

Police Involvement in Child Protective Services Investigations: Literature Review and Secondary Data Analysis

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This article examines the relationship of police and child protective services (CPS) coinvolvement to the outcomes of child maltreatment investigations. It reviews practice and empirical literature and conducts a secondary analysis of a national CPS data set of CPS. Most sources argue that coordination of the two agencies improves investigations and benefits children and families. Yet, sources also report friction between these agencies, interference with each other's job, and concerns that police involvement increases child removal. In the CPS case data, allegations were more likely to be judged credible when police also investigated and families were also more likely to receive various services. For neglect cases, multidisciplinary decision making, but not police involvement per se, was linked to child removal. Across studies, police do not appear to hinder CPS effectiveness and may actually promote it. Their investigations should be coordinated in every community.

Keywords: *child abuse; child maltreatment; child protective services; child protection; police; law enforcement; multidisciplinary team*

When a reported case of child maltreatment involves a possible criminal act, both child protective services (CPS) and police typically investigate. The two agencies are undoubtedly involved together in thousands of cases every year because state laws require their coinvolvement in many cases, and concur-

rent investigations are routine in every community. For example, in their sample of 1,828 CPS cases in five communities, Tjaden and Anhalt (1994) found that police were involved in 49% of serious physical abuse cases and 75% of sexual abuse cases. This article analyzes what the effects are when both law enforcement and CPS are involved, using both extensive literature review and a secondary analysis of a large CPS data set.

The two disciplines have expressed a contradictory mix of apprehension and enthusiasm about working together. For decades, professional literature has described a sometimes difficult relationship (e.g., Goldstein, 1987; Graves & Sgroi, 1982; International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1977; Kilby & Constable, 1975; Parkinson, 1980; Pence & Wilson, 1992, 1994b; Penner, 1959; Sheppard & Zangrillo, 1996a; Tjaden & Anhalt, 1994). At times, this has been described as a clash of underlying philosophies and beliefs (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1977), suggesting that part of the discomfort between them stems from how each thinks and what each values. Police can be stereotyped as rugged, single-minded enforcers who are insensitive to families; CPS

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workers as so-called bleeding hearts who are blind to the perpetrators' evil (Tjaden & Anhalt, 1994).

But the concerns go beyond different philosophies and styles. Several reports suggest that each has the potential to interfere seriously with the other's job as well (e.g., Cross & Spath, 1998; Tjaden & Anhalt, 1994; Walsh, 1993; Winterfeld & Sakagawa, 2003). Child protective services workers worry that police will antagonize families and undertake heavy-handed, punitive interventions, interfering with their attempts to protect children and repair families. Police are concerned that CPS workers will inadvertently interfere with evidence collection and criminal investigations and, thereby, interfere with bringing perpetrators to justice.

On the other hand, several reports also extol the benefits of law enforcement and CPS working together (e.g., Slaght, 2002). They discuss how police and CPS workers have unique skills that complement each other when the two disciplines coordinate their investigations. Many American communities report how effectively police and CPS balance and support each other in interorganizational structures like joint investigations programs, multidisciplinary teams (MDTs), and children's advocacy centers (CACs; e.g., Cross & Spath, 1998; Sheppard & Zangrillo, 1996a, 1996b; Tjaden & Anhalt, 1994; Whitcomb, 1992; Winterfeld & Sakagawa, 2003). Sheppard and Zangrillo's (1996a, 1996b) survey of 805 law enforcement agencies found that, on average, officers rated joint investigations from helpful to very helpful. Their cooperation is considered important enough that most states have legislation requiring coordination between law enforcement and CPS (Jones, Cross, & Simone, 2003). However, the wording of most of these statutes is vague and leaves considerable room for interpretation, and it is unclear how they are being implemented.

The interaction of law enforcement and child protection is not just an American concern. A similar mix of benefits, difficulties, and concerns has been reported in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand (Brown & Fuller, 1991; Findlay, 1991; Hayes & McCullough, 2001; Waterhouse & Carnie, 1991; Wilson, 1994, 1995). We suspect it is universal in all societies that have child protection as well as criminal justice institutions.

Despite decades of interest, the effect of police and CPS coinvolvement remains an open question. Much of the discussion of this topic is based on first-person observations or a small number of interviews (e.g., Hammond, Lanning, Promisel, Shepherd, & Walsh, 2001; International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1977; Maguire, 1993; Walsh, 1993). There are no

reviews of the literature and little empirical data about police and CPS coinvolvement—a significant gap given its importance and frequency. Through literature review and a secondary analysis of CPS outcome data, this article begins to address what the outcomes are when law enforcement and CPS are both involved and what the implications for practice are.

HOW POLICE AND CPS ARE INVOLVED TOGETHER

The nature of their mutual involvement in the same cases follows from CPS's mission to ensure children's safety and well-being in caretaking relationships and law enforcement's mission to investigate crimes and protect the public safety. Child protective services becomes involved when a report of suspected abuse or neglect is called in to the agency, often by a community member. The child protection system is usually limited to dealing with alleged perpetrators who are parents, guardians, or caretakers of the alleged victim. For cases screened in after the initial report, CPS conducts an investigation, time-limited by statute, to assess whether the allegation is supported or substantiated and then takes whatever action is needed, if any, to protect children from harm and ensure their well-being. Substantiations occur in 26.8% of reports, averaging across the states (Children's Bureau, 2004). Recent studies, however, suggest that substantiation may be more a function of the level of proof available to the CPS investigator than the presence of harm to children (Drake, 1996; Drake & Jonson-Reid, 2000), and that children in unsubstantiated cases can be at a level of risk comparable to that of children in substantiated cases (Drake, Jonson-Reid, Way, & Chung, 2003).

If a case is substantiated, CPS will generally provide continuing services overseen by a caseworker who works with the family. Often, CPS will arrange for family support, child psychotherapy, or other services. Children may also be removed from their homes during or after an investigation. Children who are removed on an emergency basis vary in the amount of time they spend in foster care. Almost one fifth of victims (18.9%) were placed in foster care as a result of an investigation or assessment (Children's Bureau, 2004). In addition, 4.2% of nonvictims experienced a removal. This compares with 19.0% of victims and 4.7% of nonvictims for 2001. Children who were not identified as victims of maltreatment, but were removed, include children removed on an emergency basis during an investigation and siblings of victims who were removed. Nationally, it is estimated that 265,000 children were removed from their homes as a result of a child abuse investigation or

assessment in 2002 (Children's Bureau, 2004). In most communities, police or the sheriff's office actually carry out the removal or assist CPS in doing so (see below).

Law enforcement conducts an investigation whenever there is suspicion that the reported child maltreatment involved a criminally prosecutable act. In general practice, this includes virtually all child sexual abuse allegations, most serious child physical abuse allegations, and some serious neglect cases (e.g., abandonment, starvation; e.g., Martin & Besharov, 1991). Law enforcement is not generally involved in CPS investigations if the alleged child maltreatment is judged not to represent a potential crime. In addition, the law enforcement investigation may take place after the child protective investigation has already been completed. In larger jurisdictions, the investigators are detectives; in many larger cities, they have specialized training in investigating child victimization.

To ensure appropriate involvement by both agencies, most states have legislation requiring cross-reporting of allegations between CPS and law enforcement (Jones, Cross, & Simone, 2003; see also National Center on the Prosecution of Child Abuse, 2002). Thirty-seven states require reporting of CPS cases to law enforcement, and 14 states require reporting CPS cases to the district attorney. Twenty-six states specifically require law enforcement cases to be reported to CPS; however, it is also true that all police are included in the laws mandating that a wide array of professionals in contact with abused children must report. Usually only child sexual abuse and serious child physical abuse cases must be cross-reported. Eleven states require any allegation of abuse made to either CPS or law enforcement to be cross-reported to the other agency.

CPS and law enforcement investigations are alike in some ways but very different in others (Winterfeld & Sakagawa, 2003). Both types of investigators seek to learn the truth about allegations and, broadly, are concerned with protecting children. But police are looking for evidence of a specific crime that could lead to an arrest, whereas CPS investigators are assessing the child's safety in the caretaking environment and making certain that adequate plans are made for children to live in a safe environment.

Most states have standards that require CPS to initiate investigations of serious cases within 24 hours (Children's Bureau, 2003), but police may not even have assigned the case to a detective in that time period. On the other hand, police may respond to an emergent case at night or on the weekend, but the CPS response may wait until business hours the next

day. The Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children (1996) and the Child Welfare League of America (1989) recommend that CPS investigations be completed within 30 days, and 47% of states require by statute that investigations be completed within this time period or shorter (Children's Bureau, 2003), although CPS ongoing services can last for years. Police investigations, on the other hand, can be relatively open-ended, and it is not unusual for complicated investigations to take several months.

Investigation is only one of the ways in which law enforcement is involved in CPS cases (Besharov, 1990a, 1990b; Hammond et al., 2001; Pence & Wilson, 1992). As mentioned above, because of the inherent dangers involved, the police are typically called on to physically remove a child when CPS decides on placement. Law enforcement officers can also take children into protective custody on their own in situations where the children are at imminent risk of serious bodily injury, as defined by their state statutes, and then involve CPS to provide care. Police can encounter child abuse and neglect in what Hammond et al. (1993) termed *masked incidents*: cases in which police respond to a call about another crime or danger and discover evidence of child maltreatment. They are mandated to report this to CPS. Hammond et al.'s study of calls to the sheriff's office in Tampa found that 29% of spouse battery and domestic violence calls, 18% of aggravated battery, and 15% of aggravated assault involved some indication of child victimization. In addition, police pass on to CPS child maltreatment reports from community members that fall within the CPS domain of maltreatment by caretakers. Police also become involved to protect CPS workers. In most jurisdictions, CPS may request that police accompany them on home visits if parents are hostile or buildings or neighborhoods are unsafe.

The police involved with CPS in these noninvestigation situations are almost always whatever patrol officers are on duty, not the handful of child abuse detectives in a city. Patrol officers often lack training and experience in child maltreatment, which can be a source of difficulty between police and CPS.

INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIONS

In communities without formal methods of coordinating police and social worker investigations, each set of professionals may conduct separate, parallel investigations, visiting homes independently and conducting separate interviews with children, family members, and professionals. There may be little or no communication between investigators, and there may

be redundancy in the information they seek and the questions they ask.

Even in these communities, however, investigative patterns can vary considerably by individual worker, and there may be some police officers and CPS workers who coordinate their work on an informal basis. They may conduct joint home visits informally and share information. Often, CPS agencies have confidentiality policies that limit the information that can be shared with police, but police and CPS workers sometimes find ways to obtain permission to share more than usual in given cases or to share information without violating confidentiality. For example, child protection workers may not be able to reveal a certain type of confidential information to police, but can advise police on what other sources (e.g., agencies, informants) to pursue for more information (Cross & Spath, 1998).

COORDINATED AND JOINT INVESTIGATIONS

Many other communities have formal methods for coordinating police and social worker investigations (e.g., Pence & Wilson, 1994a, 1994b; Tjaden & Anhalt, 1994). Some police departments and child protective offices have policies to conduct joint home visits, joint child interviews, and other collaborative investigative activities routinely. Where coordination is maximized, police and CPS workers work in partnership to determine the truth of allegations and develop an appropriate criminal justice and child protective response. They help each other with information, communication with the parties in the investigation, emotional support, and decision making.

If they work jointly, a community's CPS office and law enforcement agency will typically write a memorandum of understanding establishing their methods of coordination (e.g., DePanfilis & Salus, 2003). Guided in part by state statute and policy, the memorandum will detail how the two agencies should initiate and share reports of abuse with each other, how they should conduct joint investigations, and what oral and written information they should share. The memorandum will establish a protocol specifying whether and when the two agencies should conduct joint home visits and joint interviews with children, family, perpetrators, or others. The memorandum and protocol are important because they guide the actions of all investigators, including those disinclined by temperament, prejudice, or experience to cooperate with the other agency (B. Russ, personal communication, December 2003). The protocol may provide for police and CPS to have planning meetings for follow-up on investigations or services delivery. An

integral part of the process of coordination is to provide training to all staff on how to work together and implement a coordinated response; this includes so-called cross-training that both CPS and law enforcement staff attend to learn about each other's mission and responsibilities. Commentators who promote the value of police involvement with CPS uniformly recommend formal coordination with CPS as a necessary prerequisite (see Besharov, 1990a, 1990b; Hammond et al., 2001; Lanning & Walsh, 1996; Maguire, 1993; Pence & Wilson, 1992, 1994a, 1994b).

Drug endangered children (DEC) programs are one special case of a joint investigation (DEC Task Force, Arizona, 2003; Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2004). These children's caretakers expose them to environments in which illegal drugs are produced, placing children at risk for exposure to toxins, fires, and firearms as well as child abuse and neglect. A number of communities have developed protocols for contacting and coordinating police, CPS, and other agencies when drug laboratories are identified.

MDTs AND CACs

In hundreds of communities, law enforcement and CPS are joined together along with other professionals in formal MDTs that respond to allegations of child abuse (Kolbo & Strong, 1997). In MDTs, multiple professionals work together to guide the investigation, avoid duplicate interviewing, and collaborate on decision making (e.g., Pence & Wilson, 1994a, 1994b; Sheppard & Zangrillo, 1996a, 1996b). Other professionals who work together with law enforcement and CPS on MDTs include medical personnel, victim witness advocates, mental health workers, and prosecutors. Many MDTs (particularly if they are part of CACs; see below) have designated specialists who conduct interviews, oversee and coordinate the MDTs's interventions, or both.

Team interviews. The center point of such MDTs is the team interview, which is designed to eliminate the need for separate investigators to subject the child to multiple, redundant interviews. One member of the team, often a forensically trained child specialist but sometimes an individual CPS worker or law enforcement officer, conducts the investigative interview with the child. The interview typically is located in a special suite of rooms or an entirely independent center (see text on CACs below) that is arrayed to be comfortable and reassuring to children and family and physically designed to provide the technology for an effective interview (e.g., videotape, observation room). The rest of the team observes the interview through a one-way

mirror or closed-circuit television system. The interviewer queries the child in a developmentally sensitive way that is both forensically sound and comprehensive enough to satisfy the information needs of law enforcement and CPS, the two agencies with statutory responsibility for investigating child abuse. Often, observers have an opportunity to communicate with the interviewer during the interview, either through an electronic link (bug in the ear) with the interviewer, a telephone in the interview room, or a brief break in the interviewing. Following the interview, team members confer to evaluate what they have seen and make decisions about whether and how to intervene and, often, meet with nonoffending parents. Many MDTs are advocating that the law enforcement/CPS team conduct what is known as a minimal facts interview initially, if needed, to establish probable cause to take a child into protective custody but then schedule the child for a team interview conducted by an interview specialist (B. Russ, personal communication, December 2003).

Occasionally, the team meeting may be the springboard to immediate action. Based on the information revealed in the interview, police officers may go to arrest an alleged perpetrator or conduct a crime scene investigation. Sometimes, CPS workers and police on the MDT will plan a joint perpetrator interview or otherwise coordinate their investigation.

Case review. Many MDTs have a process of team case review after the initial investigative interview. Law enforcement, CPS, assistant district attorney, medical professionals, victim witness advocates, and other professionals will meet to review evidence, discuss prosecution and child protection decisions, plan referrals to services, and coordinate their communication with families. Often, law enforcement officers will develop leads from the meetings to help in their investigations, whereas child protection workers will get assistance with providing child safety and understanding how the criminal justice intervention is likely to affect the child and family. Most teams try to foster a collaborative process in which each professional benefits from the ideas and experience of their team members while still reserving final decision-making power in their particular domain.

CACs. These centers are an increasingly, widely employed model for providing MDT investigations and other more appropriate interventions and services in a way designed to meet high standards of response (see Simone, Cross, Jones, & Walsh, in press; Walsh, Jones, & Cross, 2003). Children's advocacy centers are organizationally distinct programs located within other organizations (e.g., district attorney's offices,

hospitals) or existing as independent nonprofit centers. They provide coordinated investigations and MDTs, as described above, but must also meet an array of standards for quality of investigations, medical and mental health care involvement, victim support and advocacy, and culturally competent services. In some CACs (e.g., in Brooklyn, Chicago, Dallas, Huntsville, and Phoenix), individual investigators or investigative units of CPS and police are colocated at the CAC to facilitate coordination.

The national member organization of CACs has grown from 22 CACs in 1992 to 458 full or associate centers as of 2002 (National Children's Alliance, 2003). Other multidisciplinary organizations in addition to CACs fulfill similar functions; for example, some of the Multidisciplinary Interview Centers in California (California Institute on Human Services, 2004).

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES AS CHILD PROTECTION INVESTIGATORS

Two U.S. states have experimented with a different paradigm of law enforcement involvement in child maltreatment. In these communities, law enforcement agencies have sole responsibility for conducting both criminal justice investigations and child protective investigations, and CPS focuses instead on providing services to families (Kinnevy et al., 2003; Winterfeld & Sakagawa, 2003). This model follows from an argument in the social policy literature that taking on the function of investigating child abuse neglects or even interferes with CPS's aim of helping families (Lindsey & Hawkins, 1994; Pelton, 1991, 1993). With the introduction of mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect, reports to CPS agencies soared, and soon, much of their time and resources were consumed with conducting investigations rather than providing services. Some critics have argued that families and society would be better served if law enforcement agencies took over the responsibility for investigations (Lindsey, 1994; Pelton, 1993). This would leave CPS with greater resources for services to support families and help protect children. It could also help eliminate the taint that CPS often has in families' eyes because of its role in investigation and child removal. And, it could lead to more effective investigations because it places responsibility for them in the hands of trained investigative professionals.

In the 1990s, Arkansas's CPS could not account for the response to 3,200 reports to its child abuse hotline (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2000; see also, Kinnevy et al., 2003). Confusion among state police, local police, and CPS about investigative responsibili-

ties hampered the response to child abuse allegations. Advocates complained that local law enforcement agencies and CPS offices were conducting substandard investigations; for example, interviewing children in the presence of the alleged perpetrator. Another charge was that serious child abuse cases were not being prosecuted. In response, in part out of frustration with a history of problems with CPS, Arkansas transferred responsibility for investigations of sexual abuse and serious physical abuse from its CPS agency to a new Family Protection Unit (FPU) of the state police in 1997. Reformers thought that the FPU would do a better job conducting both criminal investigations (through its Law Enforcement Child Abuse Section) and child protection investigations (through its Child and Family Protection Section) and that appropriate prosecution would be increased. Legislation also upgraded the standards for investigation practice and increased funding for investigations.

In Florida, a series of child deaths, as well as concern about lack of prosecution of child abuse, led to an experiment in 1998. Like Arkansas, Florida had a history of frustration with deficiencies in its CPS agency. The state transferred responsibility for child protection investigations to the sheriff's offices in three counties with the idea of improving both effectiveness and efficiency (Kinney et al., 2003). As in Arkansas, legislation raising the standards for investigation practice was passed about the same time.

These interventions have not been as radical as they sound. Transfer of responsibility to law enforcement suggests images of uniformed officers taking charge, but, in fact, child protection investigation is a specialized function carried out by specially hired civilian staff in units within the law enforcement agency. In Florida, 44% of these were former CPS investigators, although the screening process was more rigorous than in CPS, including background checks, polygraph tests, and psychological testing.

In the Arkansas state police, a civilian officer conducted the child interview and then referred the case to a commissioned officer who conducted the criminal investigation. In Florida, the three sheriff's offices developed a common protocol that differed substantially from the protocol that CPS had used. Civilian investigators conducted a joint child interview with a separate law enforcement officer assigned to the criminal investigation. The two professionals made decisions jointly. Although the law enforcement agencies had statutory and administrative responsibility, child protection and criminal justice investigations were still conducted by a civilian and a law enforcement officer, respectively, although they

worked jointly. Thus, both experiments differed mainly in which agency had responsibility, not what type of investigators were involved. In practice, Arkansas appears to resemble the independent investigation model and the Florida counties the joint investigation model.

REPORTED POSITIVE EFFECTS OF COINVOLVEMENT

Several reports have delineated the positive impacts of coinvolvement of police and child protection workers (e.g., Tjaden & Anhalt, 1994; Winterfeld & Sakagawa, 2003). One benefit, discussed above, is the ability to conduct joint or team interviews and avoid separate, redundant interviews of the child. Another is more thorough investigations. The investigative process, it is thought, is enhanced by virtue of involving two investigators, each with particular skills, perspectives, and information. They can gather more information together and explore more possible hypotheses with greater rigor than if they were working singly. The joint investigation process can provide a second opinion and mutual support in a type of professional work that is both mentally and emotionally challenging.

In Cross and Spath's (1998) interviews with MDT members, some respondents who had many years of experience on MDTs reported the gradual strengthening of coordination over time based on increasing attachment to the team and the development of relationships with other team members. Sometimes this led to mutual decision making influenced by the multiple goals of the MDT. Sometimes in MDT meetings, contrary to stereotype, child protection workers advocate vigorous prosecution, whereas assistant district attorneys advocate foregoing prosecution to protect the mental health of the child.

Joint investigation may also cope more effectively with safety concerns that can interfere with effective investigations (Tjaden & Anhalt, 1994). Child protective services workers may be uncomfortable with conducting certain home visits or asking certain questions of the family. This can occur, for example, if they fear that the environment or family's reactions might be dangerous for them. Their concerns may subtly or even unconsciously inhibit their actions such that even having the option to call a police officer on an as-needed basis may not be sufficient to allay them (Tjaden & Anhalt, 1994). Working with police may enable or embolden the CPS workers to remove children from the home, when necessary, in the face of opposition from the family and neighborhood.

In effective teams, law enforcement officers and CPS workers can benefit from each other's strengths.

Having the law involved may underscore the seriousness of the investigation and the potential consequences of not cooperating in a way that furthers the child protective mission of CPS. Conversely, working with experienced child protection workers may provide reassurance for police officers who have little mental health training to deal with family distress and parental mental illness in child abuse cases. Some offenders may also be more willing to reveal their troubled behavior to a human service professional than to a police officer.

Conducting investigations jointly also creates greater accountability by investigators. Both the law enforcement official and social worker must conduct the investigation under each other's watchful eye, which may make it more difficult for each to conduct a sloppy, superficial investigation or neglect important responsibilities. Indeed, an argument can be made that joint investigations allow each professional to anticipate, forestall, or better compensate for problems associated with the other's approach.

Police involvement can also help pay for psychotherapy for child victims. In most states, a police report is required for victims to be eligible for such funds from the state victims' services agency.

Potential relationship to outcomes. Based on these reports, police-social worker collaboration may have a positive effect on both criminal justice and CPS outcomes both in terms of specific skills each brings and in general empowerment to intervene. If their mutual involvement leads to better investigations, better evidence, more accountability, and better interactions with families, we might see more prosecutions, confessions, and convictions. The better evidence and greater capability for intervening generally might lead to more substantiation and child removal. The greater seriousness and accountability that police bring might foster engagement with services, and their link to victim compensation might help pay for services.

REPORTED NEGATIVE EFFECTS

Despite accounts of successful collaboration between police and CPS workers, several sources have reported difficulties between them. Probably the single best source of information on the difficulties that may exist between CPS workers and police are evaluations of child abuse response systems conducted by researchers who are neither social workers nor police (see below).

Law enforcement concerns about CPS. Police writings on child abuse, sparse in general (Maguire, 1993),

rarely concern CPS workers. Walsh (1993), however, is candid about the risks of CPS taking the lead:

When police do not take the lead in cases of CSA [child sexual abuse], they allow the offender, once notified of an allegation, to destroy evidence, pressure the child to recant the testimony, construct an alibi, secure legal counsel or flee the location. (p. 120)

It is unclear how frequently CPS intervention tips off alleged perpetrators in a way that allows them to obstruct investigation and prosecution, but interviews with police officers in several jurisdictions suggest that this is a recognized issue (Cross & Spath, 1998; Goldstein, 1987; Pence & Wilson, 1992; Tjaden & Anhalt, 1994). A similar issue can arise when CPS removes children from the home if it leads perpetrators to engage a lawyer who then stops them from talking to police.

Police also complain occasionally about child protection workers' more deliberative team approach to making important decisions (e.g., Pence & Wilson, 1992, 1994b). Child protective services field investigators' protocol often requires them to consult with supervisors before removing children from their home. Child protective services emergency staff working nights often postpone nonemergency decisions until morning when regular staff and supervisors are available. All this can make joint action frustrating for police, who are used to working independently and making decisions at the scene of an investigation. Child protective services' approach could bring additional caution, thoughtfulness, and expertise to decision making, but some police feel it sometimes inhibits immediate, necessary action.

Other police concerns relate to child protective workers' skills and attitudes. In Hayes and McCullough's (2001) study, police were uneasy when child protection workers conducted child interviews in joint investigations because of their lack of skills in gathering evidence. Some police have also complained that child protection workers are too oriented toward services rather than justice, are soft on abuse, and too likely to favor family preservation over child protection (Kinnevy et al., 2003).

CPS concern about law enforcement. Child protection workers likewise have concerns about police involvement in child protection cases (e.g., Cross & Spath, 1998; Winterfeld & Sakagawa, 2003). Police can be accustomed to doing investigations alone, making quick, independent decisions in the field, and communicating minimally with CPS workers. Some concerns arise when police are the first to contact a family, particularly when CPS contacts families later and only then find out that police have already started

their investigation. In some cases, police officers have been unwilling or uninterested in making joint visits to the family or conducting joint interviews with family members. Some officers who are not committed to a team approach may shift the burden for an investigation to the CPS worker, waiting in essence for them to do the work (B. Russ, personal communication, December 2003). Because of statutory requirements about what they do and when, the CPS worker has no such luxury.

Research suggests that police have a more punitive attitude toward child abuse than other professionals (Saunders, 1988; Trute, Adkins, & MacDonald, 1992), although Walsh (1993) explained this as a natural consequence of their job. Some CPS workers are concerned that this will scare or anger alleged perpetrators and families into defensiveness and noncooperation. This can make the process of developing and implementing a care plan difficult. An effective and just intervention that does not involve prosecution may be possible, they argue, but the alleged perpetrator and even the family, influenced by the criminal investigation, may adopt a defensive strategy.

Part of the concern about the police may not be related to officers' behaviors so much as the fact that their involvement signals the possibility that child abuse may be prosecuted. Historically, experts have debated the appropriateness of prosecuting child abuse (see Harshbarger, 1987; Helfer & Kempe, 1968; International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1977; Levesque, 1995; Newberger, 1987; Peters, Dinsmore, & Toth, 1989; Wilson, 1995), although there seems now to be general consensus that at least some child maltreatment cases deserve prosecution. Even with this general consensus, there can still be considerable debate about whether a specific case or a particular class of cases should be prosecuted. Police could be the target of ire of those opposing prosecution when they are simply doing their job.

Concern has also been voiced about police having an undue focus on removing children from the home (Maguire, 1993; Winterfeld & Sakagawa, 2003). The results of Shireman, Miller, and Brown's (1981) analysis, discussed below, suggest that emergency child removal was more likely when police responded first, and Mandel, Lehman, and Yuille (1995) found that police were more likely than social workers to opt for removal in an analogue child abuse decision-making study. One caseworker in Tjaden & Anhalt's (1994) study put it this way: "They [the police] feel they have to take some action. They have to take somebody into custody and it will almost always be the kids" (p. 93). It

should be noted, however, that police and CPS have limited power in emergency child removals and an incentive to make credible decisions because a judge must approve all removals, usually within 24 hours (B. Russ, personal communication, December 2003).

Similarly, given their focus on the guilt of the perpetrator, police may devalue CPS services such as family preservation and reunification, which involve reconciliation between the child victim and perpetrator (Maguire, 1993; Pence & Wilson, 1992). They may see visits from the original family to children in foster care as interfering with prosecution out of concern it might alter the child's commitment to prosecution or lead to recantation. Police involvement in CPS cases may, therefore, influence decision making against options that could be considered soft on the perpetrator.

One social worker we have encountered in our research work reported the concern that police officers may sway CPS workers' thinking away from the mission of child protection and toward the mission of catching and prosecuting perpetrators (K. Davison, personal communication, January 2004). Child protective workers working with police officers may unwittingly begin to apply the higher criminal justice standards to the evidence in an investigation. They would then fail to substantiate (and thereby deny services) in some cases in which children are still at risk. Often, officers are more experienced than CPS workers (who have a high turnover rate) and more confident in their decision making. Police officers investigating child sexual abuse are predominantly men, although less so than other police officers, whereas CPS workers are overwhelmingly women, suggesting that the workings of an investigative tandem or team may well be influenced by gender roles.

Problems between police and CPS workers may be worse in larger cities. The Sheppard and Zangrillo (1996b) survey found that 50.2% of all respondents in large CPS offices reported so-called turf issues as obstacles to joint investigations, whereas only 28% of respondents reported this in medium jurisdictions and 19% in small jurisdictions. Likewise, 53% of respondents in large offices reported that coordination problems impeded joint investigations as opposed to 39% and 37% in medium and small offices, respectively. Larger jurisdictions have more police and more CPS workers, reducing the frequency that any two of them work together, which makes it harder to develop trusting working relationships.

Confidentiality concerns. Some have also expressed concerns about police-CPS coinvolvement from the

perspective of the privacy and confidentiality of families (L. Berliner, personal communication, October 2003). Families' reactions to police and CPS involvement can include hostility, fear, shame, embarrassment, and humiliation. Child protective services typically has strict rules on confidentiality, and dealing with these rules has historically been a major challenge for programs of police-CPS collaboration (whether joint investigation protocols, MDTs, and CAC; e.g., Cross & Spath, 1998). Families can have legitimate concerns about their privacy when MDTs and CACs are involved. If the alleged perpetrator is not a family member (and therefore out of the purview of the CPS agency), families may understandably be uncomfortable about CPS representatives on a team having a window into their family life in cases in which they would otherwise have no jurisdiction. Similarly, if prosecution is clearly not an appropriate response, families could legitimately resent police officers being privy to the details of their family life. On the other hand, critics argue, concern about confidentiality can be excessive if it leads to children remaining in danger because of lack of communication between agencies. This issue of confidentiality in relation to collaborative involvement has arisen in numerous individual cases, and individual programs and centers have developed their own policies on it, but we are aware of no national standards or policies for dealing with this concern.

Potential relationship to outcomes. If police and CPS interfere with or fail to support each other's work, we would expect to find that it would be harder for these agencies to achieve intervention outcomes when both are involved. Each would have less evidence, more uncertainty about their decisions, and less ability to act and follow through. Prosecutions, confessions, and convictions would be less frequent. Conflict, lack of coordination, and confidentiality concerns may alienate families, who would participate less often in services. Child removal might either be less frequent, if these difficulties impeded investigators' ability to decide and act, or more frequent, if police impatience with alternatives was unduly swaying decisions or if these difficulties interfered with implementation of alternatives.

RESEARCH ON LAW ENFORCEMENT-CHILD PROTECTION COINVOLVEMENT

Research on the effects of coinvolvement has been limited, both in the number of studies conducted and the sophistication of the methodology employed. Moreover, the few existing studies are hard to com-

pare because they measured different aspects of police involvement.

In an early study, Shireman, Miller, and Brown (1981) found that police who were called first to respond to complaints of child abuse were more likely than CPS workers to remove children from the home and place them in emergency shelter. Placement had a major impact because 91% of the children placed remained in foster care 6 months or more later. The police-first cases were actually less serious on average than the CPS-first cases, although they were more likely to involve parental absence, more likely to occur on nights and weekends, and more likely to be called in by the community rather than professionals. According to Barth (1993), the Shireman et al. (1981) results suggest the potential for overuse of child placement if police take the lead. Pelton (1993) disputed this conclusion, noting that the off-hours nature of most of the study's police cases meant that access to CPS support services that might have prevented placement was limited and that Shireman et al. reported that these services were not adequate in the study site anyway. The fact that most cases were off-hours suggests they were handled by patrol officers, who generally lack training in child maltreatment and may not appreciate or feel capable of implementing a range of responses to maltreatment situations.

Brown and Fuller (1991) evaluated a joint police-social work investigation program in central Scotland in 1989 (see Findlay, 1991). Joint investigations significantly reduced the proportion of cases in which children had multiple interviews from 29% to 11%. Both professionals, when surveyed, reported that the police learned a great deal about how and where to interview children and what doctors use for medical exams. Referrals to prosecution did not increase, but the comprehensiveness of police reports improved and use of case conferences became focused on more serious cases. This study is dated in that the professionals lacked the specialized skills more commonly used today, but it suggests some of the impact of joint initiatives on each agency's practices and demonstrated a clear impact on multiple interviewing.

Demarest Tingus, Heger, Foy, and Leskin (1996) found a relationship between police involvement in child sexual abuse investigations and the likelihood that child victims referred for psychotherapy would attend at least one session. Demarest Tingus et al.'s 1989 to 1990 sample consisted of children with substantiated (founded) sexual abuse that had been evaluated at Los Angeles County's Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect team. All had been referred for psychotherapy. Of 256 cases in which both law enforcement

and CPS were involved, 95.7% entered psychotherapy as opposed to 58% of 188 cases in which there was a CPS intervention only and 13% of 67 cases in which neither CPS nor law enforcement were involved. Thus, entrance into psychotherapy was nearly universal when law enforcement and CPS were involved together but not much higher than 50% when CPS alone was involved. Their analysis is flawed, however, in that police-involved cases were substantially more likely to involve intrafamilial perpetrators and somewhat more likely to involve repeated incidents of abuse. In their brief article, Demarest Tingus et al. minimally explore the meaning of the law enforcement effect, stating only that, "Clearly, these agencies [CPS and law enforcement] provide valuable resources and support for victims and their families that they otherwise may not be able to access" (p. 67). This statement is puzzling because "valuable resources and support for victims and their families" is not something that law enforcement generally provides, and the authors provide no documentation that law enforcement provided it in this sample.

Tjaden and Anhalt (1994) examined process and outcome of investigations in five communities that varied in the degree to which police and CPS investigations were conducted jointly. The authors found that the term *joint investigation* was loosely defined and operationally defined it as involving at least one contact between the two agency investigators during the CPS investigation or one conjoint interview sometime during the investigation process. Joint investigations were more common when more serious abuse was alleged and with allegations of sexual abuse or multiple forms of abuse. They were more frequent when law enforcement was the first agency officially reporting the abuse and in the context of emergency medical treatment for the victim.

They found a plethora of differences between joint and independent investigations. Joint investigations had shorter caseworker response times. They were more thorough (lengthier, more contacts with different people involved with the child and perpetrator, more face-to-face interviews). They had more consequential child protection interventions: more custody removals, more perpetrator departures from the home, more substantiated reports, and more dependency filings. Criminal justice outcomes were impressive: more perpetrator confessions, more frequent victim corroboration, more criminal prosecutions, and more guilty pleas.

Flaws in the research undercut these results, however. These outcomes could very plausibly be explained by the greater seriousness of the abuse and greater proportion of sexual abuse and multiple

forms of abuse among the joint investigation cases. The authors acknowledge the possible effect of seriousness but did not statistically control for it.

Tjaden and Anhalt did not find any advantage in outcomes when they compared communities by their degree of coordination of investigations. Communities differed significantly on investigations and outcomes, but these differences were never related to the communities' degree of police-social worker coordination.

Evaluation of sole law enforcement responsibility. The Center for the Study of Social Policy (2000) conducted an evaluation of the 1997 Arkansas legislation that transferred all investigative functions to a new FPU of the Arkansas state police. The evaluation mostly collected opinion data, and no data on prosecution were presented.

The study found that creation of the FPU led to confusion and tension over the responsibilities of this new unit vis-à-vis CPS and local police. Local police did not often welcome state police involvement. The relationship of civilian child protection investigators with the commissioned criminal justice investigators was strained, and the state police resisted the child protection responsibility—the state police director made public comments suggesting that this responsibility was as appropriate for the state tourism board as the state police. Surveys reported community stakeholders' concern that the experiment unduly emphasized the criminal justice response over the child protection responsibility, citing FPU training that emphasized interviewing the alleged perpetrator and neglected up-to-date knowledge on child interviewing. On the other hand, increased funding associated with the law led to increased staffing and decreased caseload. The assessment process improved (e.g., increased child interviewing outside the presence of the perpetrator, increased checks for prior reports of maltreatment, increased home visiting as part of assessments), although it is unclear how much this was a function of the FPU or the tighter standards that were legislated at the same time.

The 1999 evaluation came only 2 years after the passage of the FPU legislation, and it is fair to ascribe some of the implementation problems to the growing pains of a new approach. The FPU, now renamed the Crimes Against Children Division, is still in operation in the Arkansas state police. Currently, if local police are not collaborating with the civilian investigators of the Arkansas state police on investigations, under the Arkansas state police protocol, state police criminal investigators join with them in the investigation. Although a statistical comparison on prosecution has

still proved elusive, the current administrator of the program states that “immediately prior to the creation of this division at the Arkansas state police, there were literally thousands of child abuse cases hanging out there for years with no criminal activity attached. That is not the case today” (P. Utley, personal communication, December 1, 2004).

The Florida experiment has also been evaluated (Kinnevy et al., 2003). Results are preliminary and presented cautiously as deficits in data quality and data integration limited the analysis that could be done. Moreover, the evaluation captured the experiment at a relatively early point in its development, when the project was still being implemented. Several contemporaneous changes in federal and state policy and administration also complicate the interpretation of any changes. Nevertheless, data suggest that the experiment did not have an impact on child and family outcomes as of 2003. Sole law enforcement counties and comparison counties that retained CPS investigations differed only “negligibly” (p. 97) on recurrence of abuse, substantiation, and use of emergency shelters and foster care. Judges and state’s attorney staff perceived an improved quality of investigation in two experimental counties, and law enforcement officers reported improved working relationships with child protection investigators in all three. But professionals such as doctors and attorneys in the experimental counties did not rate the model more highly than professionals in the traditional counties rated CPS. As in Arkansas, an initially very negative reaction by many stakeholders had moderated over time as professionals came to value or accept the role of the civilian investigators in the sheriff’s offices.

Although the evaluation does not clearly support this social experiment, it illustrates an important point in reference to our analysis: there was no evidence of any negative effect of police involvement on the investigation system. Fears that the new system would increase unnecessary child removals were not realized (Kinnevy et al., 2003). However, the fact the law enforcement investigators in this program were specially hired civilians, including a number of former CPS investigators, is a caveat. This study does not tell us about the effect of commissioned police officers.

What we have learned from the small number of existing studies is limited. Tjaden and Anhalt’s (1994) study contrasted joint and independent investigations, an important comparison, but did not tell us what happens when only one agency is involved. Shireman et al. (1981) and Tjaden and Anhalt have problems with inference because of the potential

effect of confounding variables. Cases in which police and CPS workers are both involved are likely to be different from single-agency cases, as are jointly and independently investigated cases. This means that differences in outcomes could plausibly be attributed to case characteristics rather than the type of investigation conducted. The studies by Demarest Tingus et al. (1996) and Shireman et al. concern a narrow range of cases and outcomes. The Brown and Fuller (1991) study suggests that joint investigations reduce multiple interviewing but is dated. The research on sole law enforcement responsibility concerns a rare, experimental model that differs mainly at a management level, not in field practice. Nevertheless, there is a trend in the research: law enforcement and CPS coinvolvement tends to be related to more substantial child protective and criminal justice intervention.

CURRENT DATA ANALYSIS

As a supplement to this sparse empirical literature, we present a data analysis that compares CPS cases with and without police involvement and examines a range of CPS outcomes. Unlike previous analyses, it uses a multivariate procedure with a large sample to control statistically for a number of potentially confounding variables that might by themselves explain any differences between the police and nonpolice cases.

Like Demarest Tingus et al. (1996), this analysis compares cases with and without police involvement in investigations. It also compares cases in which police were and were not involved in the placement decision or plan to ensure the safety of the child. Finally, it also compares cases in which a multidisciplinary team (which typically includes police) was involved in planning or placement decisions to cases without such multidisciplinary team involvement.

The hypothesis is two-tailed. Given the benefits and difficulties detailed above, police involvement in CPS cases could either increase the likelihood of a range of CPS interventions or decrease their likelihood.

Methods

This analysis employed a large, recent, nationally representative sample of child maltreatment investigations. The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being (NSCAW) started by selecting a stratified, random sample of 92 child protection agencies nationwide (the primary sampling units) and then sampled within those agencies from the list of cases for which an investigation was completed in the preceding month. (For additional detail on the NSCAW

TABLE 1 Child Characteristics

Characteristic	Most Serious Alleged Abuse Type		
	Physical Abuse (n = 1,054)	Sexual Abuse (n = 590)	Neglect (n = 2,198)
Unweighted values			
Child gender			
% Male	55	29	52
% Female	45	71	48
Child race/ethnicity			
% White, non-Hispanic	44	49	44
% Black, non-Hispanic	29	23	34
% Other race, non-Hispanic	8	9	7
% Hispanic, any race	19	19	15
Child median age in years	6	9	3
Weighted values			
Child gender			
% Male	58	25	51
% Female	42	75	49
Child race/ethnicity			
% White, non-Hispanic	50	50	46
% Black, non-Hispanic	22	23	31
% Other race, non-Hispanic	6	8	7
% Hispanic, any race	22	19	16
Child median age in years	8	8	6

SOURCE: Dowd et al., 2003.

study design and sampling procedures see Dowd et al., 2003).

The CPS sample of the NSCAW consisted of investigations conducted between October 1999 and December 2000, with about 5,504 children aged 0 to 14 years, by the CPS of one of 36 different states. The data for the present analysis were limited to investigations in which the most serious allegation concerned physical abuse ($n = 1,054$), sexual abuse ($n = 590$), or neglect ($n = 2,198$). The use of these three subsamples was dictated by NSCAW data collection protocols. For each case, the caseworker was asked to specify which abuse type was deemed most serious. Follow-up severity questions were only asked about the most serious abuse. Thus, our subsamples are mutually exclusive because each case can have only one most serious abuse type.

Information in the NSCAW came from several sources, including caregivers, child protection workers, and the children themselves. Most of the information for the present analysis came from interviews with child protection workers, who consulted the case records. The present data concern features of the allegations, investigation, case outcome, and prior child protection history.

The characteristics of the children in the three groups of cases are detailed in Table 1. Sexual abuse, as expected, has a disproportionate number of female child victims. Neglect involves younger children

(weighted median age of 6) with physical and sexual abuse involving older children (weighted median age of 8 for both). All three groups have an overrepresentation of Blacks and an underrepresentation of Whites compared to the national population.

Variables

Police involvement in these cases is identified in two different NSCAW items. The first recorded whether police participated in the investigation. The second identified whether police were involved in a placement decision or plan to ensure the safety of the child. Because these two items were not mutually exclusive and implied somewhat different activities, both were used in assessing police involvement. The first was used to construct an "investigated by" variable that distinguished between (a) CPS staff only and (b) CPS staff plus police. The second produced a "planning for safety/ placement decision by" variable with three possible categories: (a) CPS staff only, (b) CPS staff plus police, and (c) a multidisciplinary or cross-agency task force (undefined). It is likely, given current practice, that most of these task forces included police, but it is possible that some did not, only other disciplines such as medicine or psychology.

Because systematic differences in the nature of the cases with and without police involvement may confound the apparent effects of police involvement on

outcomes, additional variables were created to control for many of these differences. One important circumstance that can affect either case outcomes or police involvement, or both, is the perceived seriousness of the alleged abuse. NSCAW caseworker data allowed the construction of relative severity variables for each type of abuse. This was based on the degree of physical damage for physical abuse and the degree of penetration or copulation for sexual abuse. For neglect, the caseworker identified (a) whether neglect was physical, supervisory or both; (b) what specific subtypes of neglect pertained (food, clothing, shelter, medical, hygiene, supervision, environment, substitute care); and (c) how severe it was (on a 5-point scale from *mild* to *grave*). A further aspect of case severity was assessed by noting what additional alleged abuse types were present.

Other case circumstance measures included information on risk factors associated with the child's caregiver or household (prior CPS history, active alcohol or drug abuse by the caregiver, recent arrests of the caregiver, active or past domestic violence in the household), a measure of investigation intensiveness (number of persons contacted during the investigation), and information on the child's personal characteristics (gender, age, race/ethnicity). Five of these variables (caregiver alcohol abuse, caregiver drug abuse, caregiver recent arrest, history of domestic violence, active domestic violence) had a nontrivial number of cases with missing values, ranging from 4.2% of cases to 8.6% of cases across samples. We felt the most accurate way to treat these missing data was to code them as "no," reasoning that if these circumstances were not reported by the caseworker, they were therefore not known by the caseworker and could only influence decision making on substantiation, out-of-home placement, and service provision in indirect ways.

Finally, several outcome measures were constructed from data available in NSCAW. The first was an investigation outcome measure that recorded whether the abuse allegation was found to be credible. Credible abuse was indicated if NSCAW reported "substantiated," "indicated," or "high or medium risk." A noncredible finding was indicated by responses of "neither substantiated or indicated," "unfounded or ruled out," or "low risk."¹ Although substantiation has questionable validity as a measure of harm, it is a necessary and consequential decision for CPS to take further action. A second outcome measure recorded whether the child was in out-of-home placement. This reports the child's situation at the time of the NSCAW caregiver interview and, in most cases, because of relatively short follow-up times,

reflects the consequences of the investigation in question. The final outcome measures were indicators of whether services were provided, arranged, or referred by the child protection agency after the case investigation. In addition to a variable recording "any service," further variables were constructed that identified whether parent services were provided and whether child services were provided. The 1% to 1.7% of cases across samples that lacked data on these variables were omitted from the analysis.

Statistical Analyses

Logistic regression was used to examine the relationship of police involvement to the outcome measures when controlling for the previously indicated differences in the sample cases. Thus, the following variables were entered as control variables in the analysis: child gender, age, and race/ethnicity; child's prior CPS history; active alcohol or drug abuse by the caregiver; recent arrests of the caregiver; active or past domestic violence in the household; severity of maltreatment; presence of additional maltreatment types; and number of persons contacted during the investigation (used as a measure of investigation intensiveness).

Three models were created for the entire sample. Two related police involvement in the investigation and control variables to first allegation credibility and then provision of any service. Another related police involvement in planning, use of a multidisciplinary team in planning, and control variables to use of any services. Police involvement in planning was not used as a predictor of allegation credibility because planning activities usually occur after a determination of whether the allegation is credible. Because the severity variables were specific to the most serious type of abuse in a case, we created standardized (*z*) severity scores for the total sample analysis, using the mean and standard deviation for each severity scale. The total sample models were limited to the two outcomes of allegation credibility and use of any service to provide a parsimonious test of the hypothesis and to restrain family-wise error in significance testing.

To explore further the relationships of police involvement to specific outcomes for each type of abuse, separate models were also created for nearly every combination of outcome measure, most serious type of abuse, and type of police involvement. Multiplying three abuse types (physical, sexual, neglect) times five outcome measures (allegation credibility, out-of-home placement, any service provision, parent service, child service) times two measures of police involvement (investigation, planning/ placement) but subtracting five models, as mentioned above,

TABLE 2 Investigation and Planning/Placement Involvement

Agency Involvement	Most Serious Alleged Abuse Type		
	Physical Abuse (n = 1,054)	Sexual Abuse (n = 590)	Neglect (n = 2,198)
Weighted values			
Investigation by ^a :			
% Child welfare service only	72	55	82
% Child welfare service plus police	28	45	18
Plan/placement decision by ^b :			
% Child protection service only	88	74	93
% Child protection service plus police	8	16	4
% Multidisciplinary task force	4	10	3

SOURCE: Dowd et al., 2003.

a. $\chi^2(2, N = 3649) = 18.14, p < .001$.

b. $\chi^2(4, N = 3672) = 165.4, p < .001$.

because they would have related police involvement in planning to allegation credibility, yielded 25 additional models. These were computed using raw severity scores.

All analyses were conducted with weighted data, using the STATA statistical package. Weights were computed by the NSCAW Research Group to account for differential case selection probabilities that arose from sampling design and operations (for discussion of sampling strata, domains, and other issues see Dowd et al., 2003). To prevent some large case weights from creating any artificial associations, no results are reported as significant that were not so in both the weighted and unweighted models.

Results

A police investigation was a component in 45% of the cases that were reported to child protection agencies, with sexual abuse as the most serious allegation (see Table 2). This level is perhaps higher than expected given the reported history of independent action and even resentment between police and CPS. However, when one considers that child sexual abuse is always a crime (unlike child physical abuse and child neglect), and police have an obligation to investigate all reports of crime, it might seem low. When police were not reported as being involved, this may reflect a lack of knowledge about such concurrent police investigations within the child protection agencies, a pattern in which police investigation occurs considerably after a child protection investigation or the fact that child protection or police authorities or both quickly conclude that nothing has happened that warrants police involvement. Police investigations were a component in 28% of the physical abuse cases and 18% of the neglect cases. The percentage of cases in which police contributed to planning for safety or placement was low for each category, peak-

ing at 18% for sexual abuse. Multidisciplinary involvement in planning for child safety or deciding on placement was similarly low.

The questions regarding police involvement were assessed by looking at whether it was related to three outcomes: that alleged abuse would be found credible, that the child would be placed out of the home, or that services would be provided. The weighted percentage of cases with these outcomes for the three abuse types is shown in Table 3. Logistic regressions examined how police involvement changed the likelihood of these outcomes, adjusted for a variety of variables indicative of the seriousness and complexity of the cases. Table 4 presents the distributions of these variables in each sample.

Table 5 presents the results of the total sample logistic regressions. The presence of a police investigation was associated with an increased likelihood that the child protection investigation would find the allegation of abuse credible (odds ratio = 3.0) and that services would be provided (odds ratio = 3.0). Both police involvement in planning and use of a multidisciplinary team (in which police would generally be included) were related to provision of services (odds ratios of 2.2 and 4.2, respectively). Caregiver alcohol abuse, caregiver drug abuse, and severity of abuse also strongly predicted allegation credibility and service provision. Active domestic violence strongly predicted allegation credibility and, marginally, service provision. A history of CPS involvement predicted service provision. Other control variables were significant predictors for one of the models. Note that these findings do not necessarily represent causal effects of these variables—for example, information on substance abuse may be more available in cases that are substantiated and receiving services. The most important points for our purposes are (a) police involvement was significant even when other

TABLE 3 Case Outcomes by Type of Abuse (Shown as Percentage of Cases)

Type of Abuse	Case Outcome							
	Abuse Allegation Is "Credible"	Out-of-Home Placement	Any Service	Parent Service	Child Service	Family Service	Domestic Violence Service	Legal Service
Weighted values								
% Physical abuse (<i>n</i> = 1,054)	33	9	45	36	31	17	6	6
% Sexual abuse (<i>n</i> = 590)	38	10	49	35	47	13	3	9
% Neglect (<i>n</i> = 2,198)	39	11	44	35	21	19	4	6

SOURCE: Dowd et al., 2003.

TABLE 4 Case Circumstances

Characteristic	Most Serious Alleged Abuse Type		
	Physical Abuse (<i>n</i> = 1,054)	Sexual Abuse (<i>n</i> = 590)	Neglect (<i>n</i> = 2,198)
Weighted values			
Cases with:			
% Any prior child protection service history	54	59	56
% Active alcohol abuse by caregiver	4	5	11
% Active drug abuse by caregiver	4	5	12
% Recent arrest(s) of caregiver	7	10	16
% Active domestic violence	14	4	11
% History of domestic violence			
% Against caregiver	28	29	28
% Additional alleged abuse type	24	24	15
Investigation contacts, median number of persons	3	3	3
Cases by severity level			
Physical abuse levels:			
% Dangerous acts, no marks	41		
% Minor marks	41		
% Numerous or severe marks	10		
% Medical emergency treatment	6		
% Hospitalized more than 24 hr, or permanent damage, disability	2		
Sexual abuse levels:			
% Molestation, fondling, or masturbation		61	
% Digital penetration or oral copulation		21	
% Vaginal/anal intercourse		18	
Neglect severity levels:			
% Mild			55
% Moderate			23
% Serious			10
% Severe			8
% Grave			4

SOURCE: Dowd et al., 2003.

variables were taken into account and (b) the odds ratios for the police involvement variables were comparable in size to the odds ratios for the significant control variables in most situations, even when taking into account differences in scale across variables.

Table 6 presents the adjusted odds ratios (O.R.) for various facets of police involvement for the 25 addi-

tional logistic regression analyses. These mostly parallel the results in Table 5 but provide information on specific effects of interest. Note that the relationship of police involvement in the investigation with allegation credibility was quite large for sexual abuse (O.R. = 4.3) and lowest for physical abuse (O.R. = 2). Police involvement was not associated with out-of-

TABLE 5 Logistic Regressions on CPS Outcomes: Total Sample

<i>A. Predicting Abuse Allegation Is "Credible" When Police Investigate (N = 3,604)</i>						
<i>Predictor</i>	β	SE	t	p	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>95% CI</i>
Child being female	0.41	.15	2.67	< .01	1.5	1.11 to 2.03
Child being Black ^a	-0.15	.19	-0.80	.43	.86	.60 to 1.24
Child being Hispanic ^a	0.20	.23	0.86	.39	1.2	.78 to 1.89
Child less than 6 years old	-0.46	.16	-2.95	< .01	0.6	.46 to .86
Multiple-abuse type allegations	0.38	.21	1.79	.07	1.5	.96 to 2.20
Number of investigation contacts	0.09	.06	1.40	.16	1.1	.97 to 1.24
Abuse severity	0.89	.11	8.33	< .001	2.4	1.97 to 2.99
Any prior child CPS history	0.17	.16	1.09	.28	1.2	.87 to 1.62
Active alcohol abuse by caregiver	0.96	.29	3.29	< .01	2.6	1.47 to 4.59
Active drug abuse by caregiver	1.66	.31	5.44	< .001	5.3	2.90 to 9.61
Recent arrest(s) of caregiver	-0.14	.22	-0.70	.51	0.9	.56 to 1.33
History of domestic violence against caregiver	-0.08	.20	-0.40	.69	0.9	.62 to 1.37
Active domestic violence against caregiver	0.99	.23	4.28	< .001	2.7	1.71 to 4.25
Neglect is most serious abuse ^b	0.43	.17	2.48	.01	1.5	1.09 to 2.17
Sexual abuse is most serious abuse ^b	-0.24	.30	-0.80	.42	0.8	.43 to 1.42
Police and CPS both involved in the investigation	1.10	.18	5.95	< .001	3.0	2.08 to 4.29
Constant	-1.50	.25	-5.93	< .001		
<i>B. Predicting Any Service Provision or Referral When Police Investigate (N = 3,575)</i>						
<i>Predictor</i>	β	SE	t	p	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>95% CI</i>
Child being female	0.26	.15	1.70	.09	1.3	.96 to 1.75
Child being Black ^a	0.00	.17	0.01	.99	1.0	.72 to 1.4
Child being Hispanic ^a	0.36	.23	1.54	.12	1.4	.91 to 2.26
Child less than 6 years old	-0.23	.15	-1.51	.13	0.8	.59 to 1.07
Multiple-abuse type allegations	0.33	.19	1.79	.07	1.4	.97 to 2.02
Number of investigation contacts	0.17	.06	2.80	< .01	1.2	1.05 to 1.34
Abuse severity	0.29	.10	2.88	< .01	1.4	1.10 to 1.63
Any prior child CPS history	0.41	.15	2.71	< .01	1.5	1.12 to 2.03
Active alcohol abuse by caregiver	0.73	.30	2.43	.02	2.1	1.15 to 3.73
Active drug abuse by caregiver	1.32	.26	4.97	< .001	3.7	2.22 to 6.28
Recent arrest(s) of caregiver	0.15	.25	0.58	.56	1.2	.70 to 1.91
History of domestic violence against caregiver	0.31	.20	1.60	.11	1.4	.93 to 2.01
Active domestic violence against caregiver	0.46	.27	1.70	.09	1.6	.93 to 2.72
Neglect is most serious abuse ^b	-0.10	.17	-0.56	.57	0.9	.65 to 1.27
Sexual abuse is most serious abuse ^b	-0.13	.27	-0.46	.64	0.9	.52 to 1.50
Police and CPS both involved in the investigation	0.83	.19	4.47	< .001	2.3	1.59 to 3.29
Constant	-1.41	.26	-5.49	< .001		
<i>C. Predicting Any Service Referral or Provision When Police Are Involved in Planning (N = 3,598)</i>						
<i>Predictor</i>	β	SE	t	p	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>95% CI</i>
Child being female	0.20	.15	1.31	.19	1.2	.90 to 1.65
Child being Black ^a	0.06	.18	0.33	.74	1.1	.74 to 1.52
Child being Hispanic ^a	0.50	.22	2.22	.03	1.6	1.06 to 2.55
Child less than 6 years old	-0.17	.16	-1.06	.29	0.9	.62 to 1.15
Multiple-abuse type allegations	0.35	.20	1.77	.08	1.4	.96 to 2.10
Number of investigation contacts	0.19	.06	2.89	< .01	1.2	1.06 to 1.37
Abuse severity	0.39	.10	4.06	< .001	1.5	1.22 to 1.79
Any prior child CPS history	0.49	.15	3.21	.001	1.6	1.21 to 2.20
Active alcohol abuse by caregiver	0.79	.30	2.62	< .01	2.2	1.22 to 4.01
Active drug abuse by caregiver	1.25	.27	4.72	< .001	3.5	2.08 to 5.88
Recent arrest(s) of caregiver	0.08	.27	0.30	.77	1.1	.64 to 1.82
History of domestic violence against caregiver	0.36	.20	1.81	.07	1.4	.97 to 2.10
Active domestic violence against caregiver	0.58	.28	2.07	.04	1.8	1.03 to 3.10

(continued)

TABLE 3 (continued)

Predictor	β	SE	t	p	Odds Ratio	95% CI
Neglect is most serious abuse ^b	-0.07	.17	-0.43	.67	0.9	.67 to 1.30
Sexual abuse is most serious abuse ^b	-0.09	.28	-0.32	.75	0.9	.53 to 1.59
Police and CPS both involved in planning	0.79	.29	2.71	< .01	2.2	1.24 to 3.87
Multidisciplinary team involved in planning	1.43	.48	2.99	< .01	4.2	1.63 to 10.64
Constant	-1.43	.25	-5.70	< .001		

NOTE: CPS = child protective services; CI = confidence interval.

a. Reference category is child being White.

b. Reference category is physical abuse as the most serious abuse.

TABLE 6 Relationship of Police Involvement to CPS Case Outcomes by Most Serious Abuse Type^a

	Case Outcome				
	Abuse Allegation Is "Credible"	Out-of-Home Placement	Any Service	Parent Service	Child Service
Investigation agency ^b					
Physical abuse (n = 988)					
CPS plus police	2.0* (1.2 to 3.4)	2.0 (.9 to 4.3)	2.1* (1.2 to 3.6)	1.8* (1.1 to 3.2)	2.3* (1.2 to 4.1)
Sexual abuse (n = 539)					
CPS plus police	4.3* (2.1 to 8.8)	1.5 (.6 to 4.1)	5.1* (2.3 to 11.1)	4.8* (2.3 to 10.4)	4.8* (2.2 to 10.4)
Neglect (n = 2,077)					
CPS plus police	3.3* (2.0 to 5.4)	1.4 (.9 to 2.2)	1.7 (1.0 to 3.0)	2.2* (1.3 to 3.7)	1.9⁺ (1.1 to 3.4)
Planning agency ^c					
Physical abuse (n = 999)					
CPS plus police	—	1.5 (.6 to 3.7)	4.1* (1.9 to 8.9)	2.2 (.9 to 5.1)	3.5⁺ (1.6-7.5)
Multidisciplinary team	—	2.1 (.7 to 6.7)	7.0* (2.5 to 19.6)	5.6 (2.1 to 14.9)	6.0* (2.4-15.1)
Sexual abuse (n = 558)					
CPS plus police	—	1.3 (.5 to 3.7)	.9 (.3 to 3.1)	1.4 (.5 to 4.3)	1.1 (.3 to 3.5)
Multidisciplinary team	—	.6 (.2 to 1.9)	3.6⁺ (1.01 to 13.0)	3.4* (1.1 to 10.3)	3.9⁺ (1.1 to 13.5)
Neglect (n = 2,084)					
CPS plus police	—	2.1 (1.1 to 4.1)	2.4⁺ (1.1 to 5.0)	2.3⁺ (1.2 to 4.5)	3.0 (1.6 to 5.7)
Multidisciplinary team	—	5.1* (2.2 to 11.8)	6.9* (1.8 to 26.4)	5.2* (1.7 to 15.3)	1.8 (1.0-3.3)

NOTE: CPS = child protective services. 95% confidence intervals are in parentheses.

a. Shown as odds ratio from weighted model. Bold values are statistically significant.

b. CPS plus police versus CPS alone.

c. CPS plus police versus CPS alone or multidisciplinary team versus CPS alone.

* $p < .05$ in both weighted and unweighted models. + $p < .05$ in weighted model and $p < .10$ in unweighted model. All others do not meet significance criteria.

home placement with one possible exception. Out-of-home placement was more likely in cases of neglect in which there was multidisciplinary involvement in planning to ensure the safety of the child or in decision making about child placement (O.R. = 5.1). Although Table 5 shows that police involvement was associated in general with an increased likelihood that services would be provided, Table 6 makes clear that this was not necessarily true for all services and all forms of maltreatment.

One of the most clear-cut conclusions from Tables 5 and 6 is that police involvement was not associated with a reduction or inhibition of affirmative child protection activities under any of the conditions assessed.

The associations were all in the direction of more child protective involvement when police participated.

DISCUSSION OF EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Although the results are diverse in their specifics, a common theme runs through them: Law enforcement involvement is positively associated with a range of different CPS interventions for victims of child sexual abuse, child physical abuse, and child neglect. Both a determination that allegations were credible and various forms of service provision were more likely for several categories of cases when law enforce-

ment was involved. This was true even when a broad range of confounding variables was statistically controlled.

A higher rate of child removal from the home emerged for neglect cases when a multidisciplinary team was involved in planning for child safety or making a decision about placement. This could possibly be construed as supporting concern that police are oriented toward more aggressive action or toward taking citizens into custody. But the fact that it is related to multidisciplinary planning around child safety and not investigation and that it only pertains to one form of maltreatment suggests that the mechanisms may be subtler than a simple generalized aggressive orientation of law enforcement. Removal in neglect cases usually signals a lack of adequate caretaking. The relationship of a multidisciplinary team to child removal may reflect the fact that several professionals become involved when there is a lack of caretaking and a need to make plans to protect child safety. Note that the overall effect on CPS was small because only 3% of cases featured such multidisciplinary involvement. Police representation on these teams may reflect the necessity that, in most states, law enforcement actually carries out the removal. It is plausible that police involvement may, under some circumstances, increase likelihood of removal, but more research is needed into what this means, whether such action is appropriate and timely or precipitous and ill-considered.

Any interpretation of these results, of course, must be tempered by the fact they come from a secondary analysis of data that were collected for other purposes. They do make a contribution, however, to resolving some of the points in the debate over the effects of coinvolvement. The fact that CPS was more likely to carry out a number of interventions when police were involved, even when a number of case characteristics were statistically controlled, suggests that police involvement does not interfere in a major, systematic way with CPS intervention with the family. Families would not be involved in more services if police were scaring them into noncooperation with CPS. Child protective services would not find more cases credible when there is police involvement if police swayed CPS workers' judgment against the child protection mission or so alarmed or distressed families that they did not cooperate with CPS or so interfered with CPS functioning that it was difficult to carry on their investigation.

It is possible that police involvement helps enable CPS interventions by providing more thorough investigations and a greater quantity of evidence. This may help CPS substantiate more cases, especially given

that recent studies suggest that substantiation is often more a function of available proof than judgment of harm to children (Drake, 1996; Drake & Jonson-Reid, 2000). Police may also provide support, authority, safety, and investigative expertise to CPS workers, empowering them to work more effectively. Police involvement will lead, in many cases, to the involvement of criminal and civil courts where judges can order children's services and other important interventions. To some extent, the effects found here may be a function of police and CPS involvement being imbedded within a larger multidisciplinary team investigation, although it seems likely that few cases featured such teams given that such a small percentage of cases reported "planning for safety/ placement decision by a multidisciplinary or cross-agency task force."

It would be premature to conclude that there is a causal effect of police involvement on CPS outcomes, however. It is quite possible that we have not been able to identify or measure important, additional confounding variables. Although we measured severity of maltreatment as well as possible given the data set, this construct can be elusive to measure (e.g., Chaffin, Wherry, & Newlin, 1997; Haugaard, 2000) because it depends on so many different variables itself (frequency, intensity of abusive acts, force used, etc.), and we know of no severity measure with well-demonstrated validity. Also, police may tend to become involved when evidence for abuse is available, when victims' family members are willing and able to disclose greater information, at certain times of the day or week, in certain areas, or when there is greater certainty that abuse occurred and a particular individual was the perpetrator. These may be the very circumstances in which CPS would take greater action anyway, quite apart from the fact of law enforcement being involved or not involved. Finally, the degree of police involvement depends on the law and policies of the communities and states participating in the NSCAW study. Police-involved and non-police-involved states could differ on policies, resources, and risk variables that could affect CPS outcome variables. We think it unlikely that any of these confounds entirely explains our results. It is also not plausible, we think, that such confounds would be so strong as to turn otherwise negative effects of police involvement into spurious positive effects.

CONCLUSION

Overall, police do not appear to hinder CPS effectiveness and may, in fact, promote it. Police involvement may increase the probability that CPS finds alle-

gations of child maltreatment credible and provides services. However, alternative explanations related to the nature of the cases, situations, and communities in which police get involved cannot be ruled out. One older study found that police as first responders, usually in off-hours, were more likely to place children outside the home, and the present study finds multidisciplinary involvement was associated with more placements in neglect cases. But the meaning of these findings is ambiguous and not necessarily problematic. There is currently no empirical justification for concern about systematic negative effects of law enforcement involvement on CPS investigations.

We recommend that law enforcement and CPS coordinate their child abuse and neglect investigations in every community. This recommendation is based, in part, on this and previous case data analysis. It is also based on the experience of hundreds of professionals as expressed in survey results, practice literature, and the rapid and widespread development of CACs and other multidisciplinary structures.

Of course, difficulties may arise with individual officers and CPS workers on individual cases, and there may be subtler problems that we are not capturing. But cases of police/social worker interference with each other may also be unusual. Their frequency may be overestimated because of how much attention they command (see Tversky & Kahnemann, 1973) and to historical mistrust and lack of understanding between child protection workers and police.

The difficulties that can arise between police and CPS workers stem from differences in their mission, training, investigative methods, experience, beliefs, and temperament that arise from the nature of each institution. These difficulties can interfere with the functioning of each agency but are predictable and not primarily a consequence of the misbehavior of individuals. This is a strong argument that law enforcement and CPS in every community should develop policies and structures to deal with these differences. Many communities have done so with joint investigation protocols, MDTs, and CACs. Note that these same police-CPS differences can also be strengths that complement each other, and inter-agency structures can be designed to enable each agency to make the best use of its strengths.

Staffing, employment, and other specific policies and practices within CPS and law enforcement agencies should be reexamined to promote coordination. For example, a 2001 summit meeting of police, child protection professionals, and CAC professionals recommended that CPS provide 24-hr staffing to work with law enforcement on severe or life-threatening cases (International Association of Chiefs of Police,

2002). Cross and Spath (1998) found that night-shift officers would often not attend daytime team meetings about their cases because of the lack of overtime pay for the extra time. Both CPS and law enforcement could implement more cross-training.

A historical perspective is useful here. The opposition to prosecution that fueled some of the difficulties between police and CPS seems to have waned as knowledge about child abuse has increased, the criminal justice system has prosecuted more child abuse cases, and police and CPS have worked together more frequently. In addition, much of the literature on the difficulties of police-CPS coinvolvement predates the enormous development of interagency structures in the past 15 years, some of which include colocation of CPS and police child abuse specialists. The frequency of problems may depend on whether communities have these structures and individual offices and personnel make use of them.

More research is needed on the types of cases and circumstances in which police become involved, including reporting and referral patterns. Studies need to examine interactions between police and CPS workers, including frequency and circumstances of benefits and problems and types of cases in which collaboration has been effective and ineffective. Research should examine quality and appropriateness of interventions, not just whether or not they happened. Studies should look at the reactions of victims and nonoffending parents to police involvement in CPS cases. New research should consider the role of police vis-à-vis hospitals and physicians in child maltreatment and the effect of law enforcement on MDTs. Finally, our analysis examines CPS outcomes with and without police involvement, but we are aware of no study that examines the relationship between CPS involvement and criminal justice outcomes, although this is equally important.

In our experience, police officers' and child protection workers' substantial commitment to the well-being of children often transcends so-called turf battles and nourishes increasing experimentation and common action to develop better methods. These developments may have helped contribute to a general decline in the incidence of child sexual abuse (Jones & Finkelhor, 2001). Continued cooperative efforts between society's efforts to protect children and its effort to bring perpetrators to justice are needed to address fully the substantial problem of child victimization in all its forms. Perhaps the most important impact of this article will be to retire the old shibboleth that police and CPS workers cannot work together.

NOTE

1. The National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-Being item used to construct this variable coded a caseworker evaluation of high, medium, or low risk for agencies that do not classify reports or investigations as substantiated or not.

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