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## Reunification of Child and Animal Welfare Agencies: Cross-Reporting of Abuse in Wellington County, Ontario

Lisa Anne Zilney

Montclair State University, zilneyl@montclair.edu

Mary Zilney

MSW, RSW, mary.zilney@wcsvr.org

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# Reunification of Child and Animal Welfare Agencies: Cross-Reporting of Abuse in Wellington County, Ontario

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*Lisa Anne Zilney and Mary Zilney*

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Institutional change has resulted in the separation of organizations for the protection of animals and children. This project reunites two organizations to examine associations between human violence and animal cruelty. For 12 months, Family and Children's Services (FCS) investigators and Humane Society (HS) investigators in Wellington County, Canada, completed checklists to examine connections between forms of violence. FCS workers found some cause for concern in 20% of 1,485 homes with an animal companion. HS workers completed 247 checklists, resulting in 10 referrals to FCS. The first study of its kind, this project details the findings of cross-reporting in Wellington County and offers suggestions for future replication.

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*Lisa Anne Zilney, PhD, is Assistant Professor, Montclair State University, Upper Montclair, NJ. Mary Zilney, MSW, RSW, is Family Services Supervisor, Family and Children's Services, Guelph and Wellington County, Ontario, Canada. Special acknowledgment to: Lorna Ronald, Executive Director of the Guelph Humane Society, for her contribution and commitment to this project; Maurice Brubacher, Executive Director, and Wanda Rae, Family Services Manager, of Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County for their unconditional support; Sammy Zahran for his conceptual and statistical insight; and the editors and anonymous reviewers of Child Welfare.*

In the social work tradition, concern for the welfare of children and the development of social services for families reflects a long and often slow evolution of ideology and practice. The origins of the child-saving movement began in colonial days and were enhanced by the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601, which grew out of a consciousness of public responsibility for poverty and its consequences. During the Industrial Revolution, people saw children as durable, inexpensive, and powerless labor sources, and it was not until the 19th Century that the state began assuming responsibility for children through the formation reform schools and orphanages (Laird & Hartman, 1985). Despite increased public interest in ending cruelty toward children, no formal organization for identifying and assessing child abuse and neglect existed until 1874 (Rycus & Hughes, 1998).

In 1824, Richard Martin, MP, established the first animal welfare society in Britain, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), with the expressed goal of influencing attitudes toward animals. Forty-one years later in 1865, Henry Bergh founded the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in the United States. In Canada, the first SPCA organizations were in Montreal in 1869, followed by Ottawa in 1871, and the Ontario SPCA in Toronto in 1873 (Chamberlain & Preece, 1993).

In 1874, an unusual incident created an opportunity to establish the first organization dedicated to the prevention of cruelty toward children. A young girl named Mary Ellen Wilson, who had been abused by her caregiver, attracted the attention of a concerned citizen. Unanswered pleas to child-saving institutions and public officials resulted in the citizen approaching Henry Bergh of the New York SPCA. Bergh, with the help of attorney Elbridge T. Gerry, initiated court action to remove Wilson from the abusive environment, using laws addressing the treatment of animals. As a result, Gerry emerged as a leader of the new child rescue movement, founding the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 1875, the first such organization in the world (Wheeler, 1910).

After 1874, many North American animal welfare groups with available resources expanded their missions to include the welfare of children, thereafter referring to themselves as Humane Societies (HSs; Chamberlain & Preece, 1993). The newly organized effort to rescue neglected and abused children was not simply the result of awareness that children, like animals, merited protection from cruel treatment. Instead, it was an evolutionary step in the movement to protect children from a variety of harms, while simultaneously establishing their rights (Thomas, 1972). By 1900, more than 250 societies in the United States aided in the protection of children from neglect and abuse (Laird & Hartman, 1985).

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## Child Welfare

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When a caregiver abuses, neglects, or is clearly unable or unwilling to protect his or her child, society responds with the public child protective services system, traditionally a specialized component of a broader child welfare system. The focus of such services is the rehabilitation of the home by addressing contexts giving rise to abuse and neglect. In most states and provinces, child maltreatment is legally defined by statute, although this varies by jurisdiction. The National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect defines an abused or neglected child as one whose physical or mental health or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm by acts or omissions of the child's parent or other people responsible for that child's welfare (Jenkins, Salus, & Schultze, 1979).

One can delineate many subcategories of child cruelty, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, and various forms of neglect, such as educational and medical neglect, lack of protection, and emotional mistreatment. Added to these direct failures of parents in nurturing and rearing their children are those concerns that involve parental behavior in other, more tangential areas, such as their sexual mores or criminal activity outside the home (Laird & Hartman, 1985). In 1998, as part of child welfare reform, the Ministry of Community and Social Services implemented the

Risk Assessment Model for Child Protection in Ontario, identifying factors to be considered when assessing the well-being of a child. In this article, *domestic violence* is defined as outlined in this model and applies to children up to 16 years of age.

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## Animal Welfare

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The focus of cruelty toward animals traditionally was on physical harm, primarily the willful infliction of harm, injury, and intended pain (Kellert & Felthous, 1985), as it is the easiest form of violence to recognize. This definition, although pervasive in the legal community, which is bound by the continued property status of the animal, fails to account for neglect, which according to humane organizations, accounts for approximately 90% of all animal abuse (Solot, 1997). Generally, statutes at the state level prohibit any unjustifiable physical pain, suffering, or death of an animal (Francione, 1995). Of issue, however, is that enforcement of laws continue to be sporadic, legal interpretations vary widely across jurisdictions, serious sanctions are rarely imposed when convictions do occur, and animal protection organizations are frequently isolated from other social service agencies (Arkow, 1999; Fox, 1999).

In Canada, as of 1893, the Guelph HS was the organization responsible for both animal and child welfare in Guelph, Ontario. By 1903, the society's work focused more on child welfare, making the separation into two agencies inevitable. By the late 1920s, Family and Children's Services (FCS) of Guelph and Wellington County became responsible for the protection of children, and the Guelph and Wellington County HS dedicated itself solely to the welfare of animals (Rutter, 1993). In 2000, the two agencies reunited in recognition of the association between animal cruelty and human violence. Although the agencies continue to function independently and carry out separate mandates, this renewed partnership led to the development of this research project, bringing the agencies full circle.

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## Human Violence and Animal Cruelty

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The human-animal bond has existed for centuries in a variety of forms, both detrimental and beneficial to the animal, both complex and contradictory. In Western cultures, great disparity exists between treatment of animals and beliefs about animals, with messages mixed as to the acceptable role of animals in society (Lockwood, 1999; Serpell, 1999). Research on animal abuse remains in its infant stages, yet methodological difficulties and the changing definition of *animal abuse* greatly affect the varied incidence rates found in this area of research. For many scholars, animal abuse is not an issue in itself, but is of interest only as a catalyst for current or future interhuman conflict. Animal abuse most frequently has been linked to mass or serial murderers (American Law Institute, 1993; Miller & Knutson, 1997; Skrapec, 1996) in the media using anecdotal evidence, such as the cases of the Boston Strangler Alberto DeSalvo (Beirne, 1999), Jeffrey Dahmer (Goleman, 1991), and Ted Bundy (White, 1992), who all allegedly killed animals before escalating to human violence.

One of the first studies conducted on animal abuse was in 1971, which provided case illustrations of antisocial children who abused animals (Tapia, 1971). This research illuminated the often violent and abusive homes of which these children were a product, and found animal abuse present in follow-up studies two to nine years later (Rigdon & Tapia, 1977). Other research suggests that animal abuse can serve as a marker for children who may be experiencing family violence or as an indicator of future violent behavior (Davies, 1998; Miller & Knutson, 1997). For example, Hutton (1983) found that of families with a history of animal abuse, 83% had children at risk of neglect or abuse.

The research linking animal abuse and child abuse was encouraged in part by the inclusion of animal abuse as a symptom of conduct disorder among children in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association, 1987) and the *International Classification of Mental and Behavioural Disorders* (World Health Organization, 1996). Many

scholars believe that abuse of animals in childhood socializes children to engage in other forms of violence at later stages in the life course (Flynn, 1997). For example, researchers have found rates of animal abuse as high as 60% in families in which child abuse is present, increasing to 88% in families that physically abuse children (DeViney, Dickert, & Lockwood, 1983). Animal welfare organizations and humane education groups, such as the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Latham Foundation (Loar & White, 1992; Tebault, 1994), espouse this linkage of child abuse and animal abuse. Also, Lockwood and Church (1998) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation purport that cruelty toward animals is one childhood behavior that acts as a powerful indicator of violence elsewhere in an individual's life.

Violence against animals is also linked to the abuse of women. Surveys of battered women that ask about the abuse of animals in their homes indicate that male partners use animals to control and frighten women into submission. The Center for Prevention of Domestic Violence in Colorado Springs revealed that 24% of women seeking refuge against domestic violence reported their assailant had abused animals (Arkow, 1996). In a Wisconsin survey of women using domestic violence prevention services, 86% of women had companion animals, and of these, more than 80% had experienced maltreatment of their animal by a partner (Arkow, 1996). Considering most domestic violence service organizations do not provide shelter for companion animals, it is not surprising that nearly 20% of women in abusive relationships delay entering a shelter due to concerns about their animal companion (Ascione, Weber, & Wood, 1997). In fact, although 83% of shelter directors acknowledge a link between domestic violence and animal abuse, less than 28% question clients about the occurrence of animal abuse in their home (Ascione et al., 1997).

Arluke, Levin, Luke, and Ascione (1999) sought to examine the extent to which animal abuse was correlated with a myriad of antisocial behaviors. Results indicated that although animal

abusers were significantly more likely than controls to engage in criminal behavior, both violent and nonviolent, animal abusers were also significantly more likely to commit a host of other types of antisocial acts (Arluke et al., 1999). Specifically, animal abusers were 3.2 times more likely to have a criminal record than control participants, and 5.3 times more likely to have a violent criminal record: 70% of animal abusers committed at least one criminal offense, compared with 22% of control respondents. Furthermore, animal abusers were 4 times more likely to be arrested for property crimes, 3.5 times more likely to be arrested for drug-related offenses, and 3.5 times more likely to be arrested for disorderly behavior. Although the relationship between animal abuse and child abuse remains under debate, they are both forms of domestic violence (Hall, 1999). As such, the unity of child welfare agencies and animal welfare agencies may improve services and resources, further assisting children and animals and the families of which they are a part.

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## Method

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This project involving the completion of intake checklists between FCS of Guelph and Wellington County and the Guelph HS, began on February 1, 2001, and continued through January 31, 2002. The purpose of the research was to gather statistics at a local level through cross-reporting. The researchers would use the data to examine the link between abuse of animals and humans and potentially to serve as an educational tool in the community and to develop programs to raise awareness of this connection.

Researchers developed an initial intake checklist form to simplify the gathering of information and remind investigators to seek data through direct questioning of their clients relevant to the completion of the form. Each new investigation by either agency required the completion of the checklist. Half of the form consisted of questions related to children, completed by HS workers, and the other half consisted of similar questions related to animals, completed by FCS workers.

Through an internal training program, researchers educated investigators from both agencies about the other agency's mandates and procedures, and issues relating to the link between cruelty to animals and humans. The training was two hours long and took place in March and April 2001. The geographical area was Wellington County, inclusive of urban and rural settings. At the end of each month, the researchers used a check-and-balance system to identify incomplete forms. They advised workers failing to initially complete the checklist to do so after the fact, which may have resulted in telescoping or memory corruption.

From February 1, 2001, through January 31, 2002, FCS workers completed 1,485 checklists. Of these, 747 (50%) had animals present, and FCS made 16 (2.1%) referrals to HS. Geographically, of the 16 referrals to HS, 69% (11 cases) came from the east region of Wellington County. HS completed 247 checklists: 94 (39%) had children present, and HS made 10 (10.6%) referrals to FCS.

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## **FCS Findings**

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FCS intake workers completed 1,485 checklists. Geographically, 455 (30%) were in the west area of Wellington County, 449 (30%) in the east, 381 (26%) in the north, and 200 (14%) in the south. Of the visits, 41% were to homes with no animal companions, and 50% were to homes with at least one animal companion. In 9% of the cases, the worker did not determine whether an animal lived in the home, as he or she did not visit the home.

In the 747 homes with an animal present, 54% had only one animal, 24% had two animals, 9% had three animals, and 13% had four or more animals (range = 1–23). Of them, 37% had dogs, 31% had cats, and 15% had a combination of dogs and cats. The remaining 17% had a variety of animals including birds, rabbits, rodents, horses, farm animals, and fish. In homes with an animal, 90% of the time the worker was able to observe the animal.

The workers reported concern for the well-being of the animal companion in 12 (1.6%) cases. Reasons for such concern in-

cluded: family living in a motel, animal perceived as ill, report from a family member of animal abuse, dirty living conditions, confined living space, or animal tied on a short lead. In 73 (10%) cases, the worker reported the animal was living in inappropriate living conditions, including living in a motel or car, in a confined area, continually outside, or, most frequently, in dirty conditions. Problematic, however, is that 59 of the 73 checklists that reported concern for the animal's living condition failed to expand on the reason for such concern. This may have resulted from FCS workers not perceiving living conditions as fundamental to the well-being of the animal, or from a survey design flaw that resulted in affirmative answers by workers not reading carefully the checklist. The absence of appropriate living conditions was statistically related to location in Wellington County: 49% (36) of inappropriate living conditions were in the north, 41% (30) were in the east, 8% (6) were in the west, and 2% (1) were in the south. One in five homes in the north region of Wellington County that have an animal fail to provide appropriate living conditions, as documented by FCS investigators.

Furthermore, in 32 (4.3%) cases, the worker reported signs of excrement in the home. In 75% of these cases, the concern was based on the smell of excrement; in 15%, excrement was visible inside the home; and in 10%, excrement was visible outside the home. In 4 (0.5%) cases, the FCS worker noted the presence of injuries on an animal in the home. In two of these cases, the animal appeared to have a broken foot that had been tended by a veterinarian, and in one case, the animal appeared ill. The fourth worker failed to elaborate his or her concerns. There were 36 (4.8%) cases of worker concern about the animal's behavior. This involved behaviors such as not responding when called, a history of biting, being hyperactive or out of control, or appearing aggressive or fearful. In 59% (20) of the cases in which workers reported animal behavior problems, the cause for concern was the animal's aggression. Furthermore, 15 checklists reported aggressiveness of the animal not as a behavioral problem, but as a note

in the comment section. Of particular interest is that although workers noted aggression in 35 homes, in 80% (28) of these instances, the worker did not make a referral to HS. Workers only initiated referrals in seven cases in which they reported animal aggression. Table 1 documents overall findings by FCS.

Of the 747 homes FCS workers visited, incidents of neglect, injury, behavioral problems, inappropriate living conditions, or concern for the animal's well-being occurred in 173 cases. Although more than one cause for concern existed in some cases, approximately 20% of homes visited by an FCS worker that had an animal companion demonstrated an issue of concern. That one in five homes visited had issues of care illustrates the need for, at minimum, educational endeavors regarding appropriate care of animal companions.

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### **Guelph HS Findings**

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Of the 247 HS visits, 49% were to homes with no children, and 39% were to homes with at least one child. In 12% of the cases, the worker did not determine whether a child lived in the home, as he or she did not visit the home. In the 94 homes with a child present, 39% had only one child, 29% had two children, 11% had three children, and 3% had five children. In 18% of the cases, the worker was unable to determine how many children were present in the household, although he or she had determined the presence of at least one child. In homes with a child, 50% of the time, the worker was able to observe the child during the visit, and 50% of the time, the child was unavailable for a variety of reasons, including: the visit did not occur at the family's home, the child was in another room, the visit took place outside, or most frequently, the child was at school.

With regard to signs of abuse or neglect, HS workers reported no cases of inappropriate clothing or poor living conditions, nor any presence of injuries on a child. In 2 of the 94 homes in which children were present, workers reported lack of cleanliness as a sign of neglect. In another case, a worker reported concern with a

**TABLE 1**  
**Family and Children's Services Checklist Findings**

<i>Concern</i>	<i>Number of Incidents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Physical concern for animal's well-being	12	1.8
Inappropriate living conditions	73	10
Evidence of excrement	32	4.3
Presence of injuries	4	0.5
Animal exhibited behavior problems	36	4.8
Referrals to Guelph Humane Society	16	2.1

child's behavior, in this instance, a verbally abusive child. One worker reported the presence of drug paraphernalia. Table 2 illustrates findings by HS investigators.

It is noteworthy that although only 2 of the 94 homes with children present exhibited any of the survey indicators of neglect or abuse, workers made 10 referrals (10.6%) to FCS. This is likely due to increased caution when dealing with children. That is, in no case did FCS workers make referrals to HS without actual evidence of abuse or neglect, and in fact, even in cases in which they saw neglect, referrals were frequently absent. Conversely, HS investigators referred cases in which suspicion of abuse or neglect occurred, rather than only in demonstrated cases.

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## Discussion of Cross-Substantiated Cases

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This section examines the cruelty link between animals and humans through the review of seven investigations founded by both HS and FCS. Cases 1 and 2 were initially investigated by HS and then referred to FCS; the remaining five cases were substantiated by FCS and then referred to HS.

- Case 1: Neglect/Substance Abuse: HS's investigation determined that the individual had moved out of her residence and left her guinea pig in the dwelling, resulting in the animal dying of starvation. The investigator also learned that the woman's children were in foster care. Based on this knowledge, he or she made a referral to FCS.

**TABLE 2**  
**Humane Society Checklist Findings**

<i>Concern</i>	<i>Number of Incidents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Signs of neglect	1	1.1
Children exhibited behavioral problems	1	1.1
Referrals to family and children's services	10	10.6

An FCS investigation had been ongoing and substantiated that the children were in need of protection due to the mother's ongoing substance abuse concerns. The caregiver's negligence and substance abuse resulted in neglect of both children and animal.

- **Case 2: Neglect/Neglect:** HS responded to complaints of a strong smell of guinea pig urine that was making other tenants physically ill. The HS investigation revealed a strong animal odor in the home and filthy living conditions. On learning children were present, the investigator made a referral to FCS. The investigation by FCS revealed similar neglect concerns.
- **Case 3: Inadequate Supervision/Aggressive Animal:** FCS identified many concerns in this case, including children wandering the neighborhood unsupervised and hitting the dogs, dogs biting the children, and parents hitting the children and dogs. Drug abuse was also alleged, but unverified. FCS substantiated inadequate supervision by the caregivers. Further investigation revealed the dogs were aggressive and territorial, posing a threat to the family and others. The caregivers were unwilling to alter parenting styles and unwilling to surrender the dogs. HS did not have grounds to remove the dogs, although FCS did have cause to apprehend the children. The parents later relinquished all rights to the children, who became permanent wards.
- **Case 4: Domestic Violence/Neglect:** FCS verified adult conflict in the home consisting of threats and verbal abuse by the male partner toward the female and children. The victims disclosed further that the perpetrator had kicked their canine companion and had moved out, taking the animal.

FCS referred this matter to HS, who were unable to verify the allegation of physical abuse due to lack of evidence. The male admitted to verbally reprimanding the animal, but denied being physically abusive. HS did, however, verify neglect concerns due to lack of adequate shelter.

- Case 5: Domestic Violence, Neglect, Physical Abuse/Neglect: An FCS investigation founded numerous concerns, including physical and verbal abuse of the female partner and the children, a messy home, nutrition concerns, and a history of transience by the family, posing a significant flight risk. During ongoing FCS involvement, the family fled to a motel leaving their cat in their van. The HS investigation confirmed this allegation. The caregivers demonstrated inability to provide basic necessities consistently for both children and animal.
- Case 6: Parent-Preteen Conflict, Preteen Behavior Problems/Physical Abuse: An FCS investigation substantiated serious parent-preteen conflict in the home and severe behavioral problems by a 12-year-old, including violence toward family, friends, and animals. In fact, the child kicked the dog in the presence of the FCS worker. When HS responded to the referral, they confirmed physical abuse by the child toward the dog. The mother presented as powerless to intervene and indicated her intentions to abandon her child rather than surrender her dog.
- Case 7: Emotional Harm/Physical Abuse: FCS verified emotional harm consisting of the mother screaming at her 10-year-old daughter. The investigation further revealed that the child was roughly handling the family cat and did so in the worker's presence. FCS made a referral to HS, and they confirmed physical harm. Both the mother and the child admitted to the allegation of rough handling. The mother expressed her frustration in being unable to rectify the situation. The power imbalance indicated that the mother and child were acting out their frustration through negative interactions—mother with child, child with cat.

At the completion of the research project in February 2002, the researchers asked workers from both agencies to complete an evaluation form. Of 54 workers, 44 completed this evaluation, and general consensus existed that the checklist was not difficult to complete, yet workers sometimes failed to do so because they forgot or did not deem it appropriate. Thirty-eight workers admitted needing reminders to complete the forms. At the end of each month, the researchers cross-referenced to detect missing checklists. If forgotten, the worker completed the checklist either from memory or using information from his or her case notes.

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## Research Outcomes

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The outcomes of the research project are varied, but without doubt, the project enhanced the partnership between the two agencies as evidenced by, but not limited to, improved communication among workers. Informal consultation is now more apparent, and the agencies have incorporated innovative interventions to assist each of them despite bureaucratic restraints facing both institutions. Although legislation is different for child welfare and animal welfare, legislative requirements limited the abilities of both agencies to intervene more intrusively with families. This consequence was more pronounced for HS, where animals were left in a suspected risk situation due to inability of the investigator to be more invasive.

This project further identified the differences in the duty to report. Provincial child welfare legislation in Ontario, known as the Child and Family Services Act, outlines the responsibility for community members and professionals to report suspicions of child abuse and neglect. After the project ended, HS investigators identified their need for additional skill development on the recognition of suspected child maltreatment. No similar animal welfare legislation requiring the reporting of suspicions of animal cruelty exists. Although workers only cross-reported 26 cases during the project, many more animals and children were deemed to be at risk of harm. Workers did not report numerous cases to

the other agency due to misperceptions on the part of the worker as to what acts or omissions were reportable. As a result, these cases are not reflected in cross-reporting statistics. For example, FCS investigated a number of cases in which the worker would conduct corrective animal handling sessions with the family, rather than report to HS. This was particularly evident in cases in which a child was aggressive with an animal.

Furthermore, the project reinforced the value differences between animals and children. A number of workers from FCS did not view the project as important or relevant and were resistant to delving into animal welfare. The authors suspect that at times, investigations did not include observation of or questions about animals in the home. As a result, workers may have completed some checklists inaccurately. FCS and HS have added training regarding the relationship between animal and human cruelty to their internal orientation series, and they require all new staff to participate.

The project would not have been possible without the commitment of senior management personnel from both agencies. The HS management structure is straightforward. It consists of an executive director and one shelter supervisor. The organizational structure at FCS is more complex, with a senior management team and numerous supervisors. The FCS senior management team endorsed the research project unconditionally. A family service supervisor at FCS and the HS executive director spearheaded the project. All FCS family service supervisors were included in the cross-training conducted with front-line staff prior to the research. Some supervisors were more committed to the project and also more cognizant of the link between child and animal cruelty. It became apparent that the supervisors who sanctioned the project had workers who did likewise. Conversely, the supervisors who were less active in the project had workers who showed resistance. Although feedback indicated the project enhanced interest in and understanding of the link between animal and human violence, only HS continues to use the checklist to guide potential referrals.

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## Future Recommendations

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If replicated, researchers should complete cross-training for investigators from both agencies before the commencement of the project, and this training should be mandatory for all workers using the checklist. The training should incorporate staff from both agencies in one setting and allow for comprehensive overview and discussion. The agenda should cover in-depth information about the mandates and investigation procedures of both agencies as well as the issues related to cruelty against animals and humans. The trainers also need to outline criteria of what is reportable clearly to avoid misinterpretation. Although both HS and FCS received the same internal training, varied perceptions surfaced midway through the project. HS staff reported to FCS whenever they founded a case of animal cruelty regardless of whether they observed children or deemed them to be at risk at harm. FCS, however, only reported to HS when they actually saw the animal or deemed it to be at risk. It is believed that workers should have made many additional reports from FCS to HS. For example, an FCS worker verified a child neglect case, noting on the checklist “rotting food, insects in the home, animal appears fine—water and food evident.” HS would have conducted an investigation if this case had been referred. The other significant lapse in reporting on the part of FCS was when a worker saw an aggressive animal or a child being aggressive with an animal. In either case, HS would have conducted an investigation.

It is also important that referrals to another agency have a written cross-referencing component to ensure all reports are reviewed in a timely manner for investigation. In this project, workers made referrals by phone, and although the agencies held quarterly meetings to discuss the checklists, it was not discovered until the end of the project that HS had no documentation of two FCS referrals. As a result, investigations either did not happen or proceeded too late. Also, researchers need to examine geographical boundaries before commencement of the project, as partway

through this project, the authors discovered that part of Wellington County was actually in the jurisdiction of a different HS.

As noted, the authors sent monthly reminders to workers regarding missing checklists, however, it is recommended that workers not be reminded. Rather, it is suggested that the researchers document which workers fail to complete checklists and assess their commitment to the project. This would enhance the validity of results, as it is suspected that several workers completed the checklists out of obligation and may have reported inaccurate data. Finally, it is imperative that directors, managers, and supervisors from both agencies be committed to the project. The use of the survey instrument needs to be mandatory and supported throughout the agency to enhance the validity and reliability of the research outcome.

As most child welfare agencies are larger than animal welfare agencies, it would be beneficial to adjust the internal training component accordingly. It is recommended that additional time be spent training FCS supervisors regarding the dynamics of the cruelty link and the benefits of collaborating with HS. By enhancing the level of supervisor commitment, the authors anticipate that worker resistance will be less evident. They also recommend that each supervisor take the opportunity to engage his or her workers in clinical discussions related to current cases, referencing the cruelty link.

In recognition of a relationship between human and animal violence, as espoused by animal welfare organizations and humane education groups, this project reunited child welfare and animal welfare organization in Wellington County. Although the study had several methodological flaws, this project illustrated the need for institutional cooperation if agencies are to maximize services and resources to children, animals, and families. Because animal abuse research and its potential association with human violence is still in its early stages, projects such as this one are imperative to improve understanding of this social problem. The feasibility of replicating this research can undoubtedly become a

reality. Currently, numerous child welfare agencies across Canada are in the process of either building or enhancing partnerships with the local HS. Coalitions are erupting throughout the country in an effort to educate both professionals and the community about the link between human and animal cruelty. Replication of this research project would require institutional and individual recognition of the countless benefits of cross-reporting and a commitment to full participation in the project. Only through replication and methodological improvement can science get closer to unraveling the complex relations between animal and human violence. ♦

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(Address requests for a reprint to Lisa Anne Zilney, Montclair State University, Sociology and Justice Studies, Dickson Hall 314, Upper Montclair, NJ 07043.)