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Reporting accuracy of school officials and employees

Weston J. Finch

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

REPORTING ACCURACY OF SCHOOL OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
School of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education
Program of School Psychology

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Entitled: *Reporting Accuracy of School Officials and Employees*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in the Department of School
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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examined factors that contribute to school personnel's reporting accuracy. The total N of 168 school officials and employees from the State of Colorado rated 10 vignettes containing various scenarios of child maltreatment based on guidelines used by Colorado Children's Code Title 19. Data suggest a significant negative relationship $F(1, 136) = 6.78, p = .01$ existed between reporting accuracy and whether a social worker was assigned to his/her school building. The results of this study identify various factors that could improve mandated reporting of school personnel in Colorado, to include developing the content and application of maltreatment reporting. Addressing this issue could improve the lives and circumstances of children who continue to needlessly suffer abuse and neglect.

Keywords: school personnel, child maltreatment, reporting accuracy, mandated reporting

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Rangers Lead The Way

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Everyday in the United States children are being abused and neglected. Laws such as the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 1974 have been developed to protect these children. Among other functions, these laws specifically identify professionals who are required to report suspected abuse, of such, “public and private school officials or employees” (C.R.S. 19-3-304) are included.

School personnel serve an influential role as mandated reporters due to their consistent and regular interaction with children (Kenny, 2001a). However, researchers indicate that mandated reporters do not consistently comply with the law (Alvarez, Kenny, Donohue, & Carpin, 2004). This inconsistency leads to reporting concerns that place the child at risk for further abuse and the reporter at risk for violating laws pertaining to mandated reporting.

Rationale for the Study

An estimated 400,514 children between the ages of 5 and 17 years were victims of maltreatment in 2011 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Maltreatment, which includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse as well as neglect, can lead to physiological, affective, and behavioral/interpersonal effects that impact the child’s home and school environment (Horton & Cruise, 2001). Maltreated children are shown to have externalizing problems (Jaffee & Maikovich-Fong, 2011), which can

affect their coping mechanisms due to “hyperarousal, emotional pain, and restimulation of abuse memories” (Berliner & Elliot, 2002, p. 64). More specifically, these feelings may lead to abused children engaging in substance/alcohol abuse, self-injurious and suicidal behaviors as well as delinquent and criminal acts (Horton & Cruise, 2001; Moody, 1994; Sneddon, 2003; Webster & Hall, 2004). Furthermore, depression and post traumatic stress disorder as well as increased sexual behavior are experienced by sexually abused children and adolescents (Berliner & Elliott, 2002; Tyler, Johnson, & Brownridge, 2008). Adult survivors of child maltreatment report experiencing cognitive distortions that impact their ability to properly function. (Murthi, Servaty-Seib, & Elliott, 2006). They also note consistently feeling angry, depressed, and anxious (Berliner & Elliott, 2002).

Within the school environment, children who are maltreated may perform poorly academically and display behavioral problems such as difficulties socializing with other children due to low self-esteem and depression (Sneddon, 2003; Webster & Hall, 2004). Conduct problems, like becoming highly aggressive toward other children and defying teachers, may be common behaviors in physically abused children (Sneddon, 2003). Decreased cognitive functioning to include lower IQ scores as well as impaired problem solving abilities, lower academic achievement (to include grades), and absenteeism are all additional consequences that may accompany child maltreatment (Berliner & Elliott, 2002; Jaffee & Maikovich-Fong, 2011; Murthi et al., 2006; Portner, 1997; Sneddon, 2003; Webster & Hall, 2004). Although substantial research has been conducted within the last 30 years to understand the impact and consequences of child maltreatment in the United States, there was a time when little attention or concern was paid to this dilemma.

It is important to understand the history of this issue in order to understand its relevance today.

As many as 340 years ago, during the American colonial period, children were afforded very little protection and representation. Mulford (1983) noted instances in which children were taken to court by their parents and given death sentences for disobeying. It was not until 1874 under the influence of Henry Bergh, president of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, that efforts were made to advocate for children's rights. Further progress was gained in 1962 with Henry Kempe's work *The Battered Child Syndrome*, which eventually led to the creation of Public Law 93-247, also known as the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 1974. It is this federal law that provides funding and guidelines to states that address child abuse and neglect (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2011).

Colorado, a state that will be focused on from this point forward, uses CAPTA guidelines to address child abuse and neglect through Colorado Children's Code Title 19. Under Title 19, Colorado explicitly defines various forms of child maltreatment, provides guidelines to reporting abuse, as well as identifies who is mandated to report child abuse and neglect. According to Colorado Revised Statute (C.R.S.) 19-3-304, professionals such as physicians, dentists, and pharmacists are required to report suspected child abuse and neglect. However, one may argue that the most relevant of all mandated reporters are school officials and employees, given their frequent interaction with children and families. Furthermore, school officials and employees were among the second largest reporting sources of child maltreatment in 2011 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012).

School personnel are considered the first line of defense in combating child abuse and neglect (Crenshaw, Crenshaw, & Lichtenberg, 1995) because of the consistency with which they are able to interact and engage with children in school. School personnel are able to compare actions and behaviors of students who are suspected of being abused with same age peers not suspected of being abused (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008). This comparison is important given the likelihood of encountering abused children in the schools (Lambie, 2005).

Although school officials and employees as well as other professionals are mandated to report child maltreatment, they do not always follow the law and maintain reporting standards (Alvarez et al., 2004). This contributes to reporting inaccuracies such as the underreporting and overreporting of maltreatment (both of which have negative implications for children who may be abused and/or neglected).

Researchers suggest that various factors influence reporting standards and procedures of school personnel. One such factor is lack of training. Many school personnel feel they do not have sufficient training to recognize and report abuse and/or neglect (Horton & Cruise, 2001), despite expressing interest in receiving more extensive training (Crenshaw et al., 1995). One important point worth noting is that although state law requires certain professionals to report child maltreatment, no federal or state law dictates or requires mandated reporters to attend any formal training on the reporting of abuse.

