) the *safety assessment* tool assesses whether a child is in immediate danger, and (3) the *risk assessment* tool which predicts ongoing level of risk in five assessment categories including (a) child, (b) caregiver, (c) family, (d) abuse/neglect history, and (e) intervention (Barber, Shlonsky, Black, Goodman, & Trocmé, 2008). In terms of child exposure to domestic violence, the risk assessment tool defines the severity level of adult conflict and the potential harm to children, requiring child protection intervention if the partner violence is moderately or extremely severe (Nixon, Tutty, Weaver-Dunlop, & Walsh, 2007). These types of legislative and policy changes have sparked debate and criticism that such policies fail to protect children and further victimize abused women (Jaffe, Crooks, & Wolfe, 2003).

These legislative and policy changes that mandate child protection workers to intervene in cases involving domestic violence and child exposure to domestic violence led to an increase in substantiated child maltreatment cases. For example, in 1999, the state of Minnesota's laws were amended to include child exposure as neglect; however, the legislation had to be repealed as the counties could not handle the rapid increase in cases without an increase in funding (Edleson, Gassman-Pines, & Hill, 2006). In 2008, an estimated 29,259 cases were substantiated in Canada where child exposure to domestic violence was the primary or only form of maltreatment (Trocmé et al., 2010). However, child protection responses to children who are exposed to domestic violence depends on whether it occurred with another form of maltreatment or in isolation; children who were exposed to domestic violence and another form of maltreatment were almost four times more likely to be removed from their parents care than children only exposed to domestic violence (Black et al., 2008; Black, 2010). In an analysis of the 2003 Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect, in 64% of cases where exposure to domestic violence alone was substantiated, child protection workers did not tend to engage the family further and closed the cases as not warranting any intervention or as having insufficient evidence to substantiate maltreatment (Black et al., 2008). Such results point to the increased awareness of child exposure to domestic violence and the caution used by child protection services in acting/responding when only exposure to domestic violence is present.

The concept of "failure to protect" originates from the American child protection system but has also been applied to women in Canada and has been woven into Ontario's *Child and Family Services Act* (Nixon & Cripps, 2013; Strega, Krane, & Carlton, 2013). The legislation states that protective interventions are required when a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering physical harm resulting from a parent's "(i) failure to adequately care for, provide for, supervise

or protect the child, or (ii) pattern of neglect in caring for, providing for, supervising or protecting the child” (article 37.2). In terms of emotional abuse, protective interventions are required when a child has or is at risk of suffering emotional harm resulting “from the actions, failure to act or pattern of neglect on the part of the child’s parent or the person having charge of the child” (article 37.2.f). These sections of the law mandate protective interventions in cases where a parent not only causes harm, but fails to protect the child from harm. As a result, the parent who is not the perpetrator can be expected to predict, prevent, and react to any form of child abuse including exposure to domestic violence (Strega, Krane, & Carlton, 2013).

The gender-neutral language in the child protection legislation implies that the notion of failure to protect applies equally to both men and women; however, in reality, child protection services focus more directly on mothers’ actions rather than the perpetrators’ abuse. Such practices perpetuate mother-blaming as women are viewed as “quasi-perpetrators” who are responsible for exposing their children to domestic violence (Nixon & Cripps, 2013). Such legislation, policies and practices are additionally problematic because women may hesitate to seek help for domestic violence as they fear criminal prosecution or fear losing custody of their children to child protection services (Alaggia et al., 2007; Devoe & Smith, 2003; Douglas & Walsh, 2010). Some mothers delay or avoid seeking help from child protective services and from other services for their children and themselves altogether because of mistrust and skepticism. Mandatory charge policies or pro-charge and no-drop policies which direct police and Crown Attorneys to charge and prosecute perpetrators further compound women’s mistrust and some argue that such policies are coercive, strip women of personal choice, and mimic victims’ relationships with their abuser (Belknap & Potter, 2005; Dayton, 2002-2003). In addition, women may fear that contacting the police will result in a call to child protection services where

there is risk that they may lose their children. This fear of punitive consequences and of how child protection services or police may respond has deterred women from reporting abuse and has also led women to change their reports about domestic violence – for example altering their reports or changing their statement to the police (Devoe & Smith, 2003).

Fugate (2001) argues that courts in the United States do not deliberately convict women for failure to protect; rather, these convictions are based on underlying ideologies and gender stereotypes that society holds in regards to women's roles in parenting. Since the nineteenth century, motherhood has been praised as women's main occupation (Carlton & Krane, 2013). As such, the prevailing ideology of mothers is:

... that of intensive mothering. This motherhood mandate declares that mothering is exclusive, wholly child-centred, emotionally involving, and time-consuming... the mother portrayed in this ideology is devoted to the care of others; she is self-sacrificing and not a subject with her own needs and interests... she is the good mother (Arendell, 2000, p. 1194).

These ideologies have established high and generally unrealistic expectations of mothers and intervention strategies that rely on gender stereotypes are punitive and blaming towards women. For example, women who give up their children voluntarily in order to protect them from violence, or because they are using substances and cannot properly care for them, are judged and viewed as bad mothers (Kilty & Dej, 2012; Hannah-Moffat, 2007). In these situations women may feel responsible due to their inability to comply with the expectations of ideal motherhood which constructs women as selfless and virtuous. Kilty and Dej (2012) argue that although one component of a woman's identity (for example, being a drug user) does not represent her entire identity, women and others tend to place mothers somewhere in the hierarchy of motherhood where "good" and "bad" mothers are on opposite ends of the continuum.

Courts and child protection services often ask “why didn’t she leave?” implying that leaving would end the violence, she could easily do so, she can control her partner’s actions, and police and other support services consistently act to condemn the violence and this condemnation is effective in all cases (Magen, 1999). This question is an example of victim-blaming attitudes that are embedded in western society and how the problem is defined in terms of women’s failures, not men’s violence. By focusing on mothers and putting responsibility on them to leave abusive situations or otherwise end the violence demonstrates how child protection services hold women and not men accountable for domestic violence. Devoe and Smith (2003) spoke with mothers in New York City who described contacting child protection services for help during a violent incident and asking for assistance to have the abuser removed from the home; instead this report resulted in the removal of their children. Frontline staff who provide services to women in Queensland, Australia also reported feeling that men are not provided the necessary programming and services and are not held accountable for abuse (Douglas & Walsh, 2010). The unintended consequences of “failure to protect” policies have been to further victimize women and their children and minimize the responsibility of men for their own violence.

Canadian research that examines women’s experiences with child protection services reveal that child protection workers place considerable responsibility on mothers to leave their abusive partners yet little help is offered to assist in making changes (Hughes, Chau, & Poff, 2011; Strega et al., 2008). For example, in a qualitative study, a sample of 64 women were interviewed and many reported receiving limited assistance from child protection services and were told there are no services for them (Hughes, Chau, & Poff, 2011). Many women are simply told that they have to leave their partners or their children will be taken away. Women who are provided support and access to services are repeatedly sent to parenting programs, detox centres,

and AA meetings which are often unhelpful and create extra work (Hughes, Chau, & Poff, 2011). In addition, in a qualitative study conducted in New York City with a sample of 43 mothers, Devoe and Smith (2003) found that mothers were unable to locate frontline workers with appropriate domestic violence training and expertise. Therefore, few women in this study were provided with help to leave their abusive partners, deal with domestic violence and the impacts of trauma and past abuse. Completing parenting and drug programs sometimes become a means to have children returned home instead of a means of providing emotional and financial help to the victims of domestic violence. Although according to Hughes, Chau, and Poff (2011), only a minority of women have had positive experiences with child protection workers, women do describe positive experiences when they are provided child protection workers who are supportive and helpful. These individuals are described as frontline staff who listen to women's concerns and experiences, provide some assistance with children in order for the mother to access community services, and state or imply that their parenting is good (Hughes, Chau, & Poff, 2011). Mothers require practical assistance including help accessing housing, income support, counselling and other forms of specialized assistance when they experience domestic violence (Douglas & Walsh, 2010; Johnson & Sullivan, 2008). Davies and Krane (2006) argue that mothers' experiences of violence and mothering in this context needs to be understood by child protection services in order to create sensitive and effective interventions. This demonstrates that the dynamics of domestic violence are often inappropriately responded to and misunderstood by child protection workers and that by prioritizing the safety of children – as is the mandate of child protection agencies – women's safety can be compromised.

In order to improve child protection services' responses to child exposure to domestic violence certain initiatives have been recommended: collaboration between child protection

workers and domestic violence advocates, domestic violence training for child protection workers, and domestic violence professionals staffed within child protection agencies (Cross, Mathews, Tonmyr, Scott, & Ouimet, 2012). This study is particularly interested in how the child protection and domestic violence sectors collaborate to support both mothers and children who have experienced domestic violence.

Collaboratively Addressing Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment

Research into the functioning of collaborations between child protection services and VAW agencies is limited and challenging, in part because child maltreatment and domestic violence traditionally have been examined and treated as two separate issues (Beeman & Edleson, 2000; Moles, 2008; Zannettino & McLaren, 2014). Distinct services have been developed with different prevention, treatment and intervention approaches. Often these two services have a history of hostility and distrust which is compounded by different mission statements, terminologies and values (Echlin & Osthoff, 2000). On the one hand, child protection services are publicly-funded, child-focused, statutory agencies, concerned with the rights and safety of children (Beeman & Edleson, 2000). VAW agencies often believe that child protection agencies are involuntary and bureaucratic in structure because they make decisions regarding child safety often without regard for the safety of the mother (Potito, Day, Carson, & O'Leary, 2009). VAW agencies are usually primarily women-centered, voluntary, non-profit, community-based organizations that aim to empower women to increase their safety and the safety of their children (Beeman & Edleson, 2000). Child protection agencies often believe that VAW agencies ignore the rights and safety of children by exclusively focusing on mothers (Findlater & Kelly, 1999; Moles, 2008). These are stereotypical representations which create tensions between the agencies and which have led some to argue that domestic violence and child maltreatment should

be addressed together in a coordinated fashion because no one organization has all the resources to address these problems (Banks et al., 2009).

Collaboration among child protection services and domestic violence service providers is defined somewhat differently by different commentators. Morrison (1996) argues that collaboration is about sharing information, providing services together, and communicating effectively. Challis, Fuller, Henwood, Klein, Plowden, Webb, Whittingham, and Whistow (1988) define collaboration as comprised of three elements: “the organizational machinery (structures, policies, etc.); the process of working together both formally and informally; and the output in terms of services and benefits to abused children and their families” (as cited in Morrison, 1996, p. 129-130). Collaborations among agencies are complex undertakings and can be evaluated at different stages – for example policies, the process of working together, and the outcomes. According to Bruner (1991), Goldman and Intriligator (1990), and Morgan (1997) collaboration involves more than talking to each other about common issues, sharing information about clients and coordinating various services for clients; collaboration for these authors refers to the processes of increasing efficiency, reaching long term goals, and providing comprehensive services to clients.

The current research literature on collaborations among child protection agencies and VAW agencies present the barriers to collaboration which have evolved from the differences and tensions between these services. Some of the barriers identified by child protection workers and domestic violence advocates are conflicting philosophies, lack of cooperation and communication between sectors, and lack of appropriate services (Beeman & Edleson, 2000; Stanley & Humphreys, 2014). These two services often perceive the same family in conflicting ways with child protection agencies taking a child-centered approach and VAW agencies taking

a woman-centered approach. For example, while a domestic violence advocate “may see a woman’s decision to leave or stay as her own, a child protection worker may view her decision to stay as a danger to her children” (Beeman & Edleson, 2000, p. 349). When two different organizations partner together, there can also be challenges related to power (Lessard et al., 2010). VAW agencies are non-profit organizations and therefore may feel less powerful working with a government funded child protection agency (Potito et al., 2009; Morrison, 1996). Child protection workers also have statutory power that mandates them to investigate cases of child abuse and, when necessary, remove children from their homes. Cultural biases, racism, sexism, and lack of culturally appropriate services for children, abused women, and violent men may also be present to differing degrees in child protection agencies which further complicate collaboration efforts (Beeman & Edleson, 2000).

Research on collaborations among VAW agencies and child protection services also provides principles for effective collaboration. The first principle is that agencies must share a common mission or goal which begins with the safety of both the mother and the child (Potito et al., 2009; Beeman & Edleson, 2000; Moles, 2008). Organizations typically agree to collaborate for different reasons so it is important that common values and principles are agreed upon in the initial stages. Since a principle of collaboration is to hold perpetrators accountable and involved in the services (Beeman & Edleson, 2000), a component of good practice is to simultaneously ensure victim safety and perpetrator accountability (Potito et al., 2009).

Research concludes that in order for trust to be established between the agencies it is important that both parties are clear about their expectations, the purpose of the collaboration, what each is able to contribute, management of power, how credit will be shared, and leadership (Potito et al., 2009). In Australia, from scholars’ analysis and advice, guidelines, resources, and

checklists have been created to help the development of these types of partnerships (Potito et al., 2009). Zanettino and McLaren (2014) recommend that other ways to ensure effective collaborations include: prioritizing emotional abuse, empowering and supporting abused women, and strengthening the mother and child relationship. In addition, effective collaborations require a group of individuals with the right skills, experience and rapport to work effectively together. Of all the research on collaborations, there is no clear evidence that collaboration between sectors leads to improved outcomes for women and their children (Macvean et al., 2015; Statham, 2011). There are several reasons for this including problems around measuring outcomes and difficulty in attributing changes to the impact of collaboration work rather than something else. Most of the research findings suggest that interagency collaboration work improves service accessibility, enhances knowledge and skills for practitioners, and results in greater efficiency (Statham, 2011). This suggests that there is evidence that collaboration work improves service and system outcomes rather than family and child outcomes.

Primarily in jurisdictions in the United States, various models of collaboration have been developed among child protection services and VAW agencies. These models demonstrate how child protection agencies are able to align themselves with domestic violence survivors. For example, Mandel (2010) created the Safe and Together Model which was implemented in Florida, Connecticut as well as other areas in the United States and has focused on creating sustainable changes in child protection practices. The focus of this program is on “how it is in the children’s best interest to remain safe and together with the domestic violence survivor” (Mandel, 2010, p. 533). This model is child centered; however, the guiding principles of the model is that child protection workers need to better understand domestic violence, and need to have practical skills to support children and their mothers. This model demonstrates how child

protection agencies are able to support domestic violence survivors; however, community workers who support women are not directly involved in this process (Mandel, 2010). Thus, this model lacks an interagency collaboration component and is unable to draw conclusions on the importance of such collaborations.

In 1993, collaboration between Family First – an in-home crisis intervention family preservation program – and VAW agencies began in Michigan (Findlater & Kelly, 1999). Two projects were organized to initiate collaboration: cross-training sessions and demonstration projects that made services available to children and women through referrals from VAW agencies (Findlater & Kelly, 1999). The cross-training sessions focused on providing information on domestic violence, the law, and how to apply this knowledge in practice. However, this collaboration did not initially include the participation of child protection service workers. Eventually, a task force was created to pursue collaboration with child protection services, Family First and VAW agencies (Findlater & Kelly, 1999). The focus of this article is on describing the events that led to the eventual creation of the collaboration work between child protection services and domestic violence agencies. Although Findlater and Kelly (1999) find that collaboration is important for protecting mothers and children, and that a lot can be achieved through collaboration, their work does not demonstrate how the collaborations affected the way frontline staff work with women who experience domestic violence.

Moles (2008) examined the changing relationships and collaborative work between child protection and VAW services in New York City from the perspectives of the professionals in both fields. This collaboration began in the early 1990's and in the early 2000's a precedent setting case known as the Nicholson case shifted the way in which these agencies collaborated. The Nicholson case was based on a mother who had been a victim of domestic violence, had her

children removed from her, and was charged by police with neglect. Nicholson, as well as other mothers charged with neglect, started a class action lawsuit which was eventually heard in Federal Court. In January 2002, the Federal Court ruled that the Children's Services "violated the civil rights of these mothers and their children by removing children and charging mothers with neglect for 'failing to protect' the children from witnessing domestic violence" (Moles, 2008, p. 680). This court case initially had a negative effect on the working relationships between the sectors; however, it was also a stimulus for improving collaborations. Shortly thereafter, a Domestic Violence Subcommittee was created with membership that included domestic violence service providers and Children's Services staff with the goal of improving the day-to-day practice with mothers who experience domestic violence (Moles, 2008). This study describes how the collaboration evolved and changed through time with the main goal of improving the responses to mothers who have experienced domestic violence. Similar to Findlater and Kelly (2008), this article describes the development of social systems in place in New York that led to the collaboration initiatives and highlights the importance of having common goals, a common understanding of the problem, training on the complexities of domestic violence and child welfare policies, and the need for improved resources in order for child protection services and violence against women agencies to work effectively together.

In the United States, in response to reports of co-occurring child maltreatment and domestic violence, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) made policy and practice recommendations to improve collaboration among child protection and VAW services (Banks et al., 2009). Funding was provided to six sites over a 5-year demonstration period to implement these principles and recommendations (Banks et al., 2008). These recommendations focused on the importance of cross-training programs between child protection

and VAW agencies; child protection screening for domestic violence during intake; safety planning practices that are developed with the mother and children; reviews of child protection policies and procedures to increase safety for mothers and their children; cross-system collaboration efforts including joint trainings; and, co-locating staff (Banks et al., 2009). A number of obstacles in implementing the recommendations were reported: for example, domestic violence training for child protection workers was optional and provided only basic information about domestic violence; confidentiality for victims of domestic violence was unclear; and, difficulty tracking and identifying cases with domestic violence due to inadequate data systems and screening practices were reported (Banks et al., 2009). An evaluation of the collaboration was conducted with the use of longitudinal data collected through surveys and child protection case files, as well as qualitative interviews (Banks et al., 2008). This study indicates that considerable progress was made by having written policies and guidelines concerning domestic violence and how to share resources with community service providers, and by devoting resources into changing screening and assessment practices regarding domestic violence in child protection agencies (Banks et al., 2008). They also found that 73% of child protection agencies reported having contact with local domestic violence service providers, and 28.4% indicated having domestic violence staff working within the child protection agencies (Banks et al., 2009).

A cultural shift was reported in child protection agencies where a number of changes were observed in policy and practice. Nevertheless, moving “policy into practice proved to be an ongoing challenge” for many of the service providers (Banks et al., 2008, p. 928). One of the main purposes of this study was to examine the extent that formal collaborations exist among child protection agencies and VAW services (Banks et al., 2009). Although the longitudinal data is more generalizable and offers a way of examining how collaborations are formed and how

work is planned and implemented, the data cannot speak to frontline workers' experiences of working with survivors of domestic violence, nor to the structures that support such collaborations.

The review of the literature on interagency collaborations demonstrates a lack of knowledge about interagency collaborations but demonstrates that the various programs that have been initiated by agencies that historically have differences and tensions are able to align themselves with domestic violence survivors. The methodologies of the literature presented in this section are generally descriptive accounts of the collaboration work in specific locations or employ longitudinal studies that speak to how collaborations are formed and implemented with policy. The literature is missing a theoretical focus and is missing frontline workers' experiences of collaboration and how the existence of such collaboration policies impacts their work with women who have experienced domestic violence.

The Current Study - Ottawa CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement

Based on recommendations made by the first Domestic Violence Death Review Committee in Ontario in 2002, the child protection system recognized that domestic violence and child abuse are linked and that in order to help women and children enhanced collaborative strategies are required between child protection services and VAW agencies (Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, 2015). In 2002, the Ontario government supported the development of local collaborations between CAS and VAW agencies (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2011). The goal of these agreements was to improve coordination between the VAW and CAS sectors in order to increase the safety and wellbeing of women and their children and to hold perpetrators accountable for abuse. In the evolution and development of the Ontario collaboration agreements, the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services was

responsible for creating a “mechanism for collaboration between agencies at the local level” (Echlin & Osthoff, 2000, p. 217). In 2003, a total of 44 local collaboration agreements were developed and in effect in Ontario (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2011). In 2004, the Ottawa CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement was signed by CAS and 13 VAW agencies. The Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario (2015) has acknowledged the efforts made across Ontario to implement collaboration work between CAS and VAW agencies in order to improve policies, training, assessing, understanding and servicing women and children where domestic violence is a problem. However, the collaboration work across Ontario varies: in some cities designated domestic violence workers work within CAS and in other locations community domestic violence teams have been created.

Little academic examination of these local collaborations in Ontario has been undertaken. This research study fills a gap in the child protection and domestic violence collaboration literature as it explores how the Ottawa CAS and VAW agencies collaborate to simultaneously protect women and their children that have experienced domestic violence, from the perspective of frontline VAW workers. The following chapter sets out the theory and methodology of institutional ethnography which was used to conduct this study and to analyze the data.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework and Methodology

In this chapter I describe the theoretical framework and methodology employed in this study. A feminist approach was utilized in this study so that the informants' experiences and broader social, contextual, and political causes of oppression could be illuminated. A feminist perspective and methodology were interwoven to inform every step of this study. The first part begins with a description of institutional ethnography and how it has evolved to become what Smith refers to as "a sociology for people" (Smith, 2005b). Then I present the methodological orienting concepts that are essential for conducting and understanding institutional ethnography. The second part of the chapter describes the research procedures including ethical considerations, methods employed for data collection and the listening guide approach which was selected for the data analysis.

This study adopts the socialist feminist perspective which is rooted within Marxist ideology and is based on the belief that class and economic structures are inherently problematic and lead to women's oppression (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). Socialist feminists argue that the state adopts the role of the patriarch and passes policies and laws, such as child protection and family laws, that reinforce and maintain the unequal relations between women and men (Comack, 2014). In this particular study, the Ministry of Community and Social Services adopts the role of the patriarch and works its power through CAS by imposing laws and policies that regulate mothers. Thus, although CAS is invested with statutory power and voluntary VAW agencies are not, CAS is subordinate to the Ministry. This study understands that CAS has less power than the Ministry but more power than VAW agencies and explores the experiences of frontline VAW workers when working within these unequal power relations with CAS.

INSTITUTIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Institutional ethnography was developed in the early 1980's by Canadian sociologist, Dorothy E. Smith (DeVault & McCoy, 2001). This method of inquiry emerged at a time where academic research or scholarship was defined by men, and women, by attempting to meet these academic standards, took "up the tools of the oppressors" (Campbell, 2003, p. 15). Smith began to notice that the everyday work of women – such as child rearing and housekeeping – was invisible in the academic literature. Smith's realization that "as women we have been living in an intellectual, cultural and political world, from whose making we had been almost entirely excluded..." (Smith, 1987, p. 1) drove her research agenda. Drawing from feminism, Marx's materialist method, and Garfinkel's ethnomethodology as well as from many other predecessors, Smith started working on a sociology that would account for women's experiences that up to that point had been subordinated (DeVault & McCoy, 2001). Smith's feminism is linked to Marxism as she explains how "objective social, economic and political relations... shape and determine women's oppression" (Smith, 2005a). Institutional ethnography was initially developed as a *sociology for women* and later became recognized as a *sociology for people* (Campbell, 2003). The notion of a *sociology for women* reflects a particular historical era where feminists pointed to the fact that women's standpoint was absent; however, today by using the term a *sociology for people* Smith argues that we need to begin where we are – for example, in terms of race, class, sexual orientation, and so on (Appelrouth & Edles, 2008). In other words, this method of inquiry was developed with a focus on peoples' standpoint in order to change the social relations that subordinate both men and women (Devault & McCoy, 2001). In this study, I understand VAW frontline workers as being in a better position to understand patriarchal power relations and their consequences because of their work with and on behalf of an oppressed group of women.

Institutional ethnography was initially developed as a feminist theory and methodology; however, it has been used in a range of research areas including the social sciences, health sciences, education, and policy research to investigate questions related to power and dominance which may not be explicitly about gender (Townsend et al., 2003). Through these studies, we begin to see how people's experiences are socially organized in many different social processes.

Institutional ethnography is a method of inquiry that is guided by certain theoretical and methodological commitments, and is not a theory or a methodological technique on its own (Smith, 2005b). In fact, this method of inquiry is unique because it can explore both narratives or individual experiences and investigate organizational practices. On the one hand, it provides a way of looking at the "actualities of everyday life" (Smith, 1989, p. 34). On the other hand, Smith was interested in learning how the social world is organized; therefore, her method involves discovering material texts to learn how certain forms of knowledge are accepted while others are overlooked. This method of inquiry has been selected for this study because it closes the methodological and empirical gap between the different levels of analysis (micro, mezzo and macro) which are common in sociological investigations (Ng, 2006; Smith, 2005b). It provides an avenue for understanding the individual experiences of frontline violence against women (VAW) workers while also taking into consideration how everyday experiences are socially organized and influenced by wider structures and relations of ruling.

As a form of inquiry that combines both theory and method, this chapter first delves into the key concepts and assumptions of institutional ethnography. The following sections will discuss Smith's key concepts that were established for investigating everyday life which include: problematic, standpoint, social relations, social organization, relations of ruling, text-mediation, and discourse. These concepts and principles are key for discovering the social in people's lives,

what Smith refers to as “an ontology of the social” (Smith, 2005b, p. 52). Ontology is a theory of the way that reality comes into existence and in institutional ethnography the ontology is how the social exists. By describing how institutional ethnographers view the world, some of Smith’s influences that have helped shape institutional ethnography will be presented. This theoretical approach has helped guide the data analysis and has been used to help develop a more critical understanding of the information collected.

Problematic

The first concept is the notion of the “problematic” which is a technical term appropriated from Louis Althusser (1971) (Smith, D.E., 2005). It draws on the epistemological foundations of institutional ethnography, which adopts a reflexive epistemological position that views knowledge as being produced through the interactions between the informants and the researchers (Smith, G., 2006). Smith (1987) used the term to explain that within institutional ethnography we understand the everyday world to be an area for discovery. The problematic is thus discovered reflexively rather than objectively – meaning that reality exists independently from human perception and that it can be discovered using the tools of the natural sciences. Institutional ethnography is about exploration; therefore, a problematic is an area to be discovered, not a research question that needs to be answered nor the problem experienced by the individuals being studied, nor the problem that needs to be understood by the researcher. The concept of problematic is used “to direct attention to a possible set of questions that may not have been posed or a set of puzzles that do not yet exist in the form of puzzles but are ‘latent’ in the actualities of the experienced world” (Smith, 1987, p. 91). Therefore, the problematic is the underlying or latent tensions that are to be discovered and can be instances where the researcher notices a disjuncture, contradiction, or imbalance between the explanations provided and how

things are actually occurring (Smith, D.E. 1990b; Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Townsend, Langille, & Ripley, 2003).

The problematic is usually discovered during the early stages of research and cannot be fully explained by the individuals involved. In order to identify the problematic, the researcher should become familiar with and learn about their topic, just as those who experience or live it know it. This is what Smith (2005) refers to as becoming familiar with the experienced actualities. This usually involves doing preliminary field work to hear and understand the lives/stories of those who experience it (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). The problematics addressed by institutional ethnography are based on common experiences of powerlessness that usually persist without the full awareness of the origin of the tension and without the use of force (Townsend, Langille, & Ripley, 2003). The problematic is the starting point of inquiry into people's actual experiences and although the discovery of a problematic may begin with individual experiences, it then shifts to explore how those experiences are embedded in social relations (Smith, 2005b).

Standpoint

Inspired by the women's movement, Smith developed institutional ethnography as an alternative sociology to explore the social from women's standpoint (Smith, 2005b). Feminist standpoint theory is informed by the traditions of socialist and radical feminism (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). The ontological assumption in feminist standpoint theory is that "there is no single objective truth" but rather the understanding of reality is structured by a person's gender, race, class, and sexual orientation, resulting in multiple truths (Campbell & Wasco, 2000, p. 781). Smith's notion of women's standpoint was developed from phenomenology which understands individuals' experiences as central to research and aims to preserve an individual's

presence as subject not object; thus focusing on the everyday experiences and understanding the point of view of our informants (Campbell, 2003; Smith 1987). Standpoint becomes a place to begin the research; for example, in this study I began with the experiences of frontline VAW staff who work directly with women and/or children who have experienced domestic violence. Institutional ethnography begins with individuals' experiences as a starting point because people are not the object of analysis but rather a point of entry into understanding organizational processes (Walby, 2013). Therefore, beginning with standpoint means that the researcher understands that individuals are experts of their own lives and experiences (Rankin et al., 2010).

Institutional ethnographers typically take the standpoint of the individuals who are being ruled and, therefore, work on behalf of those who are experiencing some problem (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). This reflects Smith's critical/Marxist roots which understand that not all standpoints are equally accessible and valued in society (Appelrouth & Edles, 2008). However, as Smith discovered, if we only focus on individual experiences we are unable to grasp how people's everyday experiences are created and organized by larger organizational structures or powers. Therefore, in addition to standpoint, institutional ethnography understands individuals' experiences as being organized by and co-ordinated by forces not always apparent to the individual, for example by social relations. Investigation begins with the experiences of people's everyday lives to discover the presence of social relations and social organization that co-ordinate their lives and to explicate the workings of power that go beyond the daily local experiences; discovering the social is done in a way that does not subordinate the informants into "objectified forms of knowledge" (Smith, 2005b, p. 8). Rather, by acknowledging people's everyday experiences it is possible to begin to make visible larger level structures or institutions

that create and sustain these daily experiences (McNeil, 2008). The following sections begin to delve into these larger structural and institutional concepts found in institutional ethnography.

Social Relations and Social Organization

One of the main assumptions in institutional ethnography is that the world is social. From Marx, came the concept of “social relations” which Smith (1987) refers to as a technical term in institutional ethnography. Rankin et al. (2010) define social relations as “something happening that links individuals together” (p. 335); the social stems from people’s activities and the ongoing and purposeful coordination of those activities. The concept should not be confused with relationships; rather it is the connections between work processes (Devault, 2006). Institutional ethnographers understand that people’s activities in one place are embedded in a sequence of actions that implicate other experiences, people, and work (Smith, 2005b). It is useful to think of social relations as temporal sequences where the individual is embedded in a series of coordinated actions (Smith, 2005b).

Similar to symbolic interactionist theory, institutional ethnographers understand settings to be comprised locally by people’s work; however, institutional ethnography does not want to theorize about that work, but rather attempts to get an account to clarify and trace the social relations of that setting (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Institutional ethnographers assume that people actively form and participate in social relations. The goal is to demonstrate how people in one setting align their activities with those produced elsewhere (Devault, 2006). In this study, the social relations being examined are the practices frontline VAW staff engage in as they collaborate with Children’s Aid Society (CAS) and how this produces their everyday world. Exploring social relations “provides a method of looking at how individuals organize themselves vis-à-vis one another” (Smith, G., 2006, p. 55). Often unknowingly, social relations are pursued

through co-ordinated action as people act in certain ways that align with different standards, for example, family expectations, professional standards or organizational rules (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). The institutional documents and policies that coordinate frontline VAW staff as they collaborate with CAS are an example of the routine practices of social relations. This also demonstrates how texts coordinate our daily experiences, a topic that will be explored in the next section.

Social relations organize everything that occurs in our everyday life; therefore, what constitutes ‘social organization’ is the interplay of all the different social relations of which people are a part (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Smith (1990) argues that everything that people do on a daily basis is socially organized including our involvement with physical objects. Therefore, even though it seems to occur independently, everyone plays a part in generating the phenomena. According to the “social organization of knowledge” concept developed by Smith, people “enact the world they inhabit and know about, in concert with other people and, of course, with the technologies that people operate” (as cited in Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 23). In this study, the social relations among CAS and VAW agencies are socially organized through particular technologies including the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement, the liaison committee and the Integrated Services Project. In addition, as a researcher I cannot stand apart from what I know and what I have learned about the world as my knowledge is based on socially organized experiences. Social relations and social organization are central in the sociological inquiry for institutional ethnography and the individual is an essential presence whose activities are analyzed relationally (Smith, 2005b).

Texts and Relations of Ruling

I was initially drawn to institutional ethnography because of its focus on texts or documents in the daily practices of organizations. The term ‘text’ is defined as documents that have a “relatively fixed and replicable character” (Devault & McCoy, 2001, p. 765). These include organizational reports, policies, protocols, and forms as well as less formal institutional texts including memoranda and e-mails (Rankin et. al., 2010). Smith (1990) credits Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology for the discovery of the text as a significant component of social relations. Texts are “crystallized social relations” – a means to provide access to the social relations of an organization (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 79). Institutional ethnography traces social relations and organization beyond what is observable by recognizing that texts are “active” in coordinating our everyday experiences (Smith, 2005b). This focus on texts comes from an understanding that they are technologies of social control (Smith, 1999). Texts are not only sources of information, they are essential to understanding how people’s experiences are mediated, regulated, and coordinated on a daily basis.

In her writings on the social organization of knowledge, Smith demonstrates how texts in contemporary society are used to manage aspects of people’s lives. She coined the term “textually-mediated social organization” to express the idea that texts organize, mediate, and coordinate people’s actions (Smith, 1990). In fact, one assumption of institutional ethnographers remains that the organization of social life runs smoothly due to the proliferation of texts. Therefore, in addition to face-to-face interaction, in a text-mediated world, people also interact through texts (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). The notion of a text-reader conversation is introduced here to demonstrate how the action of reading texts is a type of conversation where the reader does both parts (Smith, 2005b). The text-reader conversation is unlike a conversation between

two people because the text remains fixed, nonresponsive and the same regardless of the number of times it is read; however, an individual's reading of a text may change. Institutional ethnographers presume that if people handle the same texts, their actions will be coordinated by the requirements of that text (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Texts do nothing on their own; rather the reader becomes the text's agent and interprets, responds to, and therefore activates the text (McCoy, 1995). This activation allows power to be exercised; therefore, institutional ethnographers believe that texts have the power to make people act in particular ways. Using Smith's term of "textually-mediated social organization", I began my research with the theoretical assumption that VAW agencies are places where social relations are coordinated and mediated by texts such as the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement.

A related concept is "relations of ruling" which Smith uses in order to understand "how power is exercised in local settings to accomplish extra-local interests" which refers to the interests of those who dominate (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 36). In local settings, individuals are not directly ruled by people they know; rather they are ruled by governments, corporations, professional settings, organizations etc. and although individuals are employed there, their actions are derived from the organizations (Smith, 2005b). Institutional ethnography shares with the theory of social constructivism an understanding that reality is constructed under particular conditions; specifically, that the world is constructed by relations of ruling which organize and control people's everyday lives (Smith, 1987). Smith's (1990) use of the concept of ruling is influenced by Marx; however, she argues that ruling practices operate with the interests of capital in ways that are different from Marx's analysis of class oppression in nineteenth-century capitalism – language, texts, and different expertise are now central to ruling practices (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). In fact, texts are almost always involved in ruling; in my study, the CAS/VAW

Collaboration Agreement text involves relations of ruling that may not be apparent to VAW agencies and the Ottawa CAS. Institutional ethnography aims to uncover these ruling relations and as such, “we must discover the relations of ruling that texts help to organize and describe the connections across sites that are actually operating” (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 33). Garfinkel insists, however, that organizational texts cannot be accepted and treated as objective or independent accounts of the organization; rather, the social practices that make sense of using these texts need to be investigated (Smith, 1990). Therefore, it is useful to think of work-text-work sequences in order to not focus solely on texts (Smith, 2005b).

Discourse

Language has always been an interest for Dorothy Smith, specifically how people use words in order to make the words mean something (Campbell, 2003). Some of Foucault’s (1981) and Bakhtin’s (1981, 1986) interests in discourse appear in Smith’s work on how people’s actions are integrated into “discourse-driven dialogue” (Smith, 1999, p. 121). However, DeVault and McCoy (2002) distinguish Smith’s notion of discourse from Foucault’s use of the term:

Although the institutional ethnography approach shares with Foucault an interest in texts, power, and governance, there are some central differences that are particularly significant for empirical research. In Foucault’s work and in work taking up his approach, for example, the notion of discourse designates a kind of large-scale conversation in and through texts... for Smith, discourse refers to a field of relations that includes not only texts and their intertextual conversation, but the activities of people in actual sites who produce them and use them and take up the conceptual frames they circulate. This notion of discourse never loses the presence of the subject who activates the text in any local moments of its use (p. 772).

Institutional ethnographers assume that people participate in discursive activity while they live their everyday lives, just like people participate in nutrition through eating (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Furthermore, through active participation and knowledge contribution of how to do

things, people align themselves to ruling ideas (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). However, elements of ruling can also arise explicitly through institutional discourses. Smith argues that language is an important aspect of writing about the social as people live it and it has been her interest to create a method of inquiry that accounts for the material contours in people's lives (Campbell, 2003).

To conclude, institutional ethnography is a feminist theoretical framework that views the world as socially organized; it is a theory of social organization that attempts to explicate the ruling practices and the associated text-based discourses (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). The following section describes the methodology applied in this study.

METHODOLOGY

Given that institutional ethnography requires it, and given the lack of data on the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement, a qualitative study was appropriate to begin to explore and describe the relationship between the organizations and the impact of this collaboration on their daily activities. A qualitative approach was selected because in institutional ethnography, research follows a process of discovery and qualitative research favours more in-depth data collection and analysis (Smith, 2005b). Consistent with feminist methodologies, this qualitative method allows the experiences of frontline VAW workers to be learned in a way that is more attuned to the complexities of individual differences and context than a quantitative approach (Tutty, Rothery, & Grinned, 1996). This section describes the sample, how data was collected and analyzed, and ethical considerations for the research.

Sample, Recruitment and Eligibility

The purpose of this study was to explore how collaboration work between CAS and VAW agencies affects frontline staff working in VAW agencies that signed the Ottawa CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement in 2004. A purposive sampling approach was used to recruit informants from the thirteen VAW agencies listed in the collaboration agreement. A purposive sampling approach is a non-probability sampling procedure where informants are selected from a target population based on the purpose of the study and specific inclusion and/or exclusion criteria (Daniel, 2012). This was important for this study because this research focused on individuals from a specific segment of the Ottawa VAW population. Institutional ethnographers use the term informants to illustrate that a sample of individuals is not being studied, rather the social organization of institutional processes are being investigated (Devault & McCoy, 2001). Informants are the entry point to the actualities of everyday life, not the object of the study.

This study was conducted independently from the organizations and agencies from which informants were recruited. CAS frontline staff were excluded from this study because permission from CAS was not granted as it was impossible to guarantee anonymity with only one child protection agency in the city. The Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW) an incorporated, non-partisan, non-profit organization composed of a network of individuals and organizations agreed to help recruit informants through their Frontline Support Standing Committee by distributing a recruitment invitation letter (Appendix C) to the VAW agencies listed in the Ottawa CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement. The researcher also attended a meeting of the Frontline Support Standing Committee to recruit frontline VAW staff. With OCTEVAW's assistance, eleven of the thirteen agencies were contacted by the researcher in an

attempt to recruit informants for the study. Agencies that were not members of OCTEVAW's Frontline Support Standing Committee were recruited independently by the researcher. The researcher was unable to locate a contact person for two VAW agencies and as a result they were not included in the study. All agencies that were contacted were asked to distribute a recruitment invitation letter to frontline VAW staff by email. The recruitment letter described the research project, the criteria for participation and asked the recipient to contact the researcher if they were interested in participating (see Appendix C).

At the time of the study it was essential that all informants who participated were employed as frontline staff by an agency listed in the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement, that they had experience working with the collaboration agreement and/or in collaboration with the Ottawa CAS, and that they were able to communicate in English. Although the researcher was unable to conduct interviews in French, Francophone-serving agencies were invited to participate in the study because it was understood that their experiences may differ from agencies serving Anglophones. If the recipient met the criteria for participation and agreed to participate, an interview was scheduled and the informant was asked to identify a meeting location that was convenient for him or her and that offered a private and quiet space. One staff member from eight VAW agencies agreed to participate. Appendix A provides information on the informants' years of service and general areas of intervention.

Data Collection

Keeping with feminist methodology, institutional ethnography was conducted through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with eight frontline VAW workers to learn "how things work" in their agency of employment when collaborating with CAS (Devault & McCoy, 2001, p. 757). Interviews were conducted between October 19, 2015 and November 11, 2015. For the

institutional ethnographer, the purpose of interviewing is to understand how activities are coordinated across multiple sites; therefore, data collection is focused on the institutional processes.

In qualitative feminist research, the interview is a social interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee where narratives and knowledge are co-constructed (Devault & McCoy, 2001). Semi-structured interviews were used in this study because it offered the most appropriate method for understanding the experiences of those who work with the collaboration agreement and offered the opportunity for probing with the use of follow-up questions. As with all approaches, there are some limitations to semi-structured interviews; for example, there may be a problem of reactivity where participants may react differently to interviewers with different personal characteristics (Harvey-Jordan & Long, 2001). This is a limitation that cannot be controlled and is relevant to all interviews conducted with people as a result of the personal interactive nature of interviews. Semi-structured interviews are also time-consuming and the results of small purposive samples are not generalizable. However, semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to collect detailed and descriptive information. Although guided by a standard set of questions (Appendix E), each interview was based on what the researcher had learned from the previous interviews and questions were added or adjusted as information arose during the interview. This is complimentary to institutional ethnography assumptions because the goal of interviewing is to build an understanding of how activities are coordinated; therefore, each interview provides the opportunity to learn a new, different, or developing piece to the picture.

The goal of institutional ethnography during data collection is to explicate what is occurring at the local level and how that is governed by extra-local interests. Institutional

ethnography begins with the everyday experiences of individuals, and gathers data about these experiences/activities in order to proceed to explicate a problematic which goes beyond what can be explained or known at the local setting. The idea of explication consists of two levels of data collection that are critical for institutional ethnography. The first is entry-level data which provides an entry into people's everyday lives and experiences (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). The goal in collecting entry-level data is to explicate the local conditions and experiences of the setting. This usually consists of speaking to multiple individuals at the local level in order to ensure that any story is not idiosyncratic. The experiences of the informants will not be the same; however, as the problematic begins to emerge, the accounts "will be about a similarly organized phenomenon" (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 60). The level-two data explains the broader setting (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). In the theory of institutional ethnography, the settings under investigation are organized and ruled in ways that are not always fully understood by informants. For example, documents can be useful in explaining why individuals participate in certain activities and level-two data entails questions pertaining to the organizational structure and organizational texts. The purpose of conducting institutional ethnography is to explicate the ruling relations; in other words, to learn how people's everyday experiences are organized outside of their control. Above all, these two levels of data are interconnected – questions intended to explore level one data may explicate level two data or the reverse.

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim onto the researcher's personal computer and saved on a USB stick. A verbatim transcription was selected to ensure that the transcription included everything that was spoken, including 'uhms' and the repetition or stuttering of words. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher which allowed me to become more familiar with the responses/data. The accuracy of the transcripts was verified by

listening to the recordings while reading the transcripts and making necessary changes and corrections. To comply with ethics requirements, both computer and USB stick were also password protected. In addition, within the transcriptions, all identifying information such as all names, employment location or position was excluded to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. After the finalization of the study, the transcripts and digital recordings were saved on a USB stick and stored in a locked cabinet in the thesis supervisor's university office for a total of 5 years.

Validity and Reliability

Although reliability and validity are often associated with quantitative measurement, it is just as important to consider for qualitative research studies. Reliability refers to consistency; the data was gathered and recorded in a consistent fashion through semi-structured interviews that were audio-recorded. Reliability in a semi-structured interview depends on whether the questions are conveyed in the same way, not whether the questions are repeated using the same words (Barriball & While, 1994). In addition, reliability of the data is achieved through the use of probes which allow for clarification in responses, further exploration into sensitive topics, clarification of inconsistencies, and can help recall information. Reliability also refers to whether other researchers performing similar data collection and analysis would generate similar findings (Thyer, 2001). As a qualitative researcher I accept that other researchers may interpret my findings differently or might study this topic differently. Rather than considering this as a limitation, it is an advantage because the social world is diverse and a variety of approaches and perspectives may be able to capture this diversity (Neuman, 2011).

Validity in qualitative research also differs from quantitative research and refers to truthfulness in which the goal is to achieve authenticity rather than finding the 'truth'.

Authenticity or sincerity refers to providing a genuine, fair, honest, transparent, and balanced account of the social life from the perspective of the people who live it every day (Neuman, 2011; Tracy, 2010). Therefore, in order to ensure validity, it is important to provide an account of how the people we study understand their experiences. The statements and experiences presented in my findings are not exclusive as the accounts presented are not the only possible truth in the world.

Ethical Considerations

The study received ethics approval from the University of Ottawa, Office of Research Ethics and Integrity Board (Appendix B). In order to protect the interests of the informants in this study, the researcher ensured that informants provided free and informed consent and understood that participation was voluntary. During recruitment, the researcher was sensitive to coercion and did not have any direct involvement or authority over the study informants. Informants were provided information on the purpose of the study, participation activities, time commitment, and potential risks and benefits of the study (see Appendix C). Prior to each interview, informants were provided a consent form for their review and signature (see Appendix D). The consent form advised informants of the voluntary nature of participation, their right to refuse to answer questions, as well as their right to withdraw from the research at any time before, during or after the interview process. The consent form also asked the informants if they agree to being audio recorded for the purpose of the interview and if they agree to being quoted with their identity protected. Once the consent form was signed a copy was provided to the informants for their own reference, as well as a method of reaching the researcher in case they wanted to review their transcripts or withdraw their consent for participation. The other copy of the consent letter was kept in a locked cabinet in the thesis supervisor's university office.

Informants were notified when the researcher started recording and stopped recording. All informants consented to being recorded and cited anonymously.

Although the sample is not considered a vulnerable population, it was essential that this study provided anonymity and was confidential. Anonymity was ensured by assigning case numbers to informants and all informants were then assigned a pseudonym. Confidentiality was ensured by holding all information in confidence and not making it public; for example, all identifying information such as all names, employment location or position were excluded to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Recorded and transcribed data was only shared with the research supervisors. All data was stored on the researcher's password protected laptop, password protected USB stick, and password protected cellphone. The goal was to gather data in a way that would make it impossible for anyone to link it to the informants in this study.

The study was designed to ensure that the informants would not experience any risks that were greater than the benefits they would receive from participating in the study. The potential risks or inconveniences that were identified pertained to the informants having to take time out of their day to speak with the researcher. To mitigate this risk, the researcher made herself available to meet at a place and time that was convenient for the informants. In addition, one of the feminist research strategies used in this study was to conduct the interviews in the informants' workplace in an effort to make them feel at ease and to give them greater control over seating and the duration of the interview which are done in an effort to level the balance of power. This study offers an opportunity for frontline staff in VAW agencies to share their views and experiences related to working in collaboration with CAS. The researcher has made a commitment to the VAW frontline workers that participated in the study to share the results with the VAW agencies listed under the agreement. The results may lead to changes in policies or

practices that directly benefit the informants in their collaborative work. The results of this research may also benefit society by contributing knowledge about collaborations that can help improve policy and practice in a way that is beneficial for frontline staff and women who have experienced domestic violence and their children. This study may also have larger benefits extending to collaboration between various agencies in fields beyond domestic violence.

Data Analysis – The Listening Guide Approach

To analyze the transcribed interview narratives, the researcher used the listening guide approach, a voice-centered relational method of analysis (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). The listening guide approach is a feminist approach to narrative analysis (Paliadis & Cruikshank, 2008). Initially a method that drew from psychoanalytical theories, this feminist method was created with the understanding that people’s talk is expressed in a multiplicity of voices and that the human psyche is also multi-layered (Gilligan, Spence, Weinberg & Bertsch, 2003; Paliadis & Cruikshank, 2008). This method allows the researcher to listen to the many voices embedded in people’s expressed experiences. The listening guide approach is congruent with the methodological and theoretical commitments of institutional ethnography as it provides a way of “understanding the self as situated in organizational contexts” (Walby, 2013, p. 142). Institutional ethnography and the listening guide approach correspond to each other for several reasons: (1) data analysis is theoretical; therefore, depending on the type of theoretical approach one takes the listening guide approach and institutional ethnography share a theoretical backdrop that is based on feminism, power, human relations and organizations; (2) institutional ethnography and the listening guide approach also “share an understanding of the self as socially produced” – narratives are products of cultural discourses and structural forces (Walby, 2013, p. 150). In addition, the listening guide approach shares with institutional ethnography a similar

unit of analysis; both begin with the standpoint or narratives of people in order to describe a broader story about organisations and relations. The first two steps of the listening guide approach offer tangible ways of focusing on the standpoint of individuals and the third and fourth steps allow the institutional ethnographer to read for social relations, texts, and the language of organizations.

As with all methods, the listening guide approach has advantages and limitations. One of the drawbacks to this method is that it is time consuming – a lot of energy and time is needed to listen to and read each interview four times. In addition, as with other qualitative methods, the researcher is likely to focus on certain issues and not others. However, this approach is distinguished from other methods because it illuminates the complex and multilayered nature of human experiences. This method was developed as a response to the dissatisfaction with coding schemes routinely used to analyze qualitative data. Gilligan (1982) found that coding techniques placed individuals in single static categories and did not allow for multiple codings of the same text. As Tolman (2001) noted, the listening guide approach “is distinctly different from traditional methods of coding, in that one listens to, rather than categorizes or quantifies, the text of the interview” (p. 132). This method is also favored because it allows the researcher to adapt the steps according to their research interests and research questions (Gilligan et al., 2003).

Researchers who use the listening guide approach believe that voices are contrapuntal (not monotonic) and when people talk there are simultaneous voices that are co-occurring (Gilligan et al., 2003). These voices can be in tension with one another; for example, they can be in tension with the self, with other people, or the culture/context within which they occur. Each listening amplifies a different aspect of the person’s voice. Gilligan et al. (2003) explain that each step is termed a “listening” in lieu of a “reading” as the process of data analysis requires the

active participation of both the listener and the teller. The following section describes the four listenings that were conducted in order to analyze the data for this study.

Step 1: Listening for the Plot

The first listening allows the informants' story to be heard, which is an important principle of feminist research (Marx, 2001) and includes listening to the plot and the characters as described by the informants (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). The purpose of this analysis is to develop a descriptive account of each informant's experience of doing collaborative work. This consists of listening to what has happened and/or what stories are being shared. In addition, I focused on the use of the terms "them" or "they" in the interview transcript which demonstrates how the informants perceive themselves in relation to CAS. At this stage I also paid attention to repeated images such as recurrent words or images, central metaphors, dominant themes, contradictions, revisions and/or absences. In institutional ethnography the recurring use of words show a pattern in the world which demonstrates that the world is organized in a particular way to recur (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). In order to facilitate the data analysis for the first listening, I found it useful to write down in bullet point all the focus areas described above and kept the piece of paper to review during the listening. When writing up the findings for this listening, I attempted to select and include excerpts from a variety of informants to allow many voices to be heard and to include quotations that both supported and did not support the theme presented.

In qualitative research and in the listening guide approach, it is also important for the researcher to be reflexive; in the first listening the researcher notes her own reactions of what is being said by the informant in order to understand her relationship to the data (Brown & Gilligan, 1993; Byrne, Canavan, & Miller, 2009). Being reflexive allows the researcher to identify her own position as a researcher as well as acknowledge any bias and assumptions she

may have during data collection and data analysis. This required me, as a researcher, to reflect on my own complex social location as well as my own personal and intellectual goals before and while conducting interviews and analyzing data (Reinharz & Chase, 2001). There is a focus on reflexivity in this listening due to the belief that researchers are unable to be neutral or objective observers. We identify our own responses in the hope that we will not confuse our own experiences with the experiences of our informants, and to provide an account of how data was analyzed and how a written account was produced (Gilligan et al., 2003; Tolman, 2001; Walby, 2013).

Step 2: I Poems

The second listening involves focusing on how the informants narrate a “sense of self” – how the informants speak about themselves (Walby, 2013, p. 146). This step is also known as focusing on the voice of the “I” and is seen as appropriate for feminist studies where the goal is to comprehend another person’s reality (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). In this listening, researchers are expected to focus on the informants’ use of the term “I” and create I poems (Gilligan et al, 2003; Edwards & Weller, 2012). There are two steps to creating I poems: (1) read the interview transcript and highlight or underline phrases containing “I”, “my”, and “me”; and (2) cut and paste the highlighted phrases into separate lines; like in a poem, it is important that the sentences or lines remain in the exact sequence as they occurred in the interview (Gilligan et al, 2003; Edwards & Weller, 2012; Paladielis & Cruickshank, 2008). This listening allows the researcher to identify the voices of the informants, and creates a space for the informants to speak about themselves before the researcher speaks of them and begins to focus on the organizational structures and powers (Brown & Gilligan, 1992).

Compared to the other data analysis steps, I found the data analysis for this listening to be the quickest to complete as I was able to quickly highlight all sentences containing the pronouns “I”, “my”, and “me”. It rapidly became apparent that most informants rarely used the pronoun “I”. Thus, only excerpts where the informants repeatedly used the pronoun “I” were transformed into I poems. The I poems were themed and organized with the findings from the first listening. I found it useful to combine the first and second listenings to allow the informants accounts to be included and heard within the themes. In addition to creating I poems with the pronoun “I”, it was interesting to create I poems with the pronouns “we” and “they” to demonstrate how VAW workers see themselves in comparison to CAS. I found I poems to be a creative and interesting avenue to present informants’ perceptions. It was important to present I poems from as many informants as possible; however, quotations were transformed into I poems when they were able to demonstrate the informants’ perceptions more clearly using that method than through quotations.

Step 3: Listening for Relations, Texts and Mapping

Institutional ethnography and the listening guide approach share the goal of understanding social relations (Walby, 2013). The first two listenings are at the foundation of the listening guide approach since all researchers using this method undertake these steps. However, in addition to these two listenings, I conducted two further listenings that were relevant to my research topic. Similar to Brown and Gilligan (1991) my third listening focused on relations. Here the focus is on the “relational narrated subjects” where individuals are part of networks of relations with other people, agencies, or texts (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008, p. 406). In my case, this reading focused on the connections between work processes. One of the goals of this research was to better understand how the collaboration agreement between CAS and VAW

agencies affects how frontline VAW staff work with women and children who have experienced domestic violence and this listening allowed me to listen for how actions are mediated by the collaboration agreement specifically by paying attention to informants' experiences working in collaboration with CAS. In the third listening, I paid close attention to how informants spoke about their coordinated action or processes with CAS and their clients. Through this listening I began to understand the ruling relations that are textually mediated. I found that this listening was the most time consuming due to the various elements and questions that I sought to answer. Similar to the first listening, I found it useful to write down in bullet point all the focus areas described above to reference and review during the listening.

Some institutional ethnography studies produce maps of the institutional complexes in which the informants participate (Smith, 2005b). While conducting the third listening, in addition to paying attention to the social relations, I began to map these institutional social relations in terms of how the activities of frontline VAW workers are connected to the activities of other people. I did this by taking data excerpts from my transcripts and pasting them onto large sheets of poster paper. This process was helpful to visualize the organization of an ordinary day a of VAW worker and also to begin to see how their work is connected to the work of CAS. Maps are produced by institutional ethnographers to provide a visual display of how people are connected but also “where in the organisational process their experiences disappear from view” (Walby, 2013, p. 144). Although not every institutional ethnography study is portrayed with maps, the institutional analysis portrayed graphically describes critically the social practices and social relations that can be changed. When writing the findings for this section, I used the map as a guide to structure the chapter and to organize the presentation of the quotations. Similar to the first two listenings, excerpts were selected systematically by grouping them into themes and then

including various informants' perceptions when describing the theme. In addition, I included quotations that did not support the theme being presented.

Step 4: Listening for Social Structures and Cultural Contexts

The final listening conducted for this research focused on the context in which the informants' stories took place, by placing their accounts and experiences within broader cultural, societal, and structural contexts (Paliadelis & Cruickshank, 2008). In this fourth listening, I listened to how informants described the structural forces as enabling and/or constraining. For example, "did they recognize them (structural forces) as such or accept them as 'personal' and 'private' troubles rather than as more 'public and socially located ills'?" (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 132). Structural forces can be specific social and political contexts and structures in which the informant is located, and that shape their sense of self (Edwards & Weller, 2012). Examples of structural forces in the context of CAS and VAW collaborations includes legislative power of CAS and the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and the imposition of policies by the Ministry of Child and Family Service which impact frontline workers. I also listened to the ideological context of collaborating with CAS, particularly, how frontline VAW workers' accounts reflect dominant or normative conceptions of CAS. For example, the use of the terms 'good', 'bad', 'should', 'right' and 'wrong' indicate where the informants are speaking through the cultural values and norms (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). This final listening was guided by my theoretical commitments. The fourth stage of analysis demonstrates how narratives are shaped by social forces and cultural discourses – narrative is not simply an individual's own personal expression (Walby, 2013). This listening was interesting to analyze due to its macro context.

Summary

This research study adopted Dorothy Smith's institutional ethnography as a feminist theoretical framework. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight VAW frontline workers to understand how the collaboration agreement affects their daily experiences working with women who have experienced domestic violence. This chapter explored how institutional ethnography and the listening guide approach correspond to each other and how the interview data was analyzed using the listening guide approach. In a feminist study like this one, it is important for the data analysis method to uncover the multiple layers of understanding such as the informants' voice, the social relations, relations of ruling, and broader cultural and structural contexts all of which are the goal of the listening guide approach. The next chapter will begin to present the findings of this study and describe the VAW informants' narratives and standpoints.

Chapter 4: Frontline VAW Workers' Narratives & Standpoints

According to the listening guide approach, the first two data analysis listenings consist of (1) listening for the plot; and (2) I poems. These listenings focus primarily on the narrative and standpoint of the violence against women (VAW) informants and allows the informants' experiences, opinions, and feelings to be included in the findings. This chapter is divided into the following three sections which demonstrate the themes, repetitive images, and recurrent words: (1) how the informants describe the Ottawa Children's Aid Society (CAS); (2) the informants' understanding of the collaboration agreement; and (3) the informants' description of experiences doing collaboration with CAS. This chapter also includes the researcher's own reactions and interpretations of what is being said by the informants to demonstrate reflexivity. Direct quotations and I poems are used within these sections to allow the informants to narrate a "sense of self" (Walby, 2013, p. 146).

How the Informants Describe CAS

This section demonstrates how the informants described CAS. Through their accounts I was better able to understand how CAS workers are viewed by the VAW informants. Informants described CAS as the people with the child protection mandate, the people with the power, an organization which lacks consistency, and an organization that has shifted and evolved.

The people with the child protection mandate

Although CAS does in fact have a child protection mandate, some VAW informants described CAS workers as "the people with the facts" and the people who have a child protection mandate or child protection concerns. Meredith describes and understands CAS workers as those with the child protection concerns: "It is what they do is screening on protection concerns". In

the following excerpt Meredith describes the differences between VAW agencies and CAS which creates an “us” versus “them” dichotomy. Although this excerpt does not contain the word “I”, each instance of “we” or “they” is underlined with the associated text or accompanying verb to construct a poem.

We are advocates for moms and kids. So we, uhm, we are... if the mother comes to us and says that I’ve been abused, this is happening to me, the kids witnessed this... and if the kids witness violence then we don’t verify facts, we are not the people with the facts or with the stamps, we are counsellors, therapists, so we work through the feelings. Actually we believe that the client tells us the story that is their story and how they feel about their experiences. While the CAS, because they have the protection mandate, then they look at facts: is the kid at risk or not? ok. The kid says I’m scared of dad, but what are the signs? Are there any bruises? Is the kid locked up in the basement? Is this happening? Is this happening? No? Oh, then maybe the kids will be scared. Probably is scared but it’s not a concern for us... So the CAS worker needs to show that both parents make progress in their parenting skills and what CAS has asked them to do, maybe attending parenting classes or anything else. So they have the facts. We ask the parents to do this, they did this.

The following poem is produced by extracting the underlined “we” and “they” portions of the quote above:

We are advocates
We are
We don’t verify facts
We are not the people with the facts
We are counsellors
We work through the feelings
We believe
They have the protection mandate
They look at facts
They have the facts

This poem demonstrates how Meredith describes VAW agencies and VAW workers as advocates who work through feelings and believe in their clients’ stories. On the other hand, this poem also demonstrates how Meredith describes CAS workers as the people with a protection mandate and the people with the facts. Meredith’s narrative reinforces an “us” versus “them”

dichotomy. Although Meredith does not suggest that VAW workers are the “good guys” and by default CAS workers are the enemy or “bad guys”, this poem exhibits a dichotomous view of the CAS and VAW realities. Through this account it is understood that CAS and VAW agencies have philosophical differences.

Christina also perceives differences in CAS and VAW mandates and describes CAS’s protection mandate as a strict mandate that in turn can lead to poor outcomes for women and their children:

From my frame of reference, the violence against women, in families impacts every aspect of that woman and family’s life. Right? So, you can’t just isolate the violence as one piece that you need to work on, you need to work from a holistic piece because every aspect of her life is impacted. Whereas, CAS comes at it, well this is their narrow mandate, it’s about child protection and what do we need to do to ensure that children are protected. CAS is firmly focused on protecting the child, whatever that looks like. Whatever issues or concerns they have in relationship with this family, their mandate is to protect the child. I think there are fundamental, philosophical differences about the issue of violence against women that make collaboration very difficult between the two agencies, and I think that there are, the mandates that exist for a child protection agency and a VAW agency also kind of put us at odds in terms of being able to collaboratively work together. (Christina)

In this excerpt, Christina describes that in comparison to VAW agencies, CAS has a different work philosophy that focuses solely on protecting children. Christina’s description of CAS as the people with a child protection mandate is described negatively because the focus is on child protection exclusively and women and children who experience domestic violence are not provided the necessary supports. Christina and Meredith’s accounts echo findings in other studies that describes one of the barriers to collaboration as the differing and conflicting philosophies (Beeman & Edleson, 2000; Stanley & Humphreys, 2014).

CAS’s child protection mandate was also described as an important function. As described by Meredith, the child protection concern is important for CAS to have because in

incidents where child abuse is not acknowledged by CAS it leaves the VAW worker in a difficult situation:

Then that impacts me, because I'm going home and I'm still thinking what can I do for that kid? How can I make sure that the kid is safe? And that shouldn't be my role. That's not my role. The protection role is not mine, but then it falls back on me. Like, because I have to make sure... to ensure that the kids... like I have to teach mom and the kids how to protect themselves. (Meredith)

Meredith's account describing the importance of the CAS child protection mandate differs from perceptions cited in the literature which describe CAS's exclusive child protection mandate as a barrier to collaboration (Beeman & Edleson, 2000).

Christina and Meredith's views demonstrate the tensions that CAS and VAW agencies face. The informants criticize the CAS workers as having a narrow interpretation of their mandates even though CAS's legislative mandates are integral to protect children from abuse. Although the views and opinions vary on whether CAS's legislative mandates are positive or negative, VAW informants describe CAS as the people with the child protection mandate.

Power

The next characteristic used to describe CAS is powerful. Several informants described CAS as the people with the legislated power and power to remove children as compared to VAW agencies or VAW workers who have no legislated power. Power held by CAS is described both positively and negatively. For example, contrary to the literature which describes the imbalance of power between agencies as a barrier to collaboration (Lessard et al., 2010; Potito et al., 2009), Amelia explains that because she has less power than CAS she is less threatening to the woman. In this short excerpt, Amelia demonstrates how she describes CAS: "The power that CAS is seen to have, uhm, and I don't have that same relationship with my clients". In a separate excerpt Amelia describes the power dynamics further "She [the client] was getting upset when I was

explaining to her what CAS said but I could at least present it in a way because I was less threatening to her than her CAS worker was cause she's not seeing me as having the same power." Here Amelia distinguishes herself from CAS as being less threatening to her client than a CAS worker. The way in which Amelia describes CAS as having power demonstrates that mothers may be threatened by CAS or may fear CAS because they have the power to remove children from their homes. However, the power that CAS has was also described as being beneficial to both the VAW agencies and the children.

Children's Aid have all the powers to say these children need to go to a child witness program and they can put that as a condition and so the children would be able to get that support. (April)

The perception that CAS's power to enforce women and children to access appropriate services is a benefit is not presented in the literature. This finding contributes a new theme to the literature that demonstrates the importance of the power that CAS has to enforce access to community services through child witness programs. This is important for VAW agencies as they require clients to be referred to their programs and are also necessary for children "in order to teach kids how to be safe and sort of understand that all this is not their fault" (April). The power that CAS has is engrained within the organization. As described by Christina, "CAS says boom this is what it is, there's not a lot of leeway or variation, and there's not a lot of room within the individual worker's capacity to challenge or change that." Another reason CAS is described as having power is due to their position as a statutory agency. Olivia describes a dichotomy between CAS and VAW agencies:

There lies some of the tension as CAS is mandated and our services are voluntary. So how do you, how do you manage that tension? So, we often say to women, so CAS is going to want you to see somebody, right, why not let it be us? Basically is how we present it. (Olivia)

In this excerpt Olivia emphasizes the voluntary nature of VAW agencies in contrast to CAS whose services are involuntary. These findings are consistent with the literature which presents the imbalance of power between agencies as a barrier to collaboration as VAW agencies are non-profit organizations and therefore may feel less powerful working with a government funded child protection agency (Lessard et al., 2010; Potito et al., 2009). Although, contrary to the literature, the power that CAS has is perceived as resulting in both positive and negative experiences for mothers and VAW workers. For example, CAS has the power to remove children from their home yet also have the power to mandate mothers and children to seek support from VAW or other community based organizations.

Lack of Consistency

Callie specifically describes CAS as an organization with no consistency. This finding contributes a new theme to the literature. In the following excerpts, Callie explains how CAS provides inconsistent information and inconsistent responses in situations involving domestic violence:

There was no consistent, reliable, uh information that I could share to a woman saying “well this is more likely how they are going to react” or “yes they will take that seriously” or “no they won't” you know, or “this is what they might do”. uhm... so, a lot of inconsistency. (Callie)

Sometimes the women will report things to me, that are concerning and then uhm... sometimes uhm.. yah. The response to those events are not always uhm... consistent from CAS. Meaning that some CAS workers will... uhm... to me, in my point of view will have very similar concerns, uh but other CAS files or workers not so much. And those will have an impact on the general custody and access case in family law. (Callie)

In Callie's last excerpt, she explains that depending on which CAS worker is working with the client, different information or concerns are identified that may be or may not be similar to her own concerns. Therefore, CAS's responses to cases involving domestic violence may depend on

the particular CAS worker. Other informants describe how collaboration can be successful or unsuccessful depending on the particular CAS worker assigned to a case.

You know, it's just a particular worker. It's not the collaboration agreement per se. I think it's just particular workers, sometimes. Uhm... and the other time it doesn't work and this isn't so much the collaboration agreement as CAS in general. (Alicia)

I'm sure that all of us have had, all VAW counsellors probably have had times over the years where uhm... the [CAS] worker really did not have a good understand of violence against women and uhm... but I think that happens less often now. (Amelia)

Some informants described CAS as lacking consistency in their information and responses and this may be due to individual differences between CAS workers. These findings suggest that in order to have successful collaborations, individual differences between CAS workers can be resolved if CAS and VAW workers can work as a group, develop appropriate skills, and develop and maintain a rapport which will result in working effectively together (Zanettino & McLaren, 2014).

CAS has Shifted and Evolved

Most informants described CAS as an organization that has evolved and shifted from its gender-neutral understanding of domestic violence to an organization that understands the dynamics of abuse and understands that women's safety is directly linked to the children's safety. I begin with an excerpt from Callie's interview which describes CAS's philosophical shift that became noticeable after the introduction of the collaboration agreement. Each instance of "I" is underlined with the associated text to construct a poem.

CAS has evolved so especially since they have created the VAW team and uhm, I think they changed quite a bit since the beginning, in terms of understanding the dynamics of abuse, understanding that the woman's safety is related to the children's safety. So, which was not necessarily the case at the beginning. They would, uhm, I think their approach was much more... was more harsh, you know... yah... at the beginning. I strongly believe that uh if you increase the safety of the women, you are also increasing the safety of the children. And I think that's the perspective that was shifted at CAS. (Callie)

The following poem is produced by extracting the underlined “I” portions of the quote above:

I think they changed quite a bit
I think their approach was much more... was more harsh
I strongly believe that uh if you increase the safety of the women, you are also increasing
the safety of the children
I think that’s the perspective that was shifted at CAS

This poem demonstrates how in Callie’s opinion (“I think”) CAS has shifted from a harsh approach to an organization that understands that women’s safety helps increase children’s safety. This finding is consistent with the literature that describes the implementation of interagency collaborations and the importance of both agencies having a common mission which begins with keeping both women and children safe (Findlater & Kelly, 1999; Moles, 2008). In order to accomplish this common mission a shift in CAS from being child-focused to child and women-centered is required. Informants describe CAS as making this positive shift. For example, Christina agrees that CAS now has a better understanding of the dynamics of abuse: “I think there is a greater level of understanding at the CAS about the dynamics of abusive relationship and how women are impacted by that.” VAW informants describe CAS as an organization that has shifted because they are now able to see women as protective of their children and less blaming towards mothers:

Now we see CAS workers doing safety plans with them, they come here they already have a safety plan done. Some sort of safety plan that focused on her and it’s not you know, it’s less blaming to mothers. I think there is a big shift. I think shifting that perspective uhm... I think is involving the mothers a lot more and less blaming, empowering them and encouraging them to connect with the community. (Callie)

They are still seeing women as protective of their children maybe instead of whereas before if a woman wasn’t leaving they were seeing them as not being protective and women could have been more at risk of losing their children. (Amelia)

These excerpts demonstrate how the informants compare and contrast how CAS has changed the way they respond to and work with women who have experienced domestic violence. Other

VAW informants describe CAS as having shifted because CAS workers provide support and are helpful to mothers. This is seen as a shift because CAS workers are historically viewed as punitive and blaming of women who have experienced violence.

They are more supportive of the woman, you know, and they are not, they don't come across quite as threateningly to the woman, to the client because uhm... they have a much clearer understanding of VAW issues and they understand that by the woman being here in this shelter that she is, she has taken the first step to make her children safe, therefore they work more positively with the woman to, to support her rather than make her feel concerned that they will take her kids away... In the last few years I found that they're ... uh they're just much more positive uhm... towards those steps that women are taking. Uhm... that they're, they work more with the woman to find solutions... uhm... they work with the woman to find uhm... just, I don't know, just to make the woman feel safer. They seem to be more uhm... able to believe that the woman is telling the truth about the abuse. (Alicia)

Because what would happen in the old days was they would drive women underground by this sort of punitive approach women would hide from them, but now women would say this person is helpful to me, and I'm going to work with her, and she's going to help me do whatever. Which is hugely way better, so uhm. So that's the potential of the agreement is to actually change the way they do business and we see a pretty substantial portion of the women out there but there are tons of women who never have any contact with any services, so those women need a CAS worker that does it right too right? (Miranda)

Here CAS is described as working with women to find solutions. This shift is viewed positively by the VAW informants. Consistent with the literary, most of the changes or shifts described in this section can be attributed to VAW or domestic violence training.

I think the collaboration agreement is a good thing, for sure. I think it's really really improved, uhm... CAS's knowledge about VAW and the impact on mothers and children. Uhm... I think it's uhh encouraged them to continue training their own staff about it. I think it's made it a lot easier for us to have a relationship with CAS workers, individual workers. (Alicia)

In this excerpt Alicia describes the improvements that CAS has made since the introduction of the collaboration agreement and how these improvements are a result of training CAS workers about VAW issues and their impacts on women and children. In this section informants

described how CAS has shifted and evolved as a result of CAS workers being more knowledgeable in abuse dynamics, VAW issues and understanding that mothers' safety is linked to children's safety.

This section has focused on how VAW informants describe CAS workers and the agency itself. Through these descriptions it is apparent that CAS is described in positive and negative terms. Overall, informants described CAS as the people with the facts and with the child protection mandate, the people with the power, and an organization that lacks consistency but has shifted and evolved.

Understanding of the Collaboration Agreement

For this study an integral part to the plot is the informants' understanding of the collaboration agreement. Each interview began by asking the informants to describe their understanding of the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement. Most informants indicated that the collaboration agreement is intended to allow CAS and VAW agencies to work together:

I think the collaboration is to make sure that, uhm, that we work together, uhm, that we are not working in silos ... the purpose in my view is to increase accountability to, uhm, to the community, to the children, to the women, and uhm, increase safety of both women and children. (Callie)

Basically it's a protocol to be able to work together ... basically we should be working more closely and trusting CAS and they should be working more closely and trusting us in our expertise. That's how it should be. (April)

I understand the collaborative agreement as a tool to assist the two agencies with very differing mandates and very differing ideas about how to do this work, as a tool to assist us to work better together to ideally assist women and children. (Christina)

My goodness... I guess it's kind of a protocol between VAW agencies and Children's Aid to, uhhh, I guess an education piece for both VAW, a mutual education piece, an agreement so that we work, so that we are able to work more closely to support the women who are experiencing VAW issues as well as, uhm, reportable children abuse issues. (Alicia)

In these direct quotations and consistent with the literature on collaboration, the informants perceive that the purpose of working together is to support and assist women and children and to increase their safety. This perception is congruent with the guiding values and beliefs outlined in the collaboration agreement document itself which states: “Working together increases safety for women and children and decreases chances of re-victimization” (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 6). This guiding value is parallel to the results in other studies which presents the first principle for effective collaboration as having a common mission or goal which begins with the safety of both the mother and the child (Beeman & Edleson, 2000; Potito et al., 2009).

A contrasting response was provided by Miranda who understood that the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement was created in order to change CAS’s response to violence against women:

The problem was the CAS response to violence against women, that’s what needed to change. That’s not to say that there aren’t many many problems with the way that VAW does things. I could spend 3 days listing those things for you. But that’s not what that project was about, and CAS doesn’t have a lot to offer VAW in terms of what we do wrong. (Miranda)

Miranda’s standpoint was connected to her participation and work on the liaison committee. As a participant in the liaison committee, she was able to provide insight on why her understanding of the collaboration agreement differed from other frontline VAW staff. Miranda’s excerpt describes a project that is one-sided, to change the way CAS responds to domestic violence. This excerpt demonstrates a contrasting interpretation of the collaboration agreement.

Unlike the literature on interagency collaborations, this study aimed at uncovering the informants understand of the collaboration agreement. In seeking the informants’ understanding of the collaboration agreement, the informants differed in their familiarity and knowledge of the information located in the collaboration agreement itself. According to Meredith the

collaboration agreement is not a document that she or her organization reviews or examines: “This collaboration agreement, uhm, is not something we, we use in our work.” In listening to Meredith’s story, a singular (I) and plural (we) first person voice was identified through the narrative. The following excerpt below seems to best reflect Meredith’s positioning towards herself (I) and her agency of employment (we). Each instance of “I” or “we” is underlined with the associated text or accompanying verb to construct a poem.

It is not really how long have I been working with this agreement because this collaboration agreement, uhm, was, is not something we ... we use in our work... it’s not ... I’ve never seen a paper of this agreement. So there is no ... well, I was not part of the committee that worked on this agreement so I ... we don’t use the paper. We know how the team works. (Meredith)

The following I poem is produced by extracting the underlined “I” and “we” portions of the quote above:

I been working
We
We use
I’ve never seen
I was not part
I
We don’t use
We know

Reading this poem helped me to develop an understanding of how Meredith positions herself, both as an individual and collectively within her agency, as it relates to her experience of working with the collaboration agreement. For example, in this particular poem, I observe Meredith’s back and forth shift from speaking from her own experience (“I been working”) to that of her agency of employment (“we use”). In her experiences I hear her justifying not working with the collaboration agreement as not being an individual experience but an overarching agency of employment experience. By focusing on the agency, her experiences are

presented as credible because she describes the entire agency as having this experience with the collaboration agreement.

Other informants echoed similar experiences in feeling like they were not familiar with the collaboration agreement. For example, Callie states “I feel like I don’t know the agreement at all (hahaha)”. When asked how does CAS and VAW agencies collaborate, Alicia replied, “I should have studied for this.” The informants’ unfamiliarity with the collaboration agreement document came as a surprise to me. Being reflexive, I realized that I expected all informants to be familiar and knowledgeable about the contents of the agreement that is designed to guide their work. It was surprising that there were informants who were not familiar with the agreement when the knowledge and use of the agreement was a recruitment criteria outlined in the recruitment text. In reflection, it is possible that the informants were eager to participate in the study because (a) their agency of employment is listed under the collaboration agreement; (b) they are aware of the agreement and that it governs their work; and/or (c) they communicate and work with CAS on a daily basis irrespective of their awareness or the contents of the document itself. Miranda expressed the view that the collaboration agreement was simply a document that all the agencies signed but did not know what was located in the actual agreement: “I think it was just an agreement that people signed, I bet you nobody in the network could even cite what’s in it.” Olivia expressed a similar understanding when asked whether VAW workers refer to the collaboration agreement when working with their clients:

I feel confident to say no. I think they know it exists and I think some will interpret their work as following this but I don’t believe this is a living document for the most part. Uh... I think if specific agencies or specific workers they would take it upon themselves to do it, I don’t know if its engrained in the sector to refer to this, same as CAS. I don’t know how many workers actually know this exists. So that’s kinda the struggle I guess.

The following I poem is created by extracting the underlined “I” portions from the excerpt:

I feel confident
I think
I think
I don't believe
I think
I don't know
I don't know
I guess

Reading this poem helped me to understand that Olivia was not sure and not confident about how other VAW agencies use the collaboration agreement in their work. This is primarily indicated in her repetition of “I think” and “I don't know”. In terms of her own experiences, Olivia indicated that she refers to and reviews the collaboration agreement: “I've got so many copies of it laying around, I never know where to actually grab one from.” Christina also shared that she has read the collaboration agreement: “I know we have this agreement and I know I've looked at, I've read it.” Among the informants only Olivia and Christina shared that they had read the collaboration agreement document.

This section demonstrates the varying understandings of and exposure to the collaboration agreement. Most informants understand the collaboration agreement as a tool to help both CAS and VAW agencies to work together to increase the safety of both women and children. This information adds to the literature on collaboration agreements as this study found that informants varied in their familiarity and exposure to the collaboration agreement document; some indicated that they have not read the document in their work while others indicated that they have reviewed and read the document.

Description of Experience Doing Collaboration

The previous section was intended to allow the informants to describe their understanding of the collaboration agreement. Unlike the literature presented in Chapter 2, this section begins to

develop a descriptive account of informants' experiences of doing collaboration work by listening to what has happened during collaboration and what stories are being shared. How collaboration occurs depends on the situations present and one of the first themes that emerged is the idea that collaboration is "case by case".

The theme of "case by case" is introduced by Meredith: "Our work together with CAS is actually case by case with the consent of the client." Working with CAS is described as case by case because collaboration depends on several different factors. For example, when asked who initiates contact for collaboration Callie stated the following:

It depends. Sometimes it's me. Sometimes it's CAS. Uhh... Yah if CAS has, if they have a specific referral to meet with me. They tend to contact me if they want to figure out when the next group is, what services exactly we have, what can we offer, if we have a waiting list. Uh sometimes if it is a very complex situation, uhm... I've been trying to set up a case conference where all the players are at the table and we are trying to figure out, you know, safety for this family in particular. So I think it has been mixed. Sometimes it's CAS, sometimes it's me, or us... VAW workers. (Callie)

Callie demonstrates that at the beginning of the collaboration where someone – either the CAS worker or the VAW worker – initiates contact depends on several factors. Miranda provides a similar answer when asked why VAW workers contact CAS:

It depends how well or badly they are doing. So, uhm, we may ask for a meeting with them with the women to talk about what's going on and what our concerns might be, uh, what resources they can offer to assist the woman better than what they are offering her right now, if they aren't already doing that. We might... so it depends on the nature of the involvement and what they're doing and whether they are doing a good job or a bad job in our view and what we think they could be doing differently and so. We will try to sort of initiate and support that process. (Miranda)

Miranda's excerpt demonstrates that contact with CAS is case by case or depends on the VAW worker's interpretation of the CAS worker's work with the client. Here the initiation of collaboration depends on the VAW and CAS workers. The opportunity for VAW workers to participate in collaboration can also, as described by Alicia, depend on the client:

It depends on the woman too. Sometimes she's really clear on what she needs to do and how she wants to interact with CAS and sometimes, uhh, sometimes the woman doesn't want us to have the information that CAS has and she doesn't want us to be involved because she... there's a lot of different reasons. She just doesn't want our support, she doesn't want us at the table, she doesn't want us to have access to certain information.
(Alicia)

Alicia's excerpt demonstrates how collaboration can depend on the woman, her situation and what she wants. Most of the excerpts presented here demonstrate that the informants use "it depends" to explain that collaboration between the agencies is on a case by case basis. The theme of case by case or "it depends" is an account that is expected when working with people as every individual, whether it is the client or worker, has different ideas, experiences, and goals yet is a finding that is not presented in the literature on interagency collaboration.

The remainder of this section has been divided and will describe both positive and negative experiences of collaboration. The interviews elicited both positive and negative experiences; however, the type of response provided was different. For example, positive experiences were told through stories while negative experiences described certain features or characteristics that made a particular experience negative.

Positive Experience

When listening to the plot of the interviews, informants generally described more positive experiences of collaboration with CAS workers than negative experiences. For example, Meredith states "I think our experience, here at my organization is that we do have a really good working relationship." This experience was endorsed by several informants in the quotations that follow. The first successful collaboration story is told by April who describes a young woman's journey through a VAW program and CAS involvement:

She was referred to the program, she was a young woman, two young kids, uhm, with an ex-partner who had a mental health problem. Very violent towards her, very violent

towards the kids as well and so she was able to, uh. She also grew up in a very violent home, uh... brilliant young woman. Never had a chance, never finished school. Uhm... uh... so she was referred to the program, and uhm, was able to with her worker be able to get more supports for her to be able to go back to school, be able to go through the support group. All the women in the support group just kept giving her compliments, giving her positive feedback all the time. And she was able to because she had good contact with CAS, good contact with us, with VAW. During the times in the support group she met a new partner, well not a partner but a new boyfriend and was able to talk through that relationship. She felt safe in that relationship, in talking this through and decided by herself that this guy was not good for her and was able to with all the tools she learned in the group but also the fact that she had two people with whom she could talk to. Like myself and CAS worker. She was able to just be able to list why this person was not safe for her. And so was able to flush and be able to continue you know. So this is important because her children are young, so she was able to keep herself safe and her children safe. So... uhm, I think that was a good collaboration because it meant a lot of ... it meant trusting on her part, it meant trusting as well on my part (haha) and you know, for CAS as well to be able to trust and see and be able to give her the space to be able to ... discover for herself what this meant. (April)

April describes this experience as a successful collaboration because the woman, the VAW worker, and the CAS worker were able to communicate effectively together and were able to trust each other and trust the process in order for the woman to work through her challenges and to make positive decisions about her life. This finding supports previous research which describes the need for effective cooperation and communication between sectors in order to ensure positive outcomes (Beeman & Edleson, 2000; Stanely & Humphreys, 2014). In April's story, CAS is trusted and not feared by the woman which is seen as positive due to the historical fear that woman have of CAS.

Consistent with the literature on interagency collaborations, trust was also identified by other VAW informants as a key component to the success of collaboration between CAS and VAW agencies (Potito et al., 2009). Olivia perceives that "collaboration is hard. Relationship building is hard especially when you have a history of mistrust". In the next excerpt Olivia explains her understanding of the history of mistrust and why development of trust is and has been an integral element of collaboration:

Historically there's a lot of mistrust between the two sectors. CAS has and again these are generalizations right, of course every worker is different but generally uhm... there has been mistrust. So CAS feeling and thinking that VAW doesn't care about the welfare of the children because they are only there to support mom and that sometimes the children can be put at risk because of that. VAW on the other hand has a history of mistrust for CAS believing that they don't take moms safety into consideration; they only focus on the children. Uhm... so as a part of the collaboration agreement, as part of the work that our team does is really bringing those two pieces together and saying actually if you keep mom safe you keep children safe so there is a role for both of us at the table. (Olivia)

This excerpt supports previous research that describes the relationship between CAS and VAW agencies as involved mistrust (Beeman & Edleson, 2000; Echlin & Osthoff, 2000). When discussing the collaboration work between CAS and VAW agencies, informants repeatedly used the term "trust" to explain how the relationship should be or how it has changed. For example, April explains that "with the collaboration basically we should be working more closely and trusting CAS and they should be working more closely and trusting us in our expertise. That's how it should be." The term "trust" was repeatedly used amongst the VAW informants and is an important theme that is described in these findings and in the literature to describe the requirements for a successful collaboration.

This next positive experience of collaboration is described by Amelia who explains how she communicated and collaborated with a CAS worker in order to better support her client. Each instance of "I" is underlined with the associated text to construct a poem.

There's one client who, you know, she was a young woman, uhm, she had uhm, Children's Aid had referred her here, uhm, so you know there was a bit of trust that had to be negotiated to begin with. But she was coming regularly and her child was not in her care at that time. Uhm... and she obviously wanted to have her child returned. Her partner was fairly dangerous so Children's Aid really wanted her to understand the risk and to stay away from her partner but she became pregnant during the time so they knew, you know. So CAS was very concerned and there was a risk of her losing, uhm, not only the child that was in care but also losing the child that she was pregnant with when the child was born. So, and she was refusing to say that she was going to stay away from her partner. Uhm... so that was a huge risk for Children's Aid, and it was so, and so I was talking with her CAS worker and uhm her CAS worker was telling me the concerns and I was understanding CAS concerns and trying to work with my client but my client uhm...

and that collaboration actually uhm... it was a good thing that the three of us didn't meet in one room because my client would have been very resistant and probably would have just gotten angry in the room. But because I had the conversation with her worker outside of that and then I met with her, with my client later, uhm... she was getting upset when I was explaining to her what CAS said but I could I could at least present it in a way because I was less threatening to her than her CAS worker was cause she's not seeing me as having the same power ... you know, and we had a different relationship established. So I talked to her about uhm... you know she had a difficult childhood growing up so I worked with her to create a plan uhm... that she could present to CAS so that they could understand why she was resistant to saying she wasn't going to stay away from her partner. So she made a beautiful plan, so and you know, she would come back with it from week to week and we would work on it again. I would find little holes that she had to work on and say, "ok, why is it that this is so important to you, how did it affect you when you were growing up without your father and you don't want your child to have that same experience?" so she started out, and then I said "ok, how are you going to know if you get back together with your partner, what are going to be the warning signs that you are looking for so you're going to know that this is not working and you are not going to go further? What's your timeline? How is it ...", so that was all worked out on paper for her. She took it to her lawyer and she got her kids back. So it was beautiful. So that was uhm... you know, a really, that was a beautiful collaboration because otherwise if she hadn't been able to you know make that plan and write it out so carefully uhm... she just wouldn't... she would have gone to court and been angry and said I'm not going to stop seeing him and she may have lost her kids. (Amelia)

The following I poem is produced by extracting the underlined "I" portions of the quote above:

I was talking with her CAS worker
I was understanding CAS concerns
My client would have been very resistant
I had the conversation with her worker
Then I met with her, with my client
I was explaining to her what CAS said
I could
I could at least present it in a way
I was less threatening to her
I talked to her
I worked with her to create a plan
I would find little holes that she had to work on

Amelia's story describes a positive experience working with CAS because she was able to determine CAS's concerns and was then able to work with her client to address those concerns.

This collaboration is interesting because the VAW worker and CAS worker consulted without

the woman present. Reading this poem helped me to develop an understanding of how Amelia interprets herself in relation to her client. Amelia describes herself as “less threatening” to her client than the CAS worker and therefore was able to talk to her client and explain CAS’s concerns. This collaboration also had a positive outcome for the woman as she had her children returned to her care.

What makes collaboration positive is described differently by informants. For example, for Alicia the work between CAS and VAW agencies has been positive because she feels like she is not working alone:

It feels like I’m not working alone. You know, I have someone that I can reach out to for support and information. Uhm.. I feel that if I contact CAS that it’s not uhh... it’s not going to have a, I don’t know what the word is, a scary impact on the woman, so it’s not going to be like the wrong you know, oops why did I do that kind of phone call, because we can always consult, you know, before we report, we can consult with them. (Alicia)

These findings echo the findings in other studies that describes a component of successful/positive collaborations is the ability to consult with the other party (Zanettino & McLaren, 2014). In addition, Alicia’s feelings like she is not working alone demonstrates that she trusts CAS and feels that CAS has made progress and changes in understanding and supporting women who have experienced domestic violence.

Consistent with the literature, another important element for successful collaboration is the sharing of information (Lessard et al., 2010). Alicia states “it’s always the sharing of information I think that that promotes safety”. Sharing of information includes various activities including discussions about appropriate resources, open dialogue between CAS and VAW workers regarding the client’s circumstances, and discussions to receive clarification on CAS actions. In the following excerpts Alicia describes how information sharing occurs between CAS and VAW agencies.

The collaboration agreement facilitates the transfer of information that we are able to uhh talk openly about the issues that the woman might be facing that will benefit, that the knowledge of those issues will benefit both our work with the woman and uh the work of CAS with the woman. (Alicia)

So we're always in back and forth, the CAS worker and I are always have discussions about what might be appropriate resources for a particular client uhm... we do a lot of that. Uhm... and sometimes if CAS workers are taking steps that I don't agree with or I don't understand, you know, I feel comfortable asking why they are doing that. You know, they're not always... I don't know... I feel like they are not as free with their information as I am with my information. I think they are probably, I don't know, bound more by what they can disclose and what they can't. (Alicia)

Alicia understands that the collaboration agreement facilitates and encourages information sharing; however, in the last excerpt Alicia explains that she feels like CAS is not as free with their information as she is with hers. This finding is consistent with Lessard et al. (2010) who also found that there is unequal information sharing between child protection services and VAW agencies. This reinforces Alicia's beliefs that in order to collaborate effectively with CAS there must be equal information sharing by both sectors.

Meredith describes a positive collaboration experience where she found the CAS worker to be supportive.

The CAS worker was really supportive and we had lots of meetings – meeting with the foster mom, with mom, with CAS, with youth people involved with the child, with the child, talking about the plan of care... This CAS worker was extremely tuned into kids needs and... like he had a lot of information about the attachment issues about the witnessing violence part, about the dynamics between mom, like he was really respectful and thoughtful and very uhm... well trained in this aspect. So... and also we had a free dialogue. We could sit together and say look this is happening, this is what I have observed, and so on and so forth, and extremely open to work together in a team and kind of uhm... actually put our heads together to find out what will work best. (Meredith)

Meredith explains that in her opinion it was a positive collaboration because this particular CAS worker was well trained and possessed knowledge about domestic violence issues. In addition, the ability to have an open dialogue and to work together allowed them to determine the best options and brainstorm ideas for the woman and her children. These findings support previous

research that suggests that domestic violence training and effective communication between sectors are needed for successful collaborations (Banks et al., 2009; Cross, Mathews, Tonmyr, Scott, & Ouimet, 2012).

Being open or the openness to collaborate is a theme that several VAW informants discussed in their interviews yet is not discussed in the interagency collaboration literature and thus contributes a new theme to the literature. VAW informants describe the collaboration agreement as a tool to facilitate open conversation and an open relationship that would benefit women who have experienced domestic violence. In Olivia's interview, she repeatedly used the term "open" and "openness to engage" when describing the purpose of collaboration. She then explains: "When I keep saying open that's kind of what I'm referring to just that openness to work differently together that knowing that if you keep mom safe ultimately you keep children safe." Being open – similarly to trusting CAS – is another factor that informants perceive facilitates collaboration between the agencies.

Being open to collaboration involves being open to working together and open to having dialogue between CAS and VAW workers. In the following excerpt, Alicia understands that due to the collaboration agreement, CAS workers are more open to talking about providing support to women. Each instance of "I" or "we" is underlined with the associated text to construct a poem.

I think because of the collaboration agreement we are more easily able to access the worker, she's more open to talking to us in order to provide support. Uhm... we feel that the CAS workers are more open to uhh... I guess it's not how we work, it's just how the collaboration, I just think that the CAS workers are more open to uhm... working positively with the woman rather than... I can't explain. I'm not explaining myself very well. (Alicia)

The following I poem is produced by extracting the underlined "I" and "we" portions of the quote above:

I think because of the collaboration agreement
We are more easily able to access the worker
We feel that the CAS workers are more open
I guess it's not how we work
I just think that the CAS workers are more open
I can't explain
I'm not explaining myself very well

In this excerpt and as indicated in the poem, Alicia had difficulty describing the collaboration agreement and its impacts on the work of both VAW and CAS workers; however, she repeatedly used the term “open” to describe how CAS workers have changed since the implementation of the collaboration agreement. Amelia also discussed how the collaboration has been positive due to open dialogue: “I think it's positive that we have, that we do have a more open dialogue with CAS.” The perception that there is an open dialogue with CAS contributes a new positive finding in the interagency collaboration literature. The term “open” was a repetitive image and recurrent word used throughout the informants' interviews to describe what they believe is needed in order to have a successful partnership with CAS workers.

The collaboration agreement has played a role in making these experiences positive. For example, the collaboration agreement has encouraged CAS workers and VAW workers to consult with each other on VAW cases, to share information in order to support the client in accessing appropriate resources and services, and being open to working together to support both women and children who have experienced domestic violence. When VAW informants describe having positive collaboration experiences with CAS, positive experiences are associated with trusting CAS, having an open dialogue and sharing information, feeling like CAS is supportive and like you are not working alone, and working with CAS workers who are well trained in domestic violence issues. The following section will discuss the negative experiences of VAW informants.

Negative Experience

Although most informants were able to describe positive experiences of collaboration, most also described negative experiences. Specifically, April and Christina felt that their experiences were more negative than positive. At the beginning of April's interview she stated, "right from the start my experience is not that positive". The following direct quotation explains why April states that she has had a negative experience with CAS:

Now they have a new term which is "high conflict". High conflict separation and divorce. So with these two different terms floating around CAS it's as if they're ... it's a lot easier to say well this situation is high conflict as oppose to violence against women because it's just a lot easier to just say well (pew) we can put the blame on both as oppose to looking at who, who is the perpetrator, or who has more power in this situation. (April)

The use of the term "high conflict" suggests that CAS workers have a gender-neutral understanding of domestic violence. In the following excerpt April describes how CAS's use of term "high conflict" in domestic violence situations has resulted in unsuccessful collaborations.

It's this whole frigging violence against women high conflict issue. That is a real royal pain. Even though there's some evidence that there is violence, whether it's sexual violence, whether it's physical violence, whether it's uhh psychological violence, there is evidence of this, it's still classified as high conflict. This, my dear, drives me right up the wall. Because what happens is that when you call in a situation, and it's happened to me just in the last month, "ohh her again" you know, "I'm gunna call her at the end of the 7 days because there's nothing there, it's just, she just wants to get him in trouble" No! The children say they have been hit by him, there's a bruise. You know, so, it's very uhh, it's very difficult because, and I understand why they do it. If I was a CAS worker it would just be easier to say he said she said, just crap. (April)

Through April's experience I understand that the term "high conflict" is used by CAS workers to describe situations that are not classified as domestic violence but instead classified as conflictual situations between divorcing or separating parents. The term "high conflict" was not found in the literature and thus contributes a new finding to the current literature on interagency collaboration and specifically demonstrates the terminology used within CAS that can diminish or halt any collaborative initiative. This reflects that CAS workers ignore gendered power

relations that perpetuate negative outcomes for women who experience domestic violence. April also understands that by using the term high conflict, collaboration cannot occur:

For them it's a non-issue. For them... I mean to them there's no child protection issue. It's just he said she said. And so if they're going into the investigation thinking there is no issue what are they going to find? Nothing. (April)

The frustration with CAS workers who described domestic violence situations as "high conflict" situations is a theme amongst several VAW informants. Meredith also explains her experience of unsuccessful collaborations when inexperienced CAS workers who do not understand the dynamics of domestic violence use the term "high conflict":

It's more related to CAS workers being inexperienced and not understanding the dynamics of domestic violence. So, for example, in the most recent case we had to go through uhm... a meeting with the CAS worker and mom, and the CAS worker said to use the words high conflict ... this is a high conflict between parents, and for us we say no this is not a high conflict this is a domestic violence ... there are safety issues. It's not that the mom is saying he does not do that and the dad is saying she does not do that. It's more than that. It's safety. She moved through 3 shelters. She moved out of town for him not to find her and now you are saying this is high conflict? So we had kind of have ... uhm... a conflict ... like different perspective within the meeting. (Meredith)

CAS's use of the term "high conflict" was seen as an important and problematic issue for collaboration with VAW informants. Christina describes a different story. When asked how does CAS and VAW agencies collaborate Christina replied:

I don't think they do. Like I don't think they do. I don't see collaboration. When I'm working with the CAS it never feels like we are collaborating to mutually support this woman to uhm... be successful or to achieve whatever it is that she's being required to achieve in order to have her children returned. (Christina)

In the following excerpt, Christina expands on her experience of collaboration with CAS:

The relationship is very confrontational between the CAS worker and the mother. Uhm.. CAS will say something like, "well we think you have anger issues so we want you to take an anger management program" or "we want you to take the parenting 1, 2, 3, program", but then they don't provide her any information where she might take that program, how she might get there, are they going to give her bus tickets to get there cause she's got no money. Right? And then they come after her because she hasn't complied. (Christina)

These findings are consistent with the literature that describes the barriers and challenges to collaboration and describes the relationship between CAS and VAW agencies as being confrontational (Beeman & Edleson, 2000; Echlin & Osthoff, 2000). There are several problems that Christina has identified which result in negative collaborations. Christina interprets the relationship between CAS workers and the women as confrontational and perceives that CAS workers do not provide the necessary information and resources to encourage women to get help.

Although not acknowledged in the literature, a component of the collaboration agreement rests in CAS referring women who have experienced domestic violence to VAW agencies. One of the reasons collaboration is described as unsuccessful is due to the lack of referrals that these VAW agencies are receiving from CAS. For example, April explains “Well they should be referring but that’s one of the problems with all of this. They should be referring a lot more. So there is a problem there.” This is also frustrating for Meredith: “The CAS/VAW team or any team can refer clients to us. We do have a group, it’s not working very well lately. We did not get referrals for our fall group”. As described by these VAW informants, their organizations depend on referrals to their services and when referrals are not occurring, collaboration with CAS is seen to be unsuccessful or non-existent.

The narratives presented above focused specifically on the negative experiences of collaboration. I conclude this section with Callie’s words which demonstrate how collaboration work can be both positive and negative:

I think these kinds of collaborations are successful although very challenging at times. One of the positive things is that yah... there is more communication between CAS and VAW in general. So that, which is positive. Uhm... there is also more, not more, but there are some disagreements and sometimes frustrations. Uhm... from the clients and from myself as well. (Callie)

The frustrations that Callie is speaking of here are in reference to the lack of consistent responses that CAS provides. As discussed earlier in this chapter, another element that results in negative experiences of collaboration is CAS's inconsistent information and responses to women. To conclude this section, overall, VAW informants' experiences collaborating with CAS are positive although most informants were able to describe both positive and negative experiences.

Summary

The objective of this chapter was to showcase VAW informants' narratives and standpoints concerning CAS and the collaboration agreement. The chapter began by presenting how VAW informants describe CAS. VAW informants described CAS as the people with the child protection mandate, an organization with power due to their legislated ability to remove children, an organization that lacks consistency in the information they provide and in their responses to cases of abuse, and an organization that has evolved and shifted to better understand the gendered nature of domestic violence. Although, on the contrary, VAW informants also expressed frustration with CAS's use of the term "high conflict" which demonstrates a gender-neutral understanding of domestic violence.

Most informants understand that the purpose of the collaboration agreement is to allow CAS and VAW agencies to work together to increase the safety of both women and children, although informants differed in their familiarity and knowledge of the contents of the collaboration agreement. Several informants indicated that they do not know the contents of the agreement while only two indicated that they have reviewed and read the document.

The last section in this chapter concentrated on the informants' experiences of collaboration with CAS. The first theme is that collaboration is case by case or depends on several different factors – for example, it can depend on the woman, her situation and what she

wants. Informants were able to describe both positive and negative experiences. Positive experiences were told through stories whereas negative experiences described specific actions or inactions by CAS which resulted in poor collaboration. Positive experiences were associated with trusting CAS, CAS being supportive, having an open dialogue and sharing information, and VAW informants feeling like they are not working alone. The collaboration agreement was seen to have played a role in making these experiences positive. Negative collaboration experiences were indicated when CAS does not provide necessary support and resources to women, when CAS does not refer clients to VAW agencies, and when CAS workers are inconsistent in their responses and information. The next chapter will map the connections among VAW informants' work processes and explore how the collaboration with CAS has affected their work with women who have experienced domestic violence.

Chapter 5: How does collaboration between CAS and VAW agencies occur?

According to the listening guide approach, the third and fourth data analysis listenings consist of listening for (1) social relations and texts; and (2) cultural and structural contexts. As this research is mainly focused on the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement document, this text is understood to demonstrate the “crystallized social relations” present within the Ottawa Children’s Aid Society (CAS) and violence against women (VAW) agencies (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 79). Consistent with institutional ethnography, this chapter will map the connections among VAW informants’ work processes, discuss how the collaboration agreement document has affected how VAW workers work with women who have experienced domestic violence, and describe how VAW workers’ accounts and experiences fit within broader cultural and structural contexts.

Mapping Connections among Work Processes

To help visualize how the VAW informants’ everyday experiences are socially organized, this section maps the institutional social relations by focusing on how the activities of frontline VAW workers are connected to the activities of CAS workers. A central task of this research is to use the techniques and strategies of institutional ethnography to explicate the steps taken by the VAW informants in their everyday experiences and to answer the question “how does collaboration between CAS and VAW agencies happen?” By mapping out the connections between work processes this section will reference the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement document. This document does not provide sequential steps for collaboration; rather it specifically outlines the following seven intersecting points where CAS and VAW agencies agree to develop collaborative actions:

1. The CAS has received a referral/report/information that a child may be in need of protection. The CAS worker suspects or learns that woman abuse may be/is occurring in the home;
2. The CAS worker is assessing the safety and future risk to the child. The CAS worker suspects or learns that woman abuse may be/is occurring in the home;
3. The CAS worker is involved in developing a Plan of Service for a child in a case involving woman abuse;
4. The VAW worker is trying to determine whether a situation constitutes reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may be in need of protection;
5. A woman and her child(ren) are involved with both a VAW agency and CAS;
6. The VAW or CAS worker is assisting a woman who is trying to negotiate a custody and access agreement in order to increase her safety and that of her children;
7. The VAW or CAS worker believes that a child may be/is experiencing abuse by a mother/female primary caregiver who is experiencing woman abuse. (“Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 8)

Within each of these intersecting points, the collaboration agreement then provides the outcomes to be achieved (for example: the CAS worker refers the mother to appropriate VAW services for support for herself) and then lists collaborative actions that both sectors agree to take (for example: both sectors agree to consult with each other as needed). Throughout this section reference will be made to the requirements outlined in the collaboration agreement and how the VAW informants’ everyday work processes when collaborating with CAS are consistent or inconsistent with these requirements. To help ensure the rigour of this study, extracted quotations from the informants’ transcripts are used to support the claims I make and reveal how their everyday experiences are organized and occur.

The diagram below (see Figure 1) is a visual aid that helps map the institutional social relations. In the process of collaboration, this map represents a standard chain of action in which people’s experiences are located, and which bring their activities into relation with others (Turner, 2006). Through the informants’ accounts it became apparent that the process of collaboration depends on whether the VAW worker’s client is already involved with CAS. Therefore, the left side of the map demonstrates the lines of communication and the client

movement that occurs when a client is already involved with CAS and the right side of the map demonstrates the lines of communication that occur when a client is not involved with CAS. Client movement in this diagram is intended to demonstrate how the client – in this case women who have experienced domestic violence – are referred from CAS to other programs and VAW agencies.

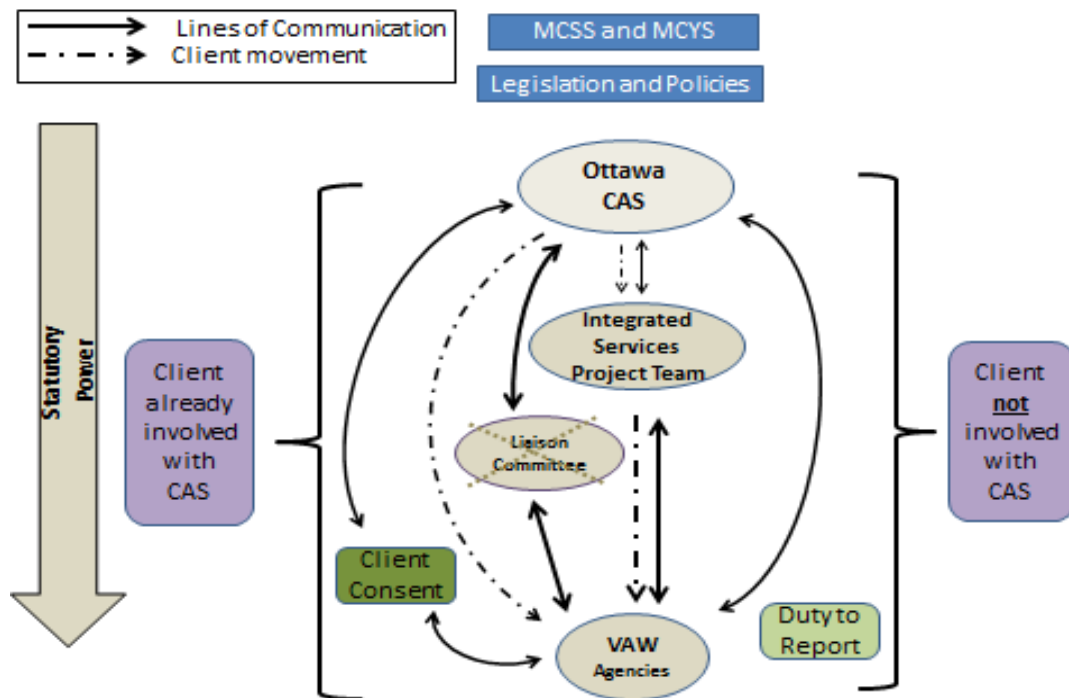


Figure 1 – Map of VAW agencies’ connections among work processes

Contacting CAS to Consult or Report

The only instance when consent is not required from the client in order to contact CAS is when the VAW worker suspects or has knowledge that the child has witnessed domestic violence or is experiencing other forms of child abuse. In the following quotation, Amelia clearly indicates this understanding: “I don’t need consent if there is something that uhm if I see a concern with the children.” In these cases the VAW worker is obligated under section 72 of the *Child and Family Services Act* to report this information to CAS. In these cases the client is often

not yet involved with CAS. The duty to report is not discussed in the interagency collaboration literature.

This duty to report under section 72 of the *Child and Family Services Act* is an example of a text that affects VAW workers work with women. VAW informants consistently discussed their obligation to report child abuse to CAS.

I have to call CAS if any of my clients report child abuse or exposure to domestic violence, if any of it is now or historical. If it is historical it means that it happened in the past. For example, two years ago and the kid comes to therapy and says my dad beat my mom and then I will have to talk to mom, if it was not reported then we will have to call CAS. (Meredith)

It's not the collaboration agreement specially no, it's just, I mean that ethical guideline that if we know that there's a child being abused or neglected we have to call. That's a professional standard. (Amelia)

Amelia understands the obligation to report child abuse as a professional standard, which would suggest that she is working through a policy. VAW organizational policies which require VAW workers to report child abuse are actually based on the legal obligations written in the *Child and Family Services Act*.

In addition to VAW workers' obligation to report instances of child abuse, which includes witnessing domestic violence, VAW informants spoke about how this affects their work with mothers. In the following excerpts VAW informants describe that as a result of the duty to report they spend time explaining the limits to confidentiality to their clients.

I make sure that women are much more aware of the consequences of disclosing any incidents. So uhm... from the first minutes I meet with her I'm much more clear with clients about confidentiality and the limitations and we have more discussion about that and how I'm going to report if there are some reports to be made. (Callie)

When I do an intake with a woman the first thing I do, before she tells me anything about her, I talk about our, the limits to confidentiality here and one of those limits is that if the resident discloses any type of abuse to the children or in the past or the present, or any threats to the children or any concerns uhm.. around different parenting issues that we by law need to let CAS know that these things are happening. (Alicia)

These excerpts are an example of how a text – in this case the *Child and Family Services Act* – impacts the everyday work of VAW workers when working with women who have experienced domestic violence. Interestingly, sometimes VAW workers are not aware of the impact this legislative text has on their work because they think they are following organization policies.

The first requirement within the collaboration agreement that this section reviews is found under intersection point no. 4: “The VAW worker is trying to determine whether a situation constitutes reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may be in need of protection”, where it is indicated that “VAW will remain committed to following current VAW service practices which include but are not limited to: informing women of the need to report; exploring reporting options with the client, ensuring that a report is made in mandatory cases, and ensuring that all reports are made within a timely fashion” (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 18). In the following excerpts, VAW informants demonstrate how they meet and continue to follow these written requirements from the collaboration agreement.

I will contact CAS when the situation, well of course, if there are any safety issues. Like if I'm hearing any situations uhh that a woman will be reporting to me and the children have been exposed to violence ... or... you know... then I will either report to CAS through their intake or call the worker directly and you know... uhm, preferably, I will get the woman to do it but I will also contact them or contact them with her. (Callie)

If her children are at risk, uhm, then or uhm you know at risk of being abused or neglected then that does have to be reported uhm... but I have never made a call to the best of my knowledge to Children's Aid without my client knowing and I've always uhm encouraged her to make the phone call first and say to her CAS worker that this is what's happening and then I make a follow-up call later on just to ensure that... because you know... I let her know that I have an obligation uhm to make a call as well. So I follow up to make sure that, uhmm you know... the call has been made and ensure that Children's Aid has the information that I think is important. (Amelia)

Callie and Amelia discuss their obligation to report any abuse to the child to CAS while also encouraging the client/mother to either make the phone call to CAS first or to make the phone call to CAS with the VAW worker present. Christina also provided a similar account of how she

informs her client of the need to report. In listening to Christina's story, a singular (I) and plural (we) first person voice was identified through the narrative. During Christina's interview she repeatedly used the term "we" to describe herself as the VAW worker and the client working together or being one entity. The excerpt below is an example that reflects Christina's positioning towards herself (I) and her work with her client (we). Each instance of "I" or "we" is underlined with the associated text or accompanying verb to construct a poem.

I mean, don't get me wrong, I don't want to suggest that shelter workers just run amok, uhh but uhm... you know, there's there's, I mean, I'm obligated to report children who are at risk, just like anybody else, and uhh, I will say that I have never made that phone call on behalf of a woman who I've worked with at my shelter, ever. Because I've never felt the need. uhm... I will approach the woman and I will say I have some concerns about what's happening and we need to work on this and we need to address it, and we need to talk about it, we need to fix it because if we don't then I will have to make that phone call. But I would never do that anonymously. I would sit with the woman at my table, and I would say, ok you call, and you tell them that you need some help. You know, like, because, I don't want to disempower her by saying, mmm too bad you're not doing a good job I'm calling the CAS. I want her to be empowered to say look I need some help, I'm not managing ok, and I need some help, and I just wish that CAS would provide that help. (Christina)

The following I poem is created by extracting the underlined "I" and "we" portions from the excerpt:

I mean
I don't want to suggest
I mean
I'm obligated to report
I will say
I have never made that phone call
I've never felt the need
I will approach
I will say
I have some concerns
We need to work
We need to address it
We need to talk about it
We need to fix
If we don't
I will have to
I would never

I would sit
I would say
I don't want to disempower her
I want her to be empowered

Reading this poem helped me to develop an understanding of how Christina positions herself, both as an individual and collectively with her client. As an individual Christina describes herself as someone who has responsibilities (to report) but has not felt the need to act on those responsibilities. Instead, Christina chooses to work with her client to address any concerns. Rather than describing the client and emphasizing that the client needs to work, address, and fix certain concerns, Christina's account uses a plural "we" to emphasize that the work will be done by both the client and herself. Christina describes that she works this way in order to empower her client; however, this is also consistent with the requirements of the collaboration agreement that encourages VAW workers to inform women of the need to report and to explore reporting options with the client. The requirement to report and to explore reporting options with the client is a new finding that contributes to the interagency collaboration literature as the literature does not describe fulfilling the duty to report as a collaborative action.

Under intersecting point no. 4, the collaboration agreement also indicates that "VAW will consult with CAS as needed around reporting requirements, while ensuring that respective roles and responsibilities are clear" and "Where needed, the VAW worker informally seeks information from a CAS worker to assist in making the decision as to whether a situation constitutes reasonable grounds that a child may be in need of protection" (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 18). Among the informants, only Callie indicated that she consulted with CAS anonymously to determine if certain cases are reportable.

Where the children are exposed, or sometimes I'm not sure but I will call... just anonymously, to see, "can I report this?" Or "is that reportable?" and they are quite open

to give their “yes it is, absolutely it is”. What are we going to be doing with this... is not necessarily... sometimes they are not able to act on it but it’s important that it’s on file. So uhm... or sometimes “no unfortunately no it won't be reportable”. But most times when I call the answer is yes. So that would be, so I can call anonymously to make a report. (Callie)

Callie’s excerpt is an example of how the requirements of the collaboration agreement are followed by a VAW worker in a VAW workplace setting. The requirement to consult with CAS around reporting requirements is another finding not presented in the interagency collaboration literature. It was not clear whether the other VAW informants also consult with CAS to determine whether certain cases are reportable as this was not directly asked in the interviews. In terms of mapping the connections between work processes, the findings indicate that the duty to report under the *Child and Family Services Act* is one of the first ways that VAW agencies connect with CAS and allows for further collaboration to occur. This information contributes to the interagency collaboration literature because it demonstrates that collaboration can occur before a client becomes involved with CAS. Not all informants cited or recognized that the obligation to report was due to this legislation, but all informants did state that they are obligated to report instances of child abuse to CAS.

Consent

When a client is already involved with CAS the first step to collaboration for the VAW worker is to receive consent from the client to contact CAS. Consent for collaboration is another topic that is not discussed in the interagency collaboration literature. The CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement describes how collaboration will occur with the consent of the client:

When possible, and with client consent, VAW and CAS will collaborate on case planning and intervention by phone or in person as soon as possible following initial client contact (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 12).

Both sectors agree to consult with each other as needed, at times anonymously, but preferably with client consent (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 14).

Where there is client consent, CAS and VAW will engage in joint consultation for the purpose of service planning and in particular safety planning (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 16).

VAW and CAS agree to explore collaborative actions related to co-intervention, once client consent has been obtained (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 20).

Consistent with the collaboration agreement, VAW informants explained that collaboration would only occur once a consent form was signed by their client.

I then will ask a woman to sign a release of information so that I can contact the CAS directly. (Christina)

I never talk to Children's Aid without signed consent. Uhm... If her CAS worker has referred her here, uhm, then again I will let her know that I won't speak with her CAS worker until I get a copy of the signed consent. (Amelia)

In fact, it is understood that both the CAS worker and the VAW worker need to have a separate consent form signed before collaboration can occur. The requirement of the consent form has been included in the map in Figure 1 to demonstrate its significance for both CAS and VAW agencies and how the connections between work processes depend on this form being signed.

The collaboration agreement document references a two-way consent form: "To facilitate future interventions and follow up, CAS and VAW agree to use a two-way consent form developed in plain language and available in a variety of different languages. The limitations of the consent must be clearly identified on the form" (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 19). There were no VAW informants who discussed this two-way consent form and I was not able to confirm that this form was created or used amongst the CAS and VAW workers. The reference to the two-way consent form in the collaboration agreement indicates that consent is at least a theoretically significant component to the collaboration process for CAS and VAW agencies.

CAS and VAW Agencies: Connections among Work Processes

Once consent is received from the client, the VAW worker is able to contact CAS. I begin this section with a quotation from Meredith's interview: "I am not mandated to call CAS if I know that CAS is involved with the family. This is our .. we prefer .. as part of our best practices, we do that because it's best for our client." Meredith's excerpt demonstrates an important distinction from the duty to report under the *Child and Family Services Act* and the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement. VAW workers are not obligated or mandated to communicate with CAS when their client is involved with CAS. This allows me to understand that the collaboration work between CAS and VAW agencies is interpreted by CAS and VAW workers as voluntary. The literature on collaboration does not acknowledge or comment on the voluntary nature of collaboration work. As illustrated in Figure 1, when the client is involved with CAS the communication between VAW workers and CAS workers can be initiated by either worker.

Sometimes it's me. Sometimes it's CAS. (Callie)

Sometimes I'm the one that does the contact because I want more information so that I can find the best way to support my client. Sometimes it's the CAS calling looking for somebody. (Christina)

More often, it would be us trying to contact them and if they are involved with the woman to try to help her navigate that. (Miranda)

Because there are no specific steps outlined in the collaboration agreement document, every collaboration looks different and is initiated for different reasons. For example, VAW informants describe collaboration as having a telephone conversation with the CAS worker and having meetings or case consultations with the CAS worker and the client present. This is consistent with the following collaborative actions outlined in the collaboration agreement:

- CAS workers will consult with VAW for the purposes of safety planning (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 14).
- CAS and VAW will work collaboratively to ensure that, wherever possible, women and their children participate in the development of their own safety plans and/or service plans (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 16).
- Where there is client consent, CAS and VAW will engage in joint consultation for the purpose of service planning and in particular safety planning (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 16).

In addition to these collaborative actions, the collaboration agreement states that “VAW and CAS will create a communication tool designed to facilitate contact between agencies in specific situations where significant safety concerns exist (a version of the police MPR process), while respecting client confidentiality” (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 19). There was no mention of this communication tool by the VAW informants in this study as this was not directly asked in the interviews.

Due to ongoing communication with CAS workers, VAW workers’ everyday experiences are directly connected to CAS. The following sub-sections delve into why VAW workers’ experiences become intertwined with CAS and result in collaboration.

A. VAW Workers Referring to the VAW Pod within CAS

One of the most prevalent reasons that VAW informants communicate with CAS is to request that their client be moved to the VAW Pod located within CAS. In the following excerpt, Olivia explains how CAS is set up in different teams and Pods:

There a number of teams and the teams make up a Pod. So uhm, based on specialty, so there’s a pre and post Pod, which is made up of teams that only deal with pregnant moms or moms with children under I believe it’s 3 months old. Then there’s the Aboriginal team and Francophone team and they all make up their own Pods. So within VAW there’s three teams, because there’s 3 supervisors with I believe have 5 to 6 protection workers on each team and together those three teams make up what we refer to as the VAW Pod of protection workers. (Olivia)

The VAW Pod only takes referrals that are specifically coded as VAW upon intake. The VAW informants consistently described the purpose of their communication with CAS workers is to recommend that their client be referred to the VAW Pod:

Sometimes when we're making a report to CAS we kind of put our two cents worth in to suggest that it go to the VAW Pod and they say yes we will do the assessment and see if that's where it goes. So we kind of push in that direction. (Alicia)

It [the collaboration agreement] has allowed me to request uhh a file be transferred to the VAW Pod so that there is a uhm you know, some consideration given to the fact that this woman is in an abusive relationship. (Christina)

It happened to me where the family for, whatever reason, was not assigned to the VAW team. So sometimes I have asked for this family to be assigned and whether they have the capacity to do it or not has varied. (Callie)

Although some informants may believe that it is in the agreement, having VAW workers refer women who have experienced domestic violence to the VAW Pod is not a collaborative action listed in the collaboration agreement. This contact with CAS is initiated to help mothers get the support they need from CAS and demonstrates how VAW workers attempt to connect with CAS for the benefit of their client. As individual workers they attempt to “push”, request or ask that their clients be assigned to the VAW Pod, but as Callie explains, whether this happens varies. CAS has control over which cases get assigned to the VAW Pod and therefore have a significant amount of power to support women and children who are dealing with domestic violence issues. How the file is managed within CAS is outside the control of VAW agencies once they suggest that the file be assigned to the VAW Pod. Although this specific example is not available in the literature, this is an example of the imbalance in decision-making authority between the sectors described in the literature and demonstrates why at times collaboration can be challenging (Lessard et al., 2010; Potito et al., 2009).

B. CAS Workers Contacting VAW for Information on VAW Services

According to the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement when a CAS worker learns or suspects that domestic abuse may be or is occurring, “VAW agencies will provide information on appropriate community based services and resources when consulted by CAS” (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p.12). This collaborative action specifies why CAS may contact VAW agencies. In the following excerpts VAW informants explain why CAS workers may contact VAW agencies/workers.

Sometimes they just call for information, it's not necessarily about a specific client but they might call just for information about something VAW related. Uhm.. They might be looking for, uhm... for a kids witness program, uhm... in different areas or in the city or they may be asking me because maybe they've, you know, maybe we've chatted before and they may call and say ok I have a woman in this area, do you know what VAW counsellor I can send her to. (Amelia)

If CAS has ... if they have a specific referral to meet with me, they tend to contact me if they want to figure out when the next group is, what services exactly we have, what can we offer, if we have a waiting list. (Callie)

These excerpts are consistent with the action item in the collaboration agreement. In addition, this finding is parallel to the results of other studies that argue that information sharing between sectors is a key requirement to collaboration work (Lessard et al., 2010). As will be discussed later in this section, with the introduction of the Integrated Services Project within the Ottawa CAS it is not clear whether this has had an impact on the frequency that CAS workers contact VAW workers in the community.

C. Collaborating to Understand and Address CAS Concerns

VAW informants described communicating with CAS workers to understand CAS's concerns in order to be able to better assist women to address those concerns. CAS concerns may include safety concerns for the child, parenting concerns, housing, and financial resources or employment. CAS workers may also initiate communication with VAW workers to explain their

concerns which are often outlined in a Plan of Service. A Plan of Service is documented in the CAS client file and outlines the intervention plan, concerns, and expectations that CAS has for a family. Intersection point no. 3 is directly connected to the Plan of Service: “the CAS worker is involved in developing a Plan of Service for a child in a case involving woman abuse” (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 16). This section indicates that CAS and the VAW agencies implicated will work as collateral service providers; however, does not provide detail on what this means and does not state that VAW workers will assist their clients in meeting CAS’s expectations and requirements. The following excerpts demonstrate how VAW informants are connected to CAS work processes:

If a mother is referred to us by CAS we will ask CAS ... in order for us to get to know what are the CAS concerns or what do they want to achieve, what their concerns for the kids, and in order for us to better support mom and be able to advocate and support the kids. So it’s that or if the mom comes to us directly and she says CAS is involved sometimes she explicitly wants our help, sometimes we will say to her the way we work is we need to know what CAS wants from you and unless mom is very very concerned about us contacting CAS, which is very rare, usually we have consent from mom and again follow-up with CAS just to go over why they are involved. (Meredith)

It happened to me where I would meet with the CAS worker when, especially at the beginning when the women felt that she had to come to counselling then I would call the CAS worker and we would meet up and see what is the Plan of Service... uhm... So at the beginning there was a lot of that, that Plan of Service was not clear with the CAS and there was a lot of misunderstanding so I would meet with the client and the CAS worker to clarify those things and it was usually useful for both the client and I, and probably for the CAS worker, I would say. (Callie)

I’ll say to her you know, would you be interested in uhm having a meeting with the three of us you and I and your CAS worker? And that way we can uhm... you know get clear what your CAS worker wants you to work on and then we can make sure that we focus on that in counselling sessions. (Amelia)

The [VAW] worker will reach out to the CAS worker again just so that everyone is on the same page, you know, sometimes mom’s understanding of why CAS is involved uhm... there might be some confusion or some misclarity in why CAS is involved so by having everyone kind of come together with consent uhm... then it just helps lay out the Plan of Service more clearly for mom and then the VAW worker is able to support mom more effectively in attending to the concerns that CAS has. (Olivia)

These excerpts demonstrate how CAS involvement affects VAW workers' work with women who have experienced domestic violence. Because the client is already involved with or has an open CAS file, VAW workers work with their client becomes meeting CAS's requirements and addressing their concerns. As Christina states "I can't assist her in complying whatever CAS requirements are there unless I have an understanding of what they are". VAW workers assisting their clients with meeting CAS's concerns is a new finding not previously discussed in the interagency collaboration literature.

The collaboration agreement states that "if a VAW agency is involved in a service plan, CAS will ensure communication and consent of the VAW agency" (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 16). This collaborative action reinforces what Smith (2005) refers to as the extra-local interests, meaning the interests of those who dominate and in this situation it is the interests of CAS. VAW informants spoke about the need to be on the same page as CAS due to the statutory authority of CAS and the voluntary nature of VAW agencies, VAW workers' efforts to support women becomes assisting CAS with their concerns and as a result accomplishing extra-local interests. This particular collaborative work process contributes to the relations of ruling between CAS and VAW workers as they are apparent to VAW workers but were described as a normative practice. For example, VAW workers described the process of helping women address CAS concerns as just something they do and as part of their work – it was not discussed in a positive or negative context and was not critically questioned.

Liaison Committee

I first learned of the liaison committee through the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement which states that "a liaison committee comprised of representatives from both sectors will be established to oversee the implementation of the collaborative agreement" (Collaboration

Agreement, 2004, p. 2). The agreement further describes the monitoring, accountability, and conflict resolution responsibilities of the liaison committee. The liaison committee is required to:

Develop a workplan and terms of reference with approval from both sectors; monitor how well the collaborative agreement is working; identify barriers and suggest improvements to each sector; share findings with each sector; modify collaborative agreement with the approval of both sectors; report annually to MCSS regional office; advocate for funding for the support of the liaison committee; develop an intersectoral conflict resolution process to assist in resolving issues that arise through the development and implementation of the collaboration agreement (Collaboration Agreement, 2004, p. 8-9).

Through preliminary discussions with VAW representatives I learned that the liaison committee was dissolved in 2014 (the exact date is unknown). However, as the liaison committee is central to the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement document and functioned for almost 10 years (from 2004 to 2014), I included it in this study in order to capture frontline VAW workers' understandings of the committee and its impact on the collaboration work with CAS. The inclusion of the liaison committee in this section is twofold: (1) an overview of the informants' knowledge and perceptions of the role of the liaison committee and experiences working with the committee are presented; and (2) how the liaison committee facilitated the collaboration and achieved work process connections.

The informants were asked to describe the role of the liaison committee. Several informants were not familiar with the liaison committee or what they do:

The ... hmm, well, I... I mean I believe it's just like looking at the uhm... at the project itself and saying you know if ... I'm not involved honestly I don't ... I don't know very much about it. (Amelia)

I don't know what the liaison committee does. I ... I guess they are talking about what's working and not working in the collaboration. I don't see a lot of information sharing happening, you know, at my level. And maybe it's happening at their level, but, I'm not 100% sure what goes on in that committee. I guess they are talking about what the next steps are. (Alicia)

These frontline VAW workers were unable to describe the role of the liaison committee. Being reflexive, I realized that this was surprising to me as the liaison committee is continuously referenced in the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement and the liaison committee was in effect for almost 10 years. This demonstrates that there are VAW workers who are not familiar with a long-standing liaison committee that is specified in the agreement that governs their work. Other VAW informants described their understanding of the liaison committee but did not know that the committee had been dissolved:

I think it was first to make some connections, to make like a channel of communication between us and, uhm, the CAS, to clarify some situations, to challenge CAS to some degrees. Uhm... and to hopefully, uhm, offer support to well both sectors but also support to and information to the CAS worker in terms of VAW issues and how to ensure safety and things like that. (Callie)

To be able to sort of bring issues more uhm objectively so that they can work out different issues. So that there's not necessarily attached to that issue. So that would be my, that's how I would use it. so uhm... in the past there was like different... I'm trying to think of, uhm... let's see... I'm trying to think of some of the VAW workers' major beefs with within the liaison. There's been ... For example, the whole question of VAW high conflict would be something that would probably be best brought there to say ok let's look at this, lets define it, lets make it a tool so that the agency can determine what is the difference, so that they... not every get pegged the same thing. So that would probably be uhh the right place to be able to put that in. I don't know is it? (haha). (April)

Although April was able to provide an example of the type of work the liaison committee would address she was still uncertain whether her understanding of the liaison committee was accurate. This suggests that there is an unclear understanding across VAW frontline workers about the role and responsibilities of the liaison committee or whether it continues to exist.

Informants were also asked if they have had to work with or contact the liaison committee during collaboration with CAS. In the following excerpt Callie describes how she had to contact the liaison committee a few times and her experience of this contact:

A few times. Mostly to request the file to be assigned to, or to be looked at. I'm thinking of a particular situation where the file has not been assigned to the VAW team, it was

assigned to a regular worker, and it was... I felt that it was not dealt with the same lens, than the others. So in that particular case, I had to. Yes. Yah so mainly or to ask for uhm... to clarify certain situations. I had some questions as to why they would act this way or why is this file not assigned and they would go and check and get back. Well this is why, yes we recognize this, but you know, but there is no... the team is overwhelmed, or ... so they would come back. Uhm... I would say it was uhh... I didn't contact them very often. Uhm... it was more to get some clarifications, so I would say I'd say it has been ... uh... positive. But not always the answer I wanted, you know. Or that was... when I had that specific request for that file to be assigned it didn't happen, you know. It's not because... because she didn't uhm... she didn't do her job or anything... it's because, CAS couldn't, the team was overwhelmed. So, uhm... it was useful, it's useful to get clarification on why are certain cases looked at this way or why it's not assigned or why... uhh why they are acting this way. Yah. (Callie)

In this excerpt, Callie explains how she used the liaison committee to ask questions and receive clarification on why certain files are not assigned to the VAW Pod within CAS. In this experience Callie describes her communication with the liaison committee as positive. In Callie's experience the liaison committee acted as an intermediary between CAS and VAW agencies. When mapping the connections between work processes, Figure 1 demonstrates how the liaison committee used to act as a channel of communication between CAS and VAW agencies. As Callie describes: "I think it was first to make some connections, to make like a channel of communication between us and uhm... the CAS". Further, the discussion of a group designed to facilitate communication between sectors was not presented in the literature.

There were some questions among the VAW informants about the information sharing from the liaison committee to the "people on the ground" and the inclusion of frontline workers on the liaison committee.

People had hoped that liaison would be a place, because reps from both sectors were coming together. That they would then take the information about what's happening back to their sectors but that wasn't happening either. (Olivia)

My concern is that the lack of people on the ground that are involved in the liaison committee. You know, it is uhh uhm.. most of the time I have no idea what's going on with that collaboration agreement or what they are doing. So because it's operating up here and I'm just, sometimes wonder why they don't have people that are right on the ground involved more. (Alicia)

Olivia and Alicia's excerpts demonstrate how the liaison committee was a group that was made up of both sectors and had more power than VAW agencies but less power than CAS. That VAW informants feel excluded and unaware of the work being done within the liaison committee, demonstrates that the committee was operating at a higher level than the VAW community agencies. If we think of the relationship between CAS and VAW agencies as a hierarchy, CAS is at the top of the hierarchy because it has more statutory power than VAW agencies. Due to its mix of participants and social relations, the liaison committee operates at a higher level than VAW agencies but lower than CAS. The collaboration agreement demonstrates why frontline VAW workers may feel isolated from the liaison committee as it was established as an oversight body to monitor how well the collaboration was working.

Meredith, in particular, had a colleague who was on the liaison committee and as such was more familiar with the committee's roles and was aware that the committee had dissolved. She describes the end of the liaison committee as a unilateral decision that came from the CAS management. In the following excerpt Meredith answers the question: "what is the liaison committee?"

That was the initial committee for some reason was decided to be stopped, uhm, and was a management decision... I guess. We are not very sure... I don't know if they decided to drop it but it was a unilateral decision more from the CAS management, or CAS/VAW management. (Meredith)

One of the VAW informants was also a member of the liaison committee. Miranda was able to provide more insight on what had occurred during the liaison committee meetings and the purpose of the liaison committee. The following story is created using excerpts from Miranda's interview to provide her standpoint and narrative on the liaison committee. The narrative begins with Miranda describing the role of the liaison committee:

To me it was critical. It was the reason the project succeeded and uh did as well as it did. The VAW world had long critiqued the way child welfare responded to violence against women which was bad for the most part and so for us the project was about transforming the way CAS did business. For CAS they didn't see it that way, and so they thought we were all coming to the table to all change the way we do things. But, they don't have, they didn't bring to the table what we brought to the table in terms of changing the way, the knowledge about the subject matter, that enabled them to change in ways that were helpful to women, they don't have that to offer to VAW, we have that to offer ourselves. Women would be the place to get it or other VAW agencies or whatever, so that project was not really ever supposed to be "we're just going to exchange knowledge, and make both sides better" it was really about changing the way child welfare responded to violence against women. We can sit here and pretend we're all going to change, but really, it's not about all of us changing, it's about you changing. So for us it was really about managing that relationship and helping them to understand that they needed to do things differently, that from where we sat, there was a different way to intervene that was actually going to work, achieve what they were after better. And it worked, shockingly and amazingly at the end of the day, many years down the road, there really was transformed thinking about how to intervene in these cases. It hasn't really changed anything about the way we do VAW. It has changed the way they do CAS. (Miranda)

Miranda's excerpt provides insight into what the purpose of the liaison committee was in her perspective specifically. In addition, she demonstrates how VAW agencies on the liaison committee had some power to change how CAS worked with women who experienced domestic violence. In her view, the liaison committee was central to the success of the collaboration work between CAS and VAW agencies. For Miranda, the purpose of the collaboration agreement and the liaison committee was to change the way that CAS responded to violence against women. Miranda's experience is important to demonstrate how, being a member of the liaison committee, she attempted to and succeeded at changing the extra-local interests and the ruling relations that CAS holds – in this case how CAS works with women who have experienced domestic violence. In the following excerpt Miranda discusses the implementation of the liaison committee:

I wanted us to have more VAW [representatives] than CAS [representatives] so that we could outnumber them and make all the decisions, and tip the balance on all the decisions. But my far more trusting colleagues were willing to make it 50/50. Me, I wouldn't have ever agreed to that but anyway, it ended up being 50/50. So half of the

delegates on that committee were VAW some frontline, some management, several of them were from VAW management, and uh yah and that's how we set up the implementation. (Miranda)

This is another example of how the set-up of the liaison committee could have further shifted the power dynamics between CAS and VAW agencies. As Miranda describes, if there were more VAW representatives on the liaison committee it would have allowed VAW representatives to make more decisions. The collaboration agreement describes the liaison committee as a neutral third party made up of both CAS and VAW representatives that would work together to make decisions to facilitate collaboration; however, through Miranda's account the liaison committee is seen as a group that was able to tip the balance and force CAS to respond differently to domestic violence. But changing the interests of those who dominate is no easy task. To further compound the challenges, the terms of reference for the liaison committee stayed in draft form due to a lack of consensus over the mandate and terms of reference and this made it challenging for the liaison committee to move forward and to function as a committee with specific responsibilities, goals, and mandate. Olivia understands that the terms stayed in draft due to tensions between the members:

There were some tensions if you will uh about the role of liaison and what people thought was the role and what other people thought the role was and because the terms of reference always stayed in draft form, uhm, there was just always a little bit of tension between some of the members. (Olivia)

The reason for the dissolution of the liaison committee is unclear. In the following excerpt

Miranda describes the unfortunate part about the loss of the liaison committee:

The unfortunate part of the loss of the liaison committee uhm meant that some of the things that we were hoping to work on were lost, like integrating the family law system with this project better. (Miranda)

Although Miranda was pleased with the work that the liaison committee had accomplished, she pointed out that a client was recently told that if she did not leave her partner CAS was going to

take her kids, which, to Miranda, represented a step back from the progress CAS had made. The VAW agencies on the liaison committee attempted to alter the ruling relations and change the way CAS responds to women who have experienced domestic violence. With the dismantling of the liaison committee and the introduction of the Integrated Services Project the connections across sites have shifted.

The Integrated Services Project

In 2007, the Ministry of Child and Youth Services distributed funding to local Children's Aid Societies for integrated services to improve collaboration between the CAS and VAW sectors (Integrated Services Project, 2013). In Ottawa, this funding resulted in the development of the Integrated Services Project (ISP) where a VAW agency received funding and was selected to be co-located at the Ottawa CAS. Similar projects have been recommended in the literature (Cross, Mathews, Tonmyr, Scott, & Ouimet, 2012). This project in Ottawa was intended to enhance the collaboration agreement between CAS and VAW sectors and as perceived by some of the VAW informants was a separate project that was an extension of the collaboration agreement. As part of this project, VAW counsellors were available to provide consultation and assistance on child protection files involving or suspected to involve domestic violence (Integrated Services Project, 2013).

Through the interviews, several informants discussed the ISP, also known as the VAW team – not to be confused with the VAW Pod mentioned above which is made up of several teams of CAS protection workers. The ISP is only made up of frontline VAW workers, some of whom participated in this study. This is a unique program where VAW workers work directly alongside CAS workers. In Olivia's view, ISP benefits from building relationships and trust amongst the CAS workers because they sit alongside them, whereas in the community VAW

workers do not always have that same relationship. Working closely with the VAW Pod has allowed both CAS workers and VAW workers from the ISP to receive joint training to allow the ISP VAW team to become integrated in the CAS knowledge and for CAS workers to have training on VAW principles and issues. The VAW workers have been able to share clinical principles and practices and act as a go-to advisory team. One of the roles of the VAW worker is to provide context and to help CAS workers understand why a mother may not be progressing as the CAS worker expects:

They're [the CAS worker is] like "she needs VAW counselling, she needs VAW counselling". Ok, we [ISP] understand that but she has nowhere to live, so until that crisis gets stabilized she's not going to want to do that emotional healing or even start down that emotional journey. (Olivia)

Similar to the liaison committee, the ISP plays an intermediary role between CAS workers and VAW agencies; however, this section will demonstrate how the Integrated Services Project operates at a higher level than the liaison committee. In the following excerpts Olivia describes the role she plays when assisting the CAS workers to understand the VAW agencies and how she helps VAW agencies navigate CAS.

CAS will come in and just say oh my gosh, I'm working with a shelter and they're not giving up any information, they're you know, uhm, they are protecting mom uhm., you know, but we have great concerns about her choices, you know, those kinds of things. Having worked in the shelter for years, and working in the community for years, I can sometimes shed a little insight as to why they might be operating the way they do but also encouraging them to call the worker. (Olivia)

Part of what my role is as well is if I get a call from the community saying I've got this client and CAS they're just not getting it; I don't know what to do. Mom feels like she's not being supportive and they're not understanding. Uhm then I support them in kind of what that process will look like about talking to the worker directly if that doesn't work, talking to the supervisor, if that doesn't work you can talk to the manager, if that doesn't work let's get everyone around the table. So I've often played a role around those tables of bringing everyone together. (Olivia)

This demonstrates that the VAW worker's work processes are connected to ISP when initiated by the VAW community worker. While in Olivia's view, the ISP has been able to assist both

CAS workers and VAW workers to work together and to understand each other, another component of the ISP program has been to provide consultations, support for women and referrals to other VAW agencies:

If mom is having trouble connecting to community services, for whatever reason, either she's not emotionally ready, child care issues, transportation issues, whatever the case may be, uh they [CAS workers] can make a referral to our team and then one of our case managers will meet with mom and the protection worker at the same time to do that whole case consult around what are the societies concerns, what are the services that our VAW team can offer and then if mom is ok with it and uhm cause our services are voluntary, if mom is ok with continuing working with us then mom and the case manager make their own appointments after that. (Olivia)

The VAW workers who work as part of the ISP help mothers get ready for services and help address barriers she has connecting to longer term supports. Similar to all VAW agencies, the ISP is entirely voluntary. Some informants describe that the ISP has become the way that the collaboration between CAS and VAW agencies has occurred in Ottawa. Rather than CAS workers making referrals to VAW agencies in the community, the ISP has allowed CAS workers to make referrals to the ISP. From there, the VAW workers are able to consult with both the CAS worker and the client to determine what concerns need to be addressed and if agreed by the client the VAW worker will continue to work with the mother to ensure that she is emotionally ready for further long-term services. The ISP VAW worker will also make referrals to VAW agencies in the community when necessary. As a result, the ISP has some control over which VAW community agencies receive referrals and clients. This has caused an imbalance between the lead ISP VAW agency and the VAW community agencies. Informants suggested that the collaboration agreement has shifted away from the community and is now sheltered within CAS. Consequently, one VAW agency's work processes are closer connected to CAS than the other VAW community agencies. Figure 1 visually demonstrates how ISP is closer – both physically

and in terms of its power to control where women receive their supports – to CAS than the VAW agencies.

How the Collaboration Agreement affects how VAW Informants Work with Women who have Experienced Domestic Violence

I begin this section with Smith's definition of work, which is an extension of the traditional view of paid work and includes anything done intentionally that takes effort and time, requires certain knowledge, and results in specific sequences of actions (Smith, 2005b). One of the goals of this research was to better understand how the collaboration agreement affects how frontline VAW staff work with women who have experienced domestic violence. This study found that frontline VAW staff members' work with women primarily focuses on CAS's concerns and frontline VAW workers spend a significant amount of time reassuring their clients of the role of CAS and ensuring that they do not sound like they are acting on CAS's behalf. These findings contribute new themes to the interagency collaboration literature.

VAW work focusing on CAS's Concerns

Although VAW informants consistently discussed their work as supporting and advocating for women, they unknowingly placed considerable emphasis on addressing CAS's concerns before the women's concerns. The first impact that the collaboration agreement has had on VAW workers is that it has made their work with their clients more focused and specific to helping women address CAS's concerns.

I'll say to her you know, would you be interested in uhm having a meeting with the three of us, you and I and your CAS worker? And that way we can uhm... you know get clear what your CAS worker wants you to work on and then we can make sure that we focus on that in counselling sessions (Amelia)

The work that VAW informants are doing with clients is aimed at supporting and helping women navigate CAS; however, it also demonstrates how VAW agencies' work processes are directly linked to helping CAS achieve their goals. It is difficult to avoid this when CAS is in a position of statutory power. In the following excerpt Meredith explains how she works with women and collaborates with CAS:

We will work with the client and ask what are their goals why do you want to come to counselling what do you want, what kind of goals do you have for your kids? uhm.. and then we will inform the client that we need to make sure that we are on the same page as CAS. So then we go back and forth with CAS and then another stage will be when there are, when everything goes perfectly well, when mom and CAS are on the same page, when mom understands the CAS concerns, when we are in sync, we just work together with mom and then eventually uh we connect from time to time or CAS connects with us with client permission and say well yes they attend counselling, the kids are making progress, they have learned about this this. (Meredith)

In this excerpt we can see how the VAW worker is trying to balance what the client wants and also ensure that the client and CAS are on the same page and as a result have the same concerns and goals. This can be viewed as contradictory because the VAW worker wants to know what the client wants and then suggests meeting with the CAS worker to gain a clear understanding of the Plan of Service created by CAS. Because CAS is in a position of power, this can leave the client with no choice but to change her own personal goals to meet CAS's requirements. Thus, an interesting consequence of the collaboration agreement or the understanding of the collaboration agreement which is not located in the literature is VAW workers working more closely with CAS to ensure that the client meets their requirements. The goal of collaboration as indicated in the collaboration agreement is to improve the safety of both children and women but since CAS has more statutory power they are able to define what this looks like. As a result, VAW workers' work with their clients becomes to meet these requirements and may subordinate their goals to CAS.

Reassuring clients

VAW informants repeatedly discussed how the collaboration agreement has resulted in having to work on building a relationship and reassuring women to not fear CAS. Callie explains that she has to work more with the client to explain CAS's role without sounding like she is siding with CAS:

It has required me to do a lot more work with clients along their fears to CAS and clarify their role without uhm.. without sounding like I'm .. I think the challenge for me was, you know, to maintain that connection that trust with women without sounding that I'm siding with CAS. (Callie)

The purpose of the collaboration agreement was to encourage both sectors to work more closely to increase the safety of children by helping women be safe. However, when these sectors work closely together it can appear to the client that the VAW worker will take CAS's side on every issue. This can lead to clients not being fully open and honest and has resulted in VAW workers having to reassure their clients about their own role vis-à-vis CAS.

Lots of times they call and say my CAS worker is making me come but I always, you know, emphasize that uhm Children's Aid may be wanting them to come so that they understand you know what the warning signs are uhmm the risks not only to them but their children for witnessing and different things but telling them that they really don't want to know all the details of what we talk about because they understand that if a woman is feeling like I'm going to be spilling everything she's telling me to her CAS worker than she's not going to be open and honest and engaged in the process. So I try you know just give them some reassurance around that that yes Children's Aid their client is the children so they're trying to support you in raising your children. (Amelia)

.. I think a lot of my work is simply uh reassuring the client that CAS is not, is not out to take the children away. Because they still have that fear. They still think that CAS is going to take their kids away. And I think a lot of my job is to, so we do a lot of work for CAS, in supporting their cause. (Alicia)

I think in the end it is positive. but sometimes there, there is more resistance from clients to share the reason why they are here, you know. so. I think that.. it requires from me a lot more delicacy and understanding where she is coming from and probably building on the relationship more than before. (Callie)

The literature on interagency collaborations does not acknowledge that due to the collaboration agreement, VAW workers may spend more time building a relationship of trust with their clients and reassuring them that CAS is not out to take away their children. As Alicia states, VAW workers do a lot of work in supporting CAS's cause. This can be viewed positively, as collaboration is more likely to be successful for the client if both CAS and VAW have similar goals and understandings of VAW issues. However, because CAS and VAW agencies are generally viewed as opposing agencies with different priorities, VAW workers' work with women becomes explaining each sector's role, the limits of confidentiality, and breaking down assumptions about CAS.

Cultural Contexts and Structural Forces

Narratives are products of cultural discourses and structural forces. The last step for this study consisted of placing informants' accounts and experiences within broader cultural and structural contexts. In the following excerpt, Meredith discusses CAS's different responses to mothers and fathers, demonstrating how cultural and structural forces interact with policy:

Somehow fathers always have access to the kids, doesn't matter what is their behaviour and what they do. While mothers if they are not protective, they expose kids to violence, or expose kids to contact with the perpetrator, the kids will be taken away and I think that is still an issue that .. I feel is still on the works. (Meredith)

From this excerpt we can see that in a cultural context, parenting is primarily the role of the mother and when CAS focuses on the mother's behaviour decisions are based on the cultural values that hold women to a different standard with respect to parenting. This statement is consistent with literature that indicates that there are underlying ideologies and gender stereotypes in regards to women's roles in parenting which result in courts convicting mothers for failing to protect their children from violence (Fugate, 2001). In addition, the emphasis that CAS places on mothers in cases involving domestic violence is a structural force that

disadvantages women over men. CAS has legislated power which reinforces their ability to make decisions that disadvantage women. Therefore, both cultural values and structural contexts interact and both need to evolve in order to shift the CAS response.

In the previous chapter, I found that VAW informants often describe CAS as an organization which lacks consistency amongst their workers, the information they provide, and their responses. Callie's excerpt is selected to illustrate this:

Sometimes the women will report things to me, that are concerning and then uhm... sometimes uhm.. yah. The response to those events are not always uhm... consistent from CAS. Meaning that some CAS workers will... uhm... to me, in my point of view will have very similar concerns, uh but other CAS files or workers not so much. And those will have an impact on the general custody and access case in family law. (Callie)

This particular description of CAS is described as a problem of individuals instead of a broader social or structural problem. The VAW informants did not identify the inconsistent responses as resulting from structural forces but rather accept this as a personal or specific problem of the individual CAS worker.

Other times, VAW informants recognized that there are structural forces that affect their work and the work of CAS workers that is outside their control.

I've had CAS workers say to me, "well really it's all just about covering our asses because the legal department" or like they can't even write a letter of support on behalf of a woman whose completed different activities without running it by their supervisor or their legal department. Like I think that bureaucracy gets in the way of them actually being able to do a better job and because they are all about covering their ass. (Christina)

Here Christina blames bureaucracy – not the individual CAS worker – for how CAS workers function within their organization. As much as CAS has considerable power, the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) as well as the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS) play a role in building the structural forces that impact both CAS and VAW agencies.

Figure 1 reflects these Ministries at the top of the map to demonstrate their power and dominance over CAS and VAW agencies.

But it seems as though the Ministries, like the provincial ministries are becoming more and more involved in the way this [the collaboration] is uhm.. unfolding. (Alicia)

These are kind of written in ministerial language, right? So the people on the ground, unless you are involved every step of the way, it's sometimes a bit of a puzzle. Because they have their language and so there's the different kind of language in this than we work with. (Alicia)

The use of “ministerial” language as described by Alicia is constraining for VAW agencies who use different language in their work. This demonstrates how there are structural forces that are used to accomplish extra-local interests of the ministries. This further demonstrates Smith’s theory of ruling relations because the ministerial language and the ministries involvement with the collaboration agreement exerts control and structures CAS and frontline VAW workers’ everyday work.

Summary

Mapping the connections among work processes proved to be an effective tool to uncover the ruling relations that the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement text helps to organize between the Ottawa CAS and VAW agencies. The mapping process demonstrates that unlike the duty to report under the *Child and Family Services Act*, VAW workers are not obligated or mandated to communicate with CAS when their client is involved with CAS. Therefore, collaboration between these services is voluntary, requires the consent of the client, and as there are no specific steps outline in the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement document, every collaboration looks different. As described by the VAW informants, collaboration is usually initiated for several reasons including (1) VAW workers contact CAS to request or ask that their client be moved to the VAW Pod within CAS; (2) CAS workers may communicate with VAW workers to gather

information on VAW services; and (3) VAW workers often communicate with CAS to better understand the requirements outlined in the Plan of Service in order to help the mother address CAS's concerns. These reasons for collaboration demonstrate the ruling relations that CAS has in their relationship with VAW workers as CAS has more statutory authority which gives them the upper hand in their work with VAW workers. The liaison committee was seen to have an intermediary role between CAS and VAW agencies and was viewed as a team that pushed for system change in CAS and altered the ruling relations to change the way CAS responds to women who have experienced domestic violence. However, with the dismantling of the liaison committee there is some uncertainty of the state of the collaboration. The Integrated Services Project which was introduced in 2007 further complicates the relations of ruling as now there is one VAW agency that is co-located at CAS. This results in an imbalance in power between the lead VAW agencies and the other VAW community agencies. Finally, at the top of the map is the legislation and policies which are the technologies of social control that coordinate the everyday experiences of these organizations (Smith, 1999).

The purpose of this study was to explore how a collaborative agreement mediates the work of VAW agencies to protect women and children. The findings demonstrate that a consequence of the collaboration agreement or the understanding of the collaboration agreement has resulted in VAW workers working more closely with CAS to ensure that the client meets their requirements. CAS's legislated power allows CAS to define the requirements for both the women and children; therefore, VAW workers work with their clients is more focused on helping women address CAS's concerns, which may result in the subordination of women's goals. Due to the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement another finding is that VAW workers spend considerably more time reassuring women not to fear CAS, explaining each sector's role,

and explaining the limits to confidentiality. VAW workers explained that they took these actions in order to better support their clients. These findings are important as VAW workers may not be aware that the collaboration agreement or the requirement to work more closely with CAS are the reasons for these actions.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

I entered into this study with no prior knowledge of how VAW agencies or CAS agencies operate. This ensured that the VAW workers I interviewed were the “expert knowers” of their work processes (Smith, 2005). This also meant that I would examine the data to see how the VAW informants actually described how they collaborate and work with CAS. This study has shown that the experiences of collaboration with CAS vary considerably among VAW frontline workers in Ottawa. Most VAW informants were able to describe both positive and negative experiences of collaboration. This is contrary to the literature on collaborations which focuses primarily on the challenges and barriers that these two sectors experience when working together. On the other hand, all the challenges highlighted in the literature were also highlighted by the informants. Mapping the social processes of collaboration allowed a deeper analysis into the functioning and underlying structures that may not be visible to these agencies during their everyday interactions with each other.

Institutional ethnographers are interested in discovering generalizing practices that cut across several settings (DeVault & McCoy, 2006). According to Campbell and Gregor (2004), in institutional ethnography, generalizability relies on discovering and demonstrating how ruling relations exist across many settings and organize the informants’ experiences. Despite the fact that the agencies recruited in this studied differed, I discovered that there are work processes that are similar and consistent. For example, the duty to report child abuse which is mandated by the *Child and Family Services Act* is consistently adhered to by the VAW agencies. Since all VAW and CAS workers are governed by the same provincial legislation, similar work processes may be unfolding in other VAW agencies in this province. Although the collaboration work between CAS and VAW agencies was mandated by the Ministry, the way it has been implemented across

the province varies and therefore the findings cannot be generalized to the experiences of all VAW frontline workers. Nevertheless, this research allowed a multi-layered analysis (both micro and macro) to understand the individual experiences and perceptions of frontline VAW workers while also understanding how everyday experiences are socially organized and influenced by wider structures and relations of ruling. To conclude, this chapter presents the limitations, the study's implications for practices and policy, the contributions it has made to institutional ethnography research and suggestions for future research.

Limitations of the Study

One of the biggest limitations of this study was the inability to include CAS workers as informants due to the agency's refusal to participate due to concerns about the impossibility of remaining anonymous. As a result, this study only has the perspective of VAW frontline workers. Without the insight of CAS workers this study was unable to draw conclusions on how CAS workers perceive their power, how the knowledge of the collaboration agreement impacts their work with VAW workers, or how the liaison committee impacts their work. Future research should include both sides of the collaboration in order to better capture the diverse experiences and perspectives.

Another limitation of this qualitative study is its small sample size. Although the results gleaned from eight VAW frontline workers are informative and meaningful, they cannot be generalized to the entire Ottawa VAW frontline worker population as the findings may be unique to the informants in this study.

This study did not identify the similarities and more importantly the differences among the participating VAW agencies. There are two kinds of VAW agencies that are included under this broad term: organizations providing VAW counselling services and agencies delivering

emergency residential shelter services or second stage housing supports. Some of the similarities between these VAW agencies include: promoting safety for women and children; the belief that woman abuse is rooted in gender inequalities; and advocacy to eliminate violence against women and children. The experiences of shelter workers and counsellors may differ and may be unique when working with CAS. Therefore, future research should be careful when grouping different agencies into one category and should examine the differences in experiences for various types of VAW agencies.

Another limitation of the study is that issues of inequality, racism, and oppressive practices were not considered or explored during the interviews. Issues of equal access to services and culturally appropriate programs and services are important for both child protection services and violence against women agencies. There is evidence that gender inequalities are further compounded for Aboriginal women, immigrant and refugee women, racialized women, women with disabilities, poor women, older or younger women, women with addictions, and/or women living in rural or isolated communities (Gallagher, Perrone, McIntyre, & Cantrell, 2010). The VAW informants did not discuss culture and race spontaneously and the interview questions were not designed to elicit such information as the questions focused on the collaboration process. The collaboration agreement specifically calls for collaboration work “to share information, resources and expertise regarding differences among women and children, community constituencies and families of diverse racial and cultural backgrounds, lifestyles and disabilities” (p. 10). Further research is required to explore how the collaboration work among child protection agencies and violence against women agencies impacts women of diverse racial, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Implications for Practices and Policy

This study has shown that practices are taken up differently from the way they are written and that, in fact, sometimes written guidelines are not even read or reviewed. To address this disjuncture, I recommend the following: (1) As texts impact the way individuals work on a daily basis, such collaborative agreements/policies need to be shared with all CAS and VAW workers and used as a reference tool to facilitate collaboration. (2) Frontline VAW workers should be included and involved in the creation of policies that will affect their work. It is important to start with frontline workers to determine how collaboration is or could be embedded into their work and daily lives. Currently the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement document was imposed by the provincial government to facilitate CAS and VAW agencies working together to improve the safety and wellbeing of both children and women and to hold perpetrators accountable for their abuse. For change to happen it is necessary to produce local solutions that take into consideration the specific context of the VAW and CAS workers. Adding new policies without consultation with frontline workers to promote collaboration is not an optimal solution. This research has shown that there is a need to take a different approach when trying to understand how collaborations occur – that is, to look “down” into the daily experiences of VAW frontline workers to discover and to understand what is actually happening. Thus, CAS and VAW managers need to look “down” into the daily experiences of VAW workers. By engaging frontline VAW workers when revising policy, the goal is for any change to reflect people’s material experiences, which would make the policies more relevant to their everyday work.

This study demonstrates the considerable impact VAW agencies have when they work together. VAW workers as individuals may feel powerless when working with CAS. For example, VAW workers may request or ask for a client to be assigned to the VAW Pod in CAS

but whether this happens is outside their control. Therefore, when comparing a VAW worker and a CAS worker there is an imbalance in decision-making authority. The work accomplished through the liaison committee demonstrates how when VAW agencies work together or “join forces” they are able to shift the way that CAS responds to women who have experienced domestic violence. The following excerpts demonstrate what VAW agencies have been able to accomplish when they work together:

CAS has evolved; they have created the VAW team and uhm I think they changed quite a bit since the beginning, in terms of understanding the dynamics of abuse, understanding that the women safety is related to the children's safety. This was not necessarily the case at the beginning. (Callie)

There are some changes over time, I think there are some change, there is more communication, there is better uhm... the fact that CAS acknowledges that there is, that uh good number of their cases are actually women abuse cases that's... already something that didn't happen before. So I mean in that sense they are more informed, they are better informed. (April)

This progress would not be possible without the liaison committee who pushed for these changes. Miranda described how in order to achieve system change VAW agencies and management need to work together.

When you're trying to do system change, you're going to get resistance. Systems are not receptive to changing, you have to strategies and have enough power in that relationship to push back when it tries to resist, so that's why it was critical that there be a management position in the ISP so they could speak management to management rather than speak up the chain of command and the liaison committee could also push as well. So it wasn't just one manager against this giant system, it was actually a liaison committee representing the community that was saying no you gotta do this, you gotta do this, so when we hit important junctures there was a lot of strength to push the agenda forward. (Miranda)

VAW workers are not powerless in their relationship with CAS and are able to push for system change when they work together to accomplish similar goals which have been to improve CAS's response to women and children who have experienced domestic violence. Broader cultural and structural contexts are difficult to change but as demonstrated with the work accomplished with

the liaison committee and as described by the VAW informants' perceptions of the change in CAS, it is not impossible.

Contributions to Criminology and Institutional Ethnography Research

In contrast to the typical criminology study which tends to study perpetrators or victims of crime, this study focused on the agencies that victims of domestic violence sometimes become involved with and must navigate through. This topic is of interest to scholars in criminology and social work because VAW frontline workers are the individuals who provide the majority of services and support to violence-affected women. Unintended consequences of policies can negatively affect abused women by undermining their ability to be empowered and to heal which points to the importance of studying interagency policies (Kulkami, Bell, & Rhodes, 2012). The finding in this study, which demonstrates that sometimes practices are taken up differently from the way they are written, is important for criminological and social work researchers who often make recommendations to create better policies to support violence-affected women. In addition, the dynamics between government and non-governmental agencies and their staff impacts how violence-affected women and children are served. This study has contributed to the criminology literature as it demonstrates that the experiences of non-governmental agencies can illuminate the challenges and barriers that women and children face when leaving violent relationships. This study enhances criminological and social work understandings of violence-affected women and children by exploring the different technologies that are put in place within organizations that can facilitate or hinder the type of support women will receive when seeking help for violence or when violence is reported to government agencies such as child protection services or police.

This research has contributed to the development of new knowledge in several ways. This is a unique study that focuses on the individual experiences and social organization of the work

of frontline VAW staff when working with CAS workers using institutional ethnography to establish how collaboration happens on the ground. This study fills a gap in the interagency collaboration literature as collaboration between the Ottawa CAS and VAW agencies has never been studied and thus has never been examined through institutional ethnography.

This research also fills a gap in the institutional ethnography literature due to its methodological strategy for data analysis. Walby (2013) suggested that the listening guide approach, a voice-centered relational method of analysis can be used as a tool to conduct institutional ethnography data analysis. The listening guide approach and institutional ethnography are congruent as they provide a way of “understanding the self as situated in organizational contexts” (Walby, 2013, p. 142). The listening guide approach provides a way of listening to the many voices embedded in people’s expressed experiences while staying loyal to the theoretical and methodological commitments of institutional ethnography. This study exemplifies how the narrative and standpoint of the VAW informants were captured as well as how connections among work processes and ruling relations can be mapped which allowed me to discuss the organisations and social relations. Finally, using the listening guide approach also allowed me to place the informants’ stories into broader cultural and structural contexts which demonstrates that the self is also socially produced. This research contributes to institutional ethnography research as currently there is no published research using the listening guide approach to analyse interview data.

Where do we go from here?

The results of this study suggest that the collaboration agreement is out of date and requires an update. A central component of the collaboration agreement is the liaison committee which has been inactive for approximately two years. In addition, there is now an Integrated

Services Project that contributes to the collaboration work between CAS and VAW agencies which is not referenced or discussed in the collaboration agreement document. It is recommended that the collaboration agreement be reviewed and updated to reflect the current collaborative actions that have been implemented in Ottawa.

As indicated by Macvean et al. (2015), the literature on interagency collaboration demonstrates that we need to invest in evaluations and longitudinal evaluation studies. Future research should focus on the evaluation of interagency collaborations to explore whether collaboration between sectors leads to improved outcomes for women and their children, as there is no clear evidence of this (Macvean et al., 2015; Statham, 2011).

Although this study explored what VAW workers actually do, there were important details of what actually happens during collaboration that were not captured. For instance, I was not given permission to interview CAS workers; therefore, this study would have benefited from the views and perceptions of CAS workers in order to understand how CAS workers interpret and perceive their collaboration work with VAW agencies. Future research on interagency collaborations should recruit from both sectors to provide a well-rounded analysis of the state of the collaboration. This study would have also benefited by having directly observed how VAW workers, CAS workers, and clients engage in dialogue.

In conclusion, child protection services and domestic violence service providers are not the only agencies that would benefit from collaboration. As perceived by Miranda, the liaison committee had hoped to create collaborative actions with the court system. Research has also been conducted on the collaboration between welfare and child protection agencies because these two services share many of the same clients (Ehrle, Scarcella, & Geen, 2004). Collaboration work should be explored with child protection services and other community services including

welfare services, immigration services, courts, and police – who often report to child protection authorities when they attend a domestic violence call and children are present.

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**APPENDIX A –
Table**

Table 1 - Informants' Years of Service & General Area of Intervention

Informant's Pseudonym	Years of Service	General Area of Intervention
Meredith	5	VAW Counselling
Christina	13	Shelter
Amelia	15	VAW Counselling
April	19	VAW Counselling
Callie	13	VAW Counselling
Alicia	20	Shelter
Olivia	11	VAW Counselling
Miranda	22	Shelter

**APPENDIX B –
University of Ottawa Ethics Approval**



Ethics Approval Notice
Social Sciences and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Holly	Johnson	Social Sciences / Criminology	Supervisor
Simon	Lapierre	Social Sciences / Service Social	Co-Supervisor
Francesca	Sapozhnikov	Social Sciences / Criminology	Student Researcher

File Number: 06-15-09

Type of Project: Master's Thesis

Title: Children's Aid Society and Violence Against Women Agencies: How a Collaboration Agreement Mediates the Daily Practices of Frontline Workers

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
07/14/2015	07/13/2016	Ia

(Ia: Approval, Ib: Approval for initial stage only)

Special Conditions / Comments:
 N/A



Université d'Ottawa **University of Ottawa**
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

This is to confirm that the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board identified above, which operates in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2010) and other applicable laws and regulations in Ontario, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above named research project. Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions / Comments".

During the course of the project, the protocol may not be modified without prior written approval from the REB except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) pertain to only administrative or logistical components of the project (e.g., change of telephone number). Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes which increase the risk to participant(s), any changes which considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project and safety of the participant(s). Modifications to the project, including consent and recruitment documentation, should be submitted to the Ethics Office for approval using the "Modification to research project" form available at: <http://research.uottawa.ca/ethics/submissions-and-reviews>.

Please submit an annual report to the Ethics Office four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval. To close the file, a final report must be submitted. These documents can be found at: <http://research.uottawa.ca/ethics/submissions-and-reviews>.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office at extension 5387 or by e-mail at: ethics@uOttawa.ca.

Signature:

**APPENDIX C –
Recruitment Letter**



Université d'Ottawa | University of Ottawa

Département de criminologie | Department of Criminology

140 Université / 140 University, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

Recruitment Letter

Title of the study: Children's Aid Society and Violence Against Women Agencies: How a Collaboration Agreement Mediates the Daily Practices of Frontline Workers

Researcher:
Francesca Sapozhnikov

Supervisors:
Holly Johnson holly.johnson@uottawa.ca
Simon Lapierre simon.lapierre@uottawa.ca

Dear Potential Participant:

You are invited to take part in the abovementioned research study which forms the basis of my Master's thesis in the Department of Criminology at the University of Ottawa.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this research is to better understand how the Ottawa Children's Aid Society (CAS) and violence against women (VAW) agencies collaborate with a specific focus on the Ottawa CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement. I am examining how it affects the work VAW agencies do to protect women and children. This study is being conducted independently from the organizations and agencies from which participants may be recruited.

What are the criteria for participation?

In order to participate we ask that you are employed with one of these organizations listed in the Ottawa CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement:

Carlington Community and Health Service	La Présence
Catholic Family Service of Ottawa-Carleton	Maison d'Amitié
Eastern Ottawa Resource Centre	Minwaashin Lodge-Aboriginal Women's Support Centre
Family Services à la famille Ottawa	Nelson House
Harmony House	Tungasuvvingat Inuit
Immigrant Women Services Ottawa	Western Ottawa Community Resource Centre
Interval House of Ottawa	

In addition you must be:

- employed as frontline staff (working directly with mothers and/or children)
- have experience working with the collaboration agreement
- able to understand and communicate in English

What will my participation entail?

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate, I will conduct one face-to-face interview for approximately 60 minutes at a time and location convenient for you. If you agree, the interview will be audio-recorded and you may request to review the transcript before it is included in the analysis. The audio recording and transcript of our discussion will be safely and securely stored, as will your contact information. The data from this study will form the basis for my Master's thesis and may also be published or presented at conferences. To safeguard your confidentiality and anonymity, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information, such as the agency you represent, will be deleted. In addition, you may withdraw from the study for any reason and at any time. If you withdraw from the study, you may request that your responses be destroyed.

If you are interested in participating or for any questions please contact the researcher directly via telephone at _____ or via e-mail _____. You may also contact my supervisor at the email addresses listed above.

Francesca Sapozhnikov
Department of Criminology
University of Ottawa

**APPENDIX D –
Consent Form**

Consent Form

Title of the study: Children's Aid Society and Violence Against Women Agencies: How a Collaboration Agreement Mediates the Daily Practices of Frontline Workers

Invitation to Participate: I am invited to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Francesca Sapozhnikov, Master's student from the University of Ottawa, under the supervision of Dr. Holly Johnson and Dr. Simon Lapierre.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to explore how the Ottawa Children's Aid Society (CAS) and violence against women (VAW) agencies collaborate with a specific focus on the Ottawa CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement and how it affects the work VAW agencies do to protect women and children. This study is being conducted independently from the organizations and agencies from which participants may be recruited.

Participation: My participation will consist of participating in a one-on-one interview that will last approximately 60 minutes during which I will be asked questions that relate to my experiences as a frontline worker working with the Ottawa CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement.

Risks: My participation in this study is voluntary and there are no foreseeable risks to my participation.

Benefits: My participation in this study provides me with an opportunity to share my views and my experience and will contribute to the advancement of knowledge on collaborative work between child protection services and violence against women agencies. The results will be available to these agencies and to policy makers and advocates and may lead to changes in policy or practice.

Confidentiality and anonymity: I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will remain strictly confidential. No identifiable information (such as my name or agency of employment) will be published and any other potentially identifiable information that I provide will be deleted or altered during transcription.

I understand that the information I share will be used for a Master's thesis, as well as for presentations, chapters and/or journal articles by the principle researcher but at no time will my identity be revealed.

Anonymity will be assured with the use of pseudonyms. The researcher and thesis supervisors will have access to pseudonyms to link data to participant identities. Before transcription the pseudonyms with participant identities will be stored on the researcher's password protected laptop. Once the interviews have been transcribed this information will be stored on a password protected data-key and will be securely deleted from the researcher's laptop. The password protected data-key will be stored in a locked cabinet in Professor Johnson's university office which is secured with an alarm.

Conservation of data: The data collected, both hard copy and electronic data (for example, tape recordings of interviews, transcripts, and notes) will be kept in a secure manner. All electronic data will be stored on computers which are password protected. Printed transcripts and any other written material

will be stored in a locked cabinet in Professor Johnson's university office. The transcripts and digital recordings will be kept for 5 years after the project has been completed. During the conservation period all transcripts will be removed from the researchers computers and transferred onto a data-key that will be stored, along with any written data, in a locked safe in the University of Ottawa office of Professor Johnson. At the end of the conservation period all data stored electronically or on paper will be securely destroyed.

Voluntary Participation: I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, I may request that all data gathered until the time of withdrawal be securely deleted from the researcher's laptop and any written material be shredded.

I, _____ (name of participant), agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Francesca Sapozhnikov of the Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences, under the supervision of Drs. Holly Johnson and Simon Lapierre.

I agree to be digitally recorded for the purposes of this interview.

Yes No

I consent to be quoted with my identity protected.

Yes No

If I would like to review the interview transcript, I am invited to contact the researcher or her supervisors.

If I have any questions about this study, I may contact the researcher or her supervisors:

Francesca Sapozhnikov (Researcher) Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ottawa:

Dr. Holly Johnson (Co-supervisor) Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ottawa: (613) 562-5800 ext. 1805, holly.johnson@uottawa.ca

Dr. Simon Lapierre (Co-supervisor) School of Social Work, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ottawa: (613) 562-5800 ext. 6392, simon.lapierre@uottawa.ca

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research, University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5

Tel.: (613) 562-5387

Email: ethics@uottawa.ca

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: Date:

Researcher's signature: Date:

**APPENDIX E –
Interview Guide**

Interview Guide

Introduction

Hello, I am conducting this research in order to explore how the Ottawa CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement affects the work that violence against women agencies do to protect women and children.

Interview Questions

In a few moments I will be asking if you can describe your experience working in collaboration with Children's Aid Society. First, however, I will begin by asking you some basic information about yourself.

1. How long have you been working for this organization?
2. When did you first learn about the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement?
3. How long have you been working with the CAS/VAW Collaboration Agreement?
4. In your own words, can you describe your understanding of the collaboration agreement?

Now we are going to move to how the collaboration works between the organizations.

5. How do CAS and VAW agencies collaborate?
[Probes]
 - a. What is the purpose of contact and who initiates it?
 - b. What is the process that occurs during collaboration?
 - c. Can you describe step by step how collaboration occurs?
 - d. Who is involved and what are their roles?
6. Can you describe an example where a successful collaboration has occurred?
 - a. What do you think made this possible?
7. Have you experienced any unsuccessful collaborations? If yes, can you describe an example?
 - a. Why do you think this was unsuccessful?

8. The Collaboration Agreement discusses the role of the liaison committee. Have you had to work with or contact the liaison committee during collaboration with CAS? If yes, can you describe that experience?

[Probes]

- a. Why did you need to contact the liaison committee?
- b. Were they able to assist you? How?
- c. What is your understanding of the role of the liaison committee?

Now we are going to move to how the Collaboration Agreement affects your work with mothers that have experienced domestic violence.

9. In what situations are you required to contact CAS?

[Probe]

- a. Does the collaboration Agreement require you to contact CAS? If not, under what circumstances can agencies exercise discretion?
10. Can you describe the type of work you are obligated to perform under this agreement?
 11. How do you think the collaborative agreement has affected your work in ways that are positive or negative?
 12. In cases of physical abuse or sexual abuse of children, how do you think the work performed under the collaborative agreement (a) enhances the safety of children? (b) enhances the safety of mothers?

Wrap-Up

This research is mainly focused on how the Collaboration Agreement affects the work of violence against women agencies employees.

13. Are there other documents or policies that encourage you to contact or collaborate with CAS to protect children from domestic violence? If yes, please describe the document(s) and how they affect your work.
14. Is there any other information or experiences with the collaboration agreement that you would like to share with me?

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me. Your responses will help us understand how the collaborative agreement works on the ground. If at any point you wish to add to your answers please do not hesitate to contact me.