A related factor that affects reporting procedures is the inability of school personnel to recognize and detect abuse (Abrahams, Casey, & Daro, 1992; Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008). Furthermore, Zellman (1990) noted that school personnel are unaware of

what behaviors or actions may deserve a report of suspected abuse. Many teachers note being unaware of the signs and symptoms of physical/emotional/sexual abuse as well as neglect (Kenny, 2004) which may influence their cognitive process of determining whether a potential situation is reportable or not reportable based on their knowledge of recognizing and detecting abuse. Inadequacy in identifying abuse impacts educators' consistency in reporting. One suggestion noted by researchers to improve recognition and detection of child abuse is to employ social service workers in the school who could assist educators in the reporting process (Kesner & Robinson, 2002). Access to this expertise may lead school personnel to remain more vigilant to the signs of child maltreatment as well as improve their ability to accurately determine whether a potential case of abuse is reportable.

School personnel's unfamiliarity with the reporting process is an additional factor contributing to inadequate reporting of child maltreatment. Researchers suggest that teachers and other educators do not know who to contact if a suspected case of child abuse arises (Kenny, 2001a).

Reporting of child abuse and neglect may also be affected by influences within the school system. Abrahams et al. (1992) indicated, in their study of 568 elementary and middle school teachers, that the majority of child maltreatment reports were made by school personnel other than teachers. Teachers in this study noted potential fears in reporting child abuse such as "lack of community or school support" and "school board or principal disapproval" (p. 234). The "hierarchy effect" occurs when a school official (such as a principal) determines whether a report of abuse and neglect should be made instead of allowing the person with the most knowledge of the occurrence to determine

whether a report is made, as is directed in C.R.S. 19-3-304. The “hierarchy effect” may essentially lead teachers to feel that their administration is unsupportive of their decision and/or ability to identify suspected abuse (Kenny, 2004). This perceived lack of support may further deter school personnel from making other reports of maltreatment to school officials, which is a disservice to children threatened by abuse and neglect.

One final factor that may affect reporting accuracy and/or procedures of educators is their distrust of Child Protective Services (CPS). Researchers suggest that school personnel believe their reports do not bear significant weight with CPS and that CPS will not investigate reports that school personnel deem as important (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Kenny, 2001a; Zellman, 1990). Bryant and Baldwin (2010) surveyed 106 school counselors who suggested that CPS was ineffective and believed communication barriers existed between CPS and school officials.

Various recommendations have been made to improve the working relationship between CPS and school personnel which would lead to higher rates of child abuse reporting in teachers (O’Toole, Webster, O’Toole & Lucal, 1999). Some suggest that school psychologists pursue an active role in communicating with CPS (Wilson & Gettinger, 1989) which may include inviting CPS into the schools to conduct mandated report training as well as to answer any questions posed by educators regarding the follow up on reports (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010; Horton & Cruise, 2001).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify factors that may contribute to school personnel’s reporting accuracy. Previous research in this area has investigated the reporting procedures of school personnel such as principals, school counselors, school

psychologists, superintendents, and teachers (Abrahams et al., 1992; Bryant & Baldwin, 2010; Bryant & Milsom, 2005; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Kenny, 2001a; Kenny, 2004; O'Toole et al., 1999). However, Colorado law states that all “public and private school officials or employees” (C.R.S. 19-3-304) are considered mandated reporters; therefore, additional research should be conducted to provide insight into the reporting knowledge and accuracy of other employees such as bus drivers, coaches, and custodians; all of whom can play an important role in interacting with a child in their typical school day. Bus drivers, for example, can be the first school employee to greet students at the beginning of the day. Students who have been maltreated that morning or the night before may show symptoms of abuse that are not apparent later in the school day. A bus driver who recognizes the signs and symptoms of abuse may be more likely to report suspected abuse.

Coaches may also have a unique advantage in identifying abuse because of the potential rapport they have established with students (Colorado Department of Education, 2004). This established rapport and trust in the coach can lead to students being more likely to disclose possible abuse. Positions of other school employees offer various vantage points for identifying child maltreatment that differ from school personnel whose reporting procedures have traditionally been investigated. Therefore, a concerted effort should be made to focus on the reporting knowledge and accuracy of these other school employees.

This current study sought to explore the reporting knowledge and accuracy of all school employees such as those discussed in previous research as well as administrative assistants, bus drivers, coaches, cooks, custodians, groundskeepers, nurses, occupational

therapists, paraprofessionals, physical therapists, school social workers, and speech language pathologists etc. within the school.

This research provides crucial data that can be used to improve how school personnel are trained in accurately recognizing and reporting child maltreatment as well as addressing whether all employees are receiving this fundamental training. Both of these components can then be addressed to ensure that schools take the necessary steps to revise their policy in order to maximize their effectiveness in accurately identifying and reporting child maltreatment. This end state serves to curtail the abuse and/or neglect that school children are experiencing.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in the study:

- Q1 Does the amount of mandated reporter training received predict school personnel's reporting accuracy?
- Q2 Are school personnel more likely to accurately report if there is a social worker assigned to his/her in the building?
- Q3 Does school personnel's perception of Child Protective Services, either positive or negative, predict their reporting accuracy?
- Q4 Is there a relationship between reporting accuracy school personnel positions?

Limitations

This study sampled school personnel within the State of Colorado; therefore, results may not be generalized to other states. Also, due to the email being distributed through the Tointon Institute listserv, it is difficult to estimate the number of school personnel/employees who accessed the email and survey. Additionally, only measures of self report were used, thus bias may have accompanied participants' responses.

Furthermore, due to the format of survey distribution, selection bias may have occurred if school personnel chose to participate based on their perceived reporting knowledge.

Definitions

Child maltreatment. “An act or failure to act by a parent, caregiver, or other person as defined under state law that results in physical abuse, neglect, medical neglect, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm to a child” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010, p. 119).

Emotional abuse. “Type of maltreatment that refers to acts or omissions, other than physical abuse or sexual abuse that caused, or could have caused, conduct, cognitive, affective, or other mental disorders and includes emotional neglect, psychological abuse, and mental injury. Frequently occurs as verbal abuse or excessive demands on a child’s performance” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010, p. 127).

Mandated reporter. Any person required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

Neglect. “Type of maltreatment that refers to the failure by the caregiver to provide needed, age-appropriate care although financially able to do so or offered financial or other means to do so” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010, p. 125).

Physical abuse. “Type of maltreatment that refers to physical acts that caused or could have caused physical injury to a child. For example, bruising” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010, p. 126).

Reporting accuracy. The consistency with which a mandated reporter correctly identifies or determines whether a potential case of child maltreatment is reportable.

School personnel. Any “public or private school official or employee” (C.R.S. 19-3-304).

Sexual abuse. “Type of maltreatment that refers to the involvement of the child in sexual activity to provide sexual gratification or financial benefit to the perpetrator, including contacts for sexual purposes, molestation, statutory rape, prostitution, pornography, exposure, incest, or other sexually exploitative activities” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010, p. 128).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Child maltreatment continues to remain a concern for our country. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2012) reported that over 400,000 children, the majority of whom were between 8 and 15 years of age, were victims of abuse in 2011. Maltreatment hampers children's cognitive, academic, and social-emotional functioning and can have perennial effects that permeate our society. Although this problem persists, much progress has been made in protecting our nation's youth through the pursuit of progressive legislation change. Such change has impacted our ability to recognize, act upon, and potentially prevent maltreatment of children.

This chapter begins with an introduction to child maltreatment and seeks to define and identify indicators for each of the four types of maltreatment. Next, the chapter describes risk factors of maltreatment to include parent/caregiver characteristics, child characteristics, and family characteristics. A brief history of abuse in the United States then demonstrates the progress that occurred, through the establishment of laws and regulations, and addressed the concerns of abuse and neglect in this country. Effects of these laws expand and place great emphasis upon mandated reporting policies and procedures to include those required to report child maltreatment (with school personnel being of greatest interest). Finally, factors explore the impact of reporting practices of school personnel, to include both underreporting and overreporting of child maltreatment, as well as the effect they have on children of abuse and neglect.

Defining and Identifying Child Maltreatment

Current definitions of child maltreatment vary by state due to federal legislations' minimum standards for creating such definitions. Most states acknowledge four types of maltreatment to include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. School personnel may be able to identify and recognize these various types through physical indicators as well as behavioral indicators of both the child and caregiver.

Physical Abuse

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2010) defines physical abuse as “acts that cause or have caused physical injury to a child” (p. 126) and estimates that more than 15% of child maltreatment reports are comprised of physical abuse cases. Physical indicators of physical abuse with which school personnel should be familiar when working in the schools can include unexplained bruising on the child's body, which may reflect the shape of the object used (Wakefield, 2002). These areas can be swollen and tender to the touch. Often times bruising may be apparent after school absences, weekends, or vacations (Wakefield, 2002). Unexplained burns, such as those from cigars and cigarettes, also may be seen on the child's palms, soles of feet, or back and buttocks (Tower, 2003; Wakefield, 2002). Rope burns or welts on arms, legs, and neck could be additional indicators of physical abuse (Horton & Cruise, 2001; Lambie, 2005; Tower, 1992; Wakefield, 2002).

In addition to physical signs, school personnel should be cognizant of behavioral indicators on the part of both the child and caregiver that may signal physical abuse. Physically abused children may be fearful of adults (Tower, 2003; Wakefield, 2002). They may exhibit signs of aggression or withdrawal and could engage in behaviors that

are destructive to self (Lambie, 2005; Tower, 2003; Wakefield, 2002). Some children are overly compliant with requests from teachers, may display anxiety during daily activities such as toileting and napping, and can express fears of going home after school (Tower, 1992; Tower, 2003; Wakefield, 2002). Students who are physically abused may also excel academically in an attempt to please an abusive parent (Horton & Cruise, 2001). Issues with chronically running away may be present in adolescents who are physically abused (Horton & Cruise, 2001; Wakefield, 2002). Caregiver behaviors such as seeming unconcerned about their child, constantly viewing their child as “bad” (not able to compliment child), and/or observing signs of alcohol/drug abuse may be indicators of potential physical abuse (Wakefield, 2002).

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse refers to “the involvement of the child in sexual activity to provide sexual gratification or financial benefit to the perpetrator, including contacts for sexual purposes, molestation, statutory rape, prostitution, pornography, exposure, incest, or other sexually exploitative activities” (Department of Health and Human Services, 2009, p. 128). This type of abuse accounts for less than 10% of maltreatment reports (Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Sexual abuse can be identified by school personnel through observations of the child’s torn or stained underclothing, frequent itching of the genital area, bruises and bleeding of the external genitalia area, and a markedly different walk (Cobb County Department of Family and Children’s Services, 2005; Lambie, 2005; Wakefield, 2002). In addition, children may display feelings of little self worth or low self esteem and may use terms such as “damaged” to describe themselves (Tower, 2003; Wakefield, 2002). Adolescents who have been sexually abused

typically display sexual promiscuity and may even become pregnant (Cobb County Department of Family and Children's Services, 2005; Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008; Horton & Cruise, 2001; Lambie, 2005; Tower, 1984; Wakefield, 2002). School personnel may identify classroom behaviors such as an inability to concentrate, decline in school performance, abrupt changes in behavior, withdrawing from peers, as well as frequent absences which may all be indicative of sexual abuse (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008; Lambie, 2005; Wakefield, 2002). Additional indicators may be observed in children who have an inappropriate knowledge of sexual acts, to include simulating intercourse with peers and/or dolls (Tower, 1992; Tower, 2003; Wakefield, 2002). School personnel may obtain further assistance in identifying sexual abuse by recognizing behavioral indicators of caregivers such as being jealous or overprotective of their child, as well as isolating or alienating their child from various community activities outside the home (Wakefield, 2002). Caregivers exhibiting seductive behaviors toward their child or overusing alcohol/drugs may also indicate that sexual abuse is taking place (Wakefield, 2002).

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse, the third form of child maltreatment, is defined as “acts or omissions, other than physical abuse or sexual abuse that caused, or could have caused, conduct, cognitive, affective, or other mental disorders and includes emotional neglect, psychological abuse, and mental injury” (Department of Health and Human Services, 2009, p. 127). Indicators of emotional abuse may present themselves in a child through various forms of internalizing behavior to include depression, withdrawal, and even feelings of anxiety (Tower, 1992; Tower, 2003). School personnel may also recognize emotional abuse through potential manifestations, such as speech disorders, asthma,

severe allergies, or ulcers (Lambie, 2005; Tower, 2003; Wakefield, 2002). Adolescents experiencing emotional abuse may abuse drugs/alcohol and may display symptoms of anorexia nervosa (Department of Health and Human Services, 2009; Tower, 1984; Wakefield 2002). School personnel familiar with behavioral indicators of emotional abuse may notice children who demonstrate habit behaviors such as sucking and rocking (Wakefield, 2002). They may also observe extremes in a student's behavior, such as being overly happy or affectionate or as aggressive and destructive (Lambie, 2005; Tower, 1984; Tower, 1992; Wakefield, 2002). Caregivers who are emotionally abusive may appear "cold and rejecting, lack nurturing skills, and exhibit behaviors such as blaming or belittling their child" (Wakefield, 2002, p. 7). Emotional abuse, which makes up 10% of all reports of abuse and neglect, is the least reported type of child maltreatment (Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). These occurrences of reporting are primarily associated with the difficult task of proving emotional abuse to authorities and protective services.

Neglect

Neglect, the final and most frequently reported form of child maltreatment (over 75%), is defined as "the failure by the caregiver to provide needed, age-appropriate care although financially able to do so or offered financial or other means to do so" (Department of Health and Human Services, 2009, p. 125). School personnel identifying physical indicators of neglect are attentive to students who come to school with unwashed clothes, are hungry, and are not equipped with needed medical aid, such as glasses (Lambie, 2005; Tower, 1992; Wakefield, 2002). These children may also lack consistent supervision (Horton & Cruise, 2001; Lambie, 2005; Tower, 1984; Wakefield,

2002). Behavioral indicators of children being neglected may steal or beg for food and appear exhausted and tired during school (Lambie, 2005; Wakefield, 2002). School personnel may also notice that these students are destructive and often display absenteeism and tardiness (Tower, 1984; Wakefield, 2002). Wakefield (2002) noted that school personnel may recognize neglect in behavioral indicators of a caregiver who misuses alcohol/drugs, lacks social skills and motivation, as well as one who has a disorganized and chaotic home life.

Factors that Increase the Risk of Maltreatment

As various types of child maltreatment have been defined, it is important to also identify related risk factors of abuse and neglect. Through the identification of these factors, major steps may be taken to aid in the understanding and possible resolution of these tragic acts against children. Risk factors associated with child maltreatment are typically separated into three domains to include parent/caregiver characteristics, child characteristics, and family characteristics. Abused or neglected children typically reside with single parents who have attained a lower level of education and often abuse drugs (Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 2006; Horton & Cruise, 2001). According to the Department of Health and Human Services (2009), victimization is roughly equal between gender and 87% of victims belong to three racial or ethnic groups including Caucasian (44%), African-American (22.3%), and Hispanic (20.7%). Children with childhood disabilities also appear to be more at risk for child maltreatment (Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 2006). Domestic violence in the home, lower socioeconomic status, single parent homes, and large family size are all

family risk factors that reportedly contribute to abuse and neglect (Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, 2006; Horton & Cruise, 2001).

As previously mentioned, the consequences of maltreatment are great and far reaching, with the greatest impact being psychological. Children of abuse can experience decreased self esteem, depression, anxiety disorders, and learned helplessness (Webster, 2001). Children may also be confronted with feelings of shame, powerlessness, sexual dysfunction, aggression, social withdrawal and increased thoughts of suicide because of the conditions to which they have been exposed (Moody, 1994). These psychological conditions may be further affected by increased drug, tobacco, and alcohol use (Arata, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Bowers, & O'Brien, 2007; Horton & Cruise, 2001). Additionally, students who have been abused may be absent more frequently and may perform worse in school (Portner, 1997).

Although various forms of child maltreatment have been explicitly defined and a considerable amount of data, demonstrating the effects of abuse, has been gathered, adequate attention has not always been paid to these fundamental concerns. The tremendous strides the United States has taken since its inception as a nation to address these concerns is well worth noting.

History of Response to Abuse in the United States

Early American colonies regarded the protection and provision of children quite differently from today's standards. An example of this is explained during the period of the Colonial Laws of Massachusetts 1672-1686. During this time, parents were able to take their own child, who had to be at least 15 years of age, to court if the child was

“stubborn and rebellious” and did not obey his or her parents. If the court ruled against the child, his punishment was death (Mulford, 1983).

It was not until 1874 that an integral step was taken to establish the rights of children in the United States. It involved the case of an 8-year-old girl, Mary Ellen Wilson, who was severely battered by her guardian in New York City. Mary was represented by Henry Bergh, president of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Because no law was in place to defend the rights of children, Mary’s case was judged according to laws enacted to protect animals. Mary’s guardian was found guilty and sentenced to one year in prison. From this case emerged the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children that went on to draft acts that prevented baby farming, selling of children for labor as well as other child labor laws (Mulford, 1983; Williams, 1980).

The progression of rights for children continued with the passage of the Social Security Act of 1935. Through this act, the Children’s Bureau received funding that enabled the protection of children such as those who were homeless or neglected (Myers, 2008). Following this enactment, a major advancement occurred in the identification and treatment of child abuse and neglect with the publication of Henry Kempe’s (1962) *The Battered Child Syndrome*. This monumental work challenged physicians to begin diagnosing this condition and provided the impetus for physicians to “take protective action by members of a profession dedicated to healing and saving lives” (Williams, 1980, p. 83).

Kempe’s work helped lead to the development of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 1974, Public Law 93-247, which is now CAPTA

Reauthorization Act of 2010. CAPTA is the federal legislation addressing child abuse and neglect and served as the first time government-sponsored child protection was on a nationwide level. CAPTA sets forth minimum definitions of child abuse and neglect that states must abide by as well as provides “federal funding to states in support of prevention, assessment, investigation, prosecution, and treatment activities” related to child maltreatment (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2011). States utilize CAPTA guidelines in order to form their own laws regarding suspected child abuse and neglect. Colorado, under the direction of CAPTA, utilizes Colorado Children’s Code Title 19 as its parameters for defining and addressing abuse and neglect. This law requires professionals such as physicians, veterinarians, counselors, as well as any public and private school official or employee to report “suspected” child abuse and neglect (C.R.S. 19-3-304) and carries a maximum penalty of 6 months in prison and/or \$750 fine (C.R.S. 19-3-304.4) for failing to do so.

Mandated Reporting Requirements, Procedures, and Statistics

The history of mandated reporting is directly linked to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act and its influence on reporting laws adopted by each individual state. Although not identical in their identification of who is considered a mandated reporter, approximately 48 states recognize personnel who are required to report suspected abuse and neglect (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2010). The State of Colorado identifies and defines various forms of child maltreatment as well as requires mandated reporters to adhere to certain guidelines when reporting maltreatment, as defined in Colorado Children’s Code Title 19. This law requires that any person who has reasonable suspicion that a child has been abused or neglected “shall immediately

upon receiving such information report or cause a report to be made of such fact to the county department or local law enforcement agency” (C.R.S. 19-3-304). Following this initial report, a formal written report must promptly be prepared and submitted by required reporters (C.R.S. 19-3-307). Written report information should include the child’s age, race, gender, and extent of his or her injuries. In addition, the child’s family composition to include the suspected perpetrators name and address are to be noted. Finally, reporters should include their own name, address, and position as well as any actions that were taken by the reporting party (C.R.S. 19-3-307). Children’s Code Title 19 ensures that school personnel and other mandated reporters who act in good faith are “immune from any liability, civil or criminal, or termination of employment, unless the employee’s action is of willful, wanton, and malicious intent” (C.R.S. 19-3-309).

When a report of suspected child maltreatment is received in Colorado, social service county departments and law enforcement determine whether a response time or no response time is assigned to the case based upon the definitions of child maltreatment provided by Colorado Children’s Code Title 19 (Weld County Child Abuse Coalition, 2007). If a case is assigned as a high risk referral it indicates that the child is “in danger of moderate to severe harm or the child is vulnerable to drug and alcohol abuse, violence, isolation, or risk of flight from one county to another county or state” (Walker, 2007, p. 24) and will be investigated immediately and no later than 24 hours after the report was received (Weld County Child Abuse Coalition, 2007). Moderate referrals in which the child’s safety has not been secured are assigned when the child is in moderate to severe harm if a follow up is not conducted within 3 days; therefore, the investigation must be initiated within 72 hours of receiving the report (Weld County Child Abuse Coalition,

2007). Finally, low risk referrals, which are investigated within 4 working days of receiving the report, are assigned when concern over the child exists but he/she is considered to be generally safe (Weld County Child Abuse Coalition, 2007).

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2010), a total of 50 states plus the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico reported that CPS followed up on and assigned a disposition to 2,000,488 reports. Of those, 64.3% were identified as unsubstantiated, while 22.1% were substantiated. 8.7% of the dispositions included “investigations that did not determine that any child in the report was a victim of maltreatment” (p. 7), while 1.6% of reports included no findings. The remaining 2.1% was comprised of reports that were intentionally false, unknown, had reason to believe that maltreatment occurred but could not be proven under state law, as well as situations where it was determined that a child was maltreated but occurred outside of a formal investigation. The average response time for these reports was 2.9 days (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010).

Mandated reporters carry an immense responsibility that plays a pertinent role in protecting children from abuse and neglect. Laws have been emplaced to define various forms of maltreatment while also explicitly identifying reporting professionals and providing them with guidelines to follow.

School Personnel as Mandated Reporters

Due to their “access to children and expertise in child development” (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008, p. 379), school personnel may arguably serve as the most pertinent of all mandated reporters. This constant exposure allows them to observe familial cues to abuse while also comparing unusual behaviors of potentially abused children and typical peers

(Crenshaw et al., 1995; Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008; Lambie & Rokutani, 2002; Lumsden, 1992). According to Hinkelman and Bruno (2008), students may view teachers as trustworthy which may affect a child's disclosure of abuse. This trust is important and needs to be established given that children may feel embarrassed, guilty, and may even blame themselves for the abuse that has occurred (Moody, 1994; Murthi et al., 2006). Furthermore, the probability of encountering an abused student and making an initial and formal report is likely given that "at least five students have been or will be reported as being possible victims of abuse in a typical teacher's classroom per year in the United States" (Lambie, 2005, p. 250).

Factors Affecting Reporting Procedures

Although teachers are considered the first line of defense in combating child abuse (Crenshaw et al., 1995), researchers suggest that those mandated to report child abuse may not consistently adhere to and comply with the law (Alvarez et al., 2004). Beck, Ogloff, and Corbishley (1994) noted that school personnel may display some knowledge of laws pertaining to mandated reporting but were "only moderately knowledgeable about the specific components of legislation" (p. 15).

The following factors that affect reporting procedures of school personnel, such as an inability to recognize abuse, a lack of sufficient mandated reporter training, as well as being unfamiliar with whom to make the report to, may all lead to both underreporting and overreporting of child maltreatment. Both of these conditions may have negative consequences for a child who is or is not abused/ neglected. The condition of underreporting continues to put the child at risk for further abuse while also placing school personnel at risk of breaking the law. Penalties involved with failure to report are

guided by CAPTA; however, each state determines what their specific penalty will be. In a study of professionals mandated to report, Zellman (1990) found that 40% of the study's sample ($N = 1,196$) had failed to report suspected abuse on at least one occasion; included in this sample were elementary and secondary principals. Similarly, Kenny (2001a) surveyed 197 teachers and found that 11% noted not reporting suspected maltreatment and cited "fear of making an inaccurate report" (p. 87) as their main reason for not doing so.

Overreporting, as noted by Zellman and Fair (2002), was caused by expanding definitions of abuse which has in turn increased reports made to CPS; a number that could not be adequately processed by CPS personnel because of budget restrictions. Due to this bombardment of reports, CPS's ability to follow-up with and investigate the more serious allegations is affected. This in turn impacts children who are in real danger and need to be followed up on immediately.

Lack of Training

The first factor that affects reporting procedures of school personnel is the amount of training school personnel receive. Training impacts their ability to comply with the law which is important given that school personnel were the second largest reporting source in 2011 (16.5%), according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2012). However, many believe they do not receive the necessary training to be effective reporters and even rate themselves as being barely adequate at reporting (Horton & Cruise, 2001). Abrahams et al. (1992) reported that "the majority of teachers are receiving a minimal amount of training on identifying, reporting, and intervening in suspected cases of child abuse and neglect" (p. 4). Crenshaw et al. (1995) noted similar results in

their survey of 664 primary, intermediate, and secondary school counselors, principals, superintendents, and school psychologists. They found that although 89% of the sample indicated that they were familiar with state mandated reporting laws “nearly 27% believed they were barely adequate and 13% considered themselves poorly or not at all prepared to deal with child abuse” (p. 1099). The majority of this sample were cited as extremely or fairly interested in receiving more substantial training in reporting abuse and recognizing indicators of abuse (Crenshaw et al., 1995).

Although no federal or state law requires mandated reporters to complete trainings which pertain to the reporting of child maltreatment, state law “requires every school district to have a written district policy for reporting child abuse and neglect” (Colorado Department of Education, 2004, p. 6). In Colorado, this policy serves as a template for conducting school wide trainings on reporting requirements. The policy and thus the training should target reporting requirements such as reportable conditions of abuse and neglect as defined by state law, person or agency to whom the report should be made (to include telephone numbers), penalties that accompany failures to report, as well as information that is required in a report (Colorado Department of Education, 2004). No stipulation is made as to the amount or type of mandated reporter training school personnel should receive. However, in Colorado, school trainings typically take place on a yearly basis and can occur in two formats. Online formats allow school personnel to view a PowerPoint presentation and then answer questions pertaining to that presentation. An alternate format involves in-person presentations that are given to school personnel by experts in the field of mandated reporting and may be followed up by a brief questionnaire to assess their knowledge. Both formats typically provide certificates to

personnel for completing this yearly training (C. Sarlo-Bergmann, personal communication, March 16, 2012). The Colorado Department of Education (2004), suggests school nurses as the building employee who should conduct this training. Other employees to deliver this training may be school social workers or counselors (Abrahams et al., 1992). King, Reece, Bendel, and Patel (1998) in their study of 382 pediatricians, master's level social workers, and physician assistants found that those receiving 10 hours or more of professional training had a higher lifetime reporting proportion of reportable/not reportable offenses than those receiving less than 10 hours; suggesting that training strongly affects professionals reporting behaviors.

Recognition/Detection of Abuse

Many teachers, in particular, lack preparation in handling situations involving alleged child abuse and are insufficient in recognizing and detecting abuse and understanding its effects (Abrahams et al., 1992; Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008). Kenny (2004) surveyed 200 teachers (K-12th grade) in which 77% noted disagreeing/strongly disagreeing with the statement "I am aware of the signs and symptoms of child neglect" (p. 1315). Furthermore, 54.5% disagreed/strongly disagreed with a similar statement pertaining to child sexual abuse and 81% disagreed/strongly disagreed with the statement addressing child physical abuse. Bryant and Milsom (2005) found that school counselors felt they were better able to identify physical abuse than neglect, sexual, or emotional abuse, suggesting that "types of abuse with more observable evidence (physical/neglect) are more likely to be identified and perhaps reported" (p. 68). Horton and Cruise (2001) make a sagacious point as to the practicality of school personnel recognizing and developing an accurate awareness of abuse indicators. They argue that "accurate

awareness of prevalence rates and potential symptoms of abuse should lead school personnel to consider abuse as a *possible* cause of some behaviors” (p. 29). They note that school personnel should not be quick to assume that all symptoms are indicators of abuse but should at least be vigilant of the potential occurrence of abuse (Horton & Cruise, 2001).

Kesner and Robinson (2002) suggested that schools employ social service workers as educators in an effort to help school personnel more accurately identify and report child maltreatment. Social service workers would also be able to coordinate and foster relationships between agencies like CPS and schools which may help to improve reporting consistency (Kesner & Robinson, 2002).

Unfamiliar with Reporting Process

School personnel and other mandated reporters may be unfamiliar with legal requirements of the reporting process (Kenny, 2001a); such as to whom to make the report and information to include when reporting. Kenny (2004) reported 13% of teachers in her study were aware of school reporting procedures. To further complicate the matter, some educators have not been provided “clear guidance on what constitutes abuse or reasonable suspicion of abuse” (Zellman, 1990, p. 30). Kenny (2001b) also cited that first year physicians and teachers made decisions not to report based on their belief that they could receive legal repercussions if their report turned out to be false. Because many school personnel are unfamiliar with the reporting process “all schools should have clear, accessible, written policies (consistent with state statutes) for school personnel regarding child abuse reporting” (Kenny, 2004, p. 1317).

Hierarchy Effect

An additional factor that has made reporting for teachers even more difficult is the potential occurrence of the “hierarchy effect” in schools. The hierarchy effect occurs when school policy requires personnel to report all suspected cases of abuse to the principal, who ultimately makes the decision as to whether the report will be passed along to CPS. Based on this policy, a teacher, who feels that a particular situation constitutes abuse, would only be required to report his/her suspicion to a predetermined school official who, ultimately, would make the determination based on his/her understanding of child abuse/neglect. This practice not only makes teachers feel that their decisions are being suppressed but may cause them the “extra burden of feeling that they will have to go through, or against, their employers preferences to do what they feel legally, ethically, and morally obligated to do” (Horton & Cruise, 2001, p. 67). The hierarchy effect is also in violation of many mandated reporting laws and can lead to a diffusion of responsibility when reporting (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Horton & Cruise, 2001). Darley and Latane (1968) noted that diffusion of responsibility can be influenced by the number of people one perceives to be aware of a certain situation (such as an abuse report) and can impact the likelihood with which one responds to or reports a given incident.

In addressing the responsibility of making a maltreatment report, Colorado

Revised Statute states that:

Any person who has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect or who has observed the child being subjected to circumstances or conditions that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect shall immediately upon receiving such information report or cause a report to be made of such fact to the county department or local law enforcement agency. (19-3-304)

As clearly noted in the Colorado Revised Statute, a mandated reporter who suspects potential abuse is by law required to make the report themselves or at least follow up with the individual whom they disclosed the report to (such as a principal). As a means of best practice, Walker (2007) suggests that “the person with the most direct knowledge of the alleged abuse or neglect should be the one who makes the report” (p. 16).

In a national survey of 568 elementary and middle school teachers, roughly 23% noted making reports of suspected abuse directly to CPS, with the majority of reports being “made to other school system personnel such as the school principal, social worker, or nurse” (Abrahams et al., 1992, p. 233).

Given the pressure and responsibility that accompany a maltreatment report and that teachers have felt unsupported by administrators in their decision to report (Kenny, 2004), school personnel do not need an additional barrier, such as school “gatekeeper” policies that may discourage and prevent them from making a report based on their suspicion of abuse, a decision that they remain liable for regardless of the principals’ perception of the report (Horton & Cruise, 2001).

Distrust of Child Protective Services

An additional barrier in the reporting process which, in part, is caused by the discrepancy of reports being made with those that are investigated have led to school personnel’s distrust of CPS and contributes to their reluctance to report (Bryant & Milsom, 2005; Horton & Cruise, 2001). Educators, viewing CPS as having poor quality, are often concerned that CPS would not follow up on their reports and believe that their reports are not taken seriously (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Kenny, 2001a; Zellman, 1990).

Bryant and Baldwin (2010) surveyed 227 school counselors regarding their reporting experiences. A common theme that surfaced included a perception that CPS was ineffective due to the overwhelming case load each worker maintained. Unfortunately, one counselor even noted that “CPS involvement has actually created more problems for the child” (p. 181). Finally, lack of communication between CPS workers and schools was also perceived (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010). This criticism is further observed in Zellman and Antler’s (1990) survey of 1,196 mandated reporters who complained about CPS’s communication system in which many of them noted being kept on hold for extensive periods of time. The affects of this process tend to cause experienced mandated reporters to only attempt to report more serious allegations of maltreatment (Zellman & Antler, 1990).

Due to the distrust that exists between school personnel and CPS, it is essential for “school psychologists (and other school personnel) to develop a cooperative, working relationship with the county agency and to view agency workers as individuals who are also striving to provide the best services to abused children” (Wilson & Gettinger, 1989, p. 100). In order to accomplish this, it has been recommended that school officials invite CPS workers into the school building to conduct yearly mandated reporter training (Horton & Cruise, 2001). This format would allow school personnel the opportunity to ask questions (Bryant & Baldwin, 2010) pertaining to the investigatory process followed by CPS as well as the criteria that must be met for them to follow up on reports.

Furthermore, others proposed that CPS should provide feedback and encouragement to mandated reporters following their report of suspected abuse (Crenshaw et al., 1995; King et al., 1998). Implementing these recommendations may

lead teachers to perceive CPS in higher regards which have been shown to lead to higher rates of recognition and reporting of abuse (O'Toole et al., 1999).

Research indicates that one is more likely to abide by mandated reporting laws if he/she is familiar with such laws (Tower, 1987). Experts in the field have made the recommendation that providing education to mandated reporters, as well as improving communication between CPS and schools would be effective actions to combat insufficient reporting (Bryant & Milsom, 2005; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Horton & Cruise, 2001; O'Toole et al., 1999).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the participants who were included in the study and provides an instrumentation section that details the dependent and independent variables as well as demographic questions that were asked of the participants. Next, procedures of the study are clearly outlined. Finally, the statistical procedures used to address the research questions are presented.

Participants

Participants in the study included individuals who currently work as school officials or employees in the State of Colorado. Officials and employees, who are identified as mandated reporters in Colorado Children's Code Title 19 (19-3-304), consisted of those who have been the focus of prior mandated reporting research (school counselors, principals, school psychologists, superintendents, and teachers) as well as those who have not (administrative assistants, bus drivers, coaches, cooks, custodians, groundskeepers, nurses, occupational therapists, paraprofessionals, physical therapists, school social workers, and speech language pathologists) were targeted in the study. Due to its access to school administrators across the State of Colorado, the Tointon Institute for Educational Change email listserv was used to contact potential participants. The Tointon Institute is a program at the University of Northern Colorado designed to offer leadership training to K-12 administrators. The email and survey link was sent to 322 principals currently serving in schools throughout Colorado.

Additionally, the researcher had access to six Colorado principals (not included on the Tointon Institute's email listerv) who also received the email and survey. Therefore, a total of 328 principals from 71 school districts across Colorado received the survey invitation email.

Based on G*Power 3 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007), the required N for this sample was 85. The sample size was based on using a linear regression analysis with four predictors, an effect size of $R^2 = .15$, $\alpha = .05$, and power of .80; as recommended by Cohen (1992) in his article *A Power Primer*, which specifies required sample sizes needed to obtain statistical significance in a regression analysis. It is estimated that approximately 14,760 potential participants received the survey. This figure is based on 328 school buildings (each employing approximately 45 personnel) receiving the email and survey link.

A response rate of approximately 34% was expected for this study based on the average response rate reported by Shih and Fan (2008), who conducted a meta-analysis of 39 studies which utilized web-based surveys of college population participants, professionals (e.g., doctors), employees (e.g., school teachers), as well as participants from the general population. It was difficult to estimate the true response rate of this study given that each school principal was entrusted with forwarding the survey to all school personnel in his/her building. However, of the 244 school officials/employees who clicked on the survey link, 168 participants completed the survey. This suggests a response rate of nearly 69% for those who actually viewed the survey.

Instrumentation

Independent variables in the study were measured using typed response and/or response selection formats to various questions in an online survey. The dependent variable, reporting accuracy, was measured using vignettes. Vignettes provided the opportunity for participants to respond to the same scenarios which helped to minimize subjectivity. Information in the study was collected via Instant.ly by uSamp, an online survey software tool.

Demographic Survey

The researcher solicited information on the following variables pertaining to the participants' general demographic information.

School personnel position. School personnel position, was measured by the participants selected response to the demographic question "What position do you hold in your school?" Response options for this question included Administrative Assistant, Bus Driver, Coach, Cook, Custodian, Counselor, Groundskeeper, Librarian, Nurse, Occupational Therapist, Paraprofessional, Physical Therapist, Principal, Assistant Principal, School Psychologist, Social Worker, Speech Language Pathologist, Superintendent, Teacher, or Other. If "Other" was selected, the participant was asked to indicate their position through a typed response format.

Participants' age. Participant was requested to indicate their age through a typed numerical response.

Participants' gender. Participant selected one of two options (Female/Male) to the demographic question "What is your gender?"

Years' experience. Participant was asked to provide a typed numerical response to the question “How many years’ experience in all different positions do you have teaching/working in the schools (to include student teaching/internship)?”

Type of mandated reporter training received. Type of training received, measured the participants’ selection(s) to the question “What type of mandated reporter training have you received?” Responses included no training, online/internet, in-person, or other. If “other” was selected, the participant was asked to indicate the training they received to include having received multiple types of training through a typed response format.

Amount of mandated reporter training received. Training received, was measured by the participants’ typed response to the question “How many hours of mandated reporter training have you received in the last three years?”

School Environment

The researcher solicited information based on the participants’ response to the following variables concerning his/her school environment.

Free and reduced lunch. Number of children receiving free and reduced lunch, was measured by the participants’ selected response to the question “What percent of children in your school qualify for free and reduced lunch?” Selected responses included 0-10%, 11-20%, 21-30%, 31-40%, 41-50%, 51-60%, 61-70%, 71-80%, 81-90%, 91-100%, and I Do Not Know.

Urban/rural. Participants were prompted to identify whether they worked in a school located in a rural or urban area through the question “Do you work in a school

located in an urban area (> 2,500 residents) or rural area (< 2,500 residents)?”

Participants had the option of selecting Urban, Rural, or I Do Not Know.

Social worker. This variable was measured with respect to how the participant responded (Yes/No/I Do Not Know) to the question “Does your building have a social worker assigned to it?”

Hierarchy effect. Participants were prompted to select one of three responses (Yes/No/Not Applicable) to the question “In your most recent experience of having reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child, within your school, has been abused or neglected, was the decision to report made by a school official, other than yourself?”

Mandated to report. Participants selected one of two options (Yes/No) to the question “Do you believe your job in the school requires you to report suspected child abuse and neglect?”

Child Protective Services perception. Participants’ perceptions of Child Protective Services was measured by their selected response to the question “How do you perceive Child Protective Services (CPS)?” using a 5 point Likert-type scale (Very positively, Positively, Neutral, Negatively, Very negatively).

Reporting History

The researcher solicited information based on the participants’ response to the following variables concerning his/her history of reporting child maltreatment.

Number of child maltreatment reports made in the last 3 years. Participants were asked to provide a typed numerical response to the question “How many child maltreatment reports have you made to Child Protective Services or other Law

Enforcement Agencies in the last 3 years as part of your job in the public/private schools?”

Number of child maltreatment reports made. Participants were asked to provide a typed numerical response to the question “How many child maltreatment reports have you made to Child Protective Services or other Law Enforcement Agencies over the course of your entire career in the public/private schools?”

Number of child maltreatment reports made to other school personnel in the last 3 years. Participants were asked to provide a typed numerical response to the question “How many child maltreatment reports have you made to other school personnel within your building in the last 3 years as part of your job in the public/private schools?”

Number of child maltreatment reports made to other school personnel. Participants were asked to provide a typed numerical response to the question “How many child maltreatment reports have you made to other school personnel within your building as part of your job in the public/private schools?”

School personnel follow up. Participants’ perceptions of school personnel’s follow up on their concerns of suspected child abuse/neglect was measured by their selected response to the question “If you have reported suspected abuse/neglect to other school personnel, how often do you feel that they have reported your concerns of suspected child abuse/neglect to Child Protective Services or other Law Enforcement Agencies?” using a 4 point Likert-type scale (Never, Sometimes, Almost Always, Always) or by selecting Not Applicable.

Vignettes

The researcher wrote 12 vignettes (See Appendix A) based on the definition of child abuse and neglect in Colorado Law (C.R.S. 19-1-103). Vignette 9 was adapted from a vignette written by a mandated reporting trainer (K. Wawrzyniak, personal communication, October 26, 2011) and substantially modified to adhere to consistent vignette information. Each vignette presented a hypothetical scenario in which a school employee witnesses or is told of a situation that may involve child abuse and/or neglect. Participants selected what determination should be made by the school employee according to the hypothetical information provided in the vignette. Ten vignettes were used for each of the four survey versions. Three vignettes were randomly selected from each of the three categories (Reportable, Not Reportable, More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made) and one additional vignette was randomly selected from the three vignettes that remained.

Reporting accuracy. The dependent variable, reporting accuracy, was measured by the consistency with which a participant correctly identified, from the vignettes, whether a potential maltreatment scenario was reportable, not reportable, or whether more information is needed before a determination of reportable can be made. Vignettes were scored as 1 or 0 based upon the correct rating for that vignette. For example, if a particular vignette (which was rated as “reportable” by mandated reporting professionals) was rated by a participant as “reportable”, the participant received a score of 1. The responses “not reportable” and “more information is needed before a determination of reportable can be made” were assigned a score of 0. Therefore, the possible range of

scores (Total Score) on vignettes were between 0 (participant rated all vignettes incorrectly) and 10 (participant rated all vignettes correctly).

Procedures

Approval to conduct this study was obtained from the University of Northern Colorado's Institutional Review Board prior to collecting data for the study (See Appendix B for IRB Approval Letter). Upon being granted permission, pre-K through 12th grade principals, from the Tointon Institute's email listserv, received an email from the director of the Tointon Institute with a link to a secure web-based survey program (See Appendix C for Online Survey Version) titled Instant.ly by uSamp (Instant.ly by uSamp, 2012).

Vignette Development

Vignettes were drafted from seven vignettes used in a previous pilot study (Finch, 2011) in which a multiple linear regression analysis indicated that no significant relationships existed between the independent variables and the dependent variable, reporting accuracy. However, no criteria were established in writing the original vignettes and no unanimous decision was reached by child abuse and neglect professionals in their rating of the pilot study vignettes. Therefore, the current study amended vignettes according to a list of required information and a meeting with three Child Protective Service workers was held in which a unanimous rating was reached for all vignettes used in the study.

The researcher included four vignettes that were believed to be reportable, four believed to be not reportable, and four that were believed to need more information

before a determination of reportable can be made. Additionally, the researcher ensured that each vignette adhered to a list of consistent information that included:

1. Child's age
2. Event that was witnessed or told to the school employee
3. Occupation of the school employee who was most knowledgeable of the event
4. Location of the event that was witnessed or was told to the school employee.

Upon consulting with three Child Protective Service workers, the researcher contacted the point person for the professionals via phone call and email to discuss their participation in rating vignettes that were to be used to assess school personnel's reporting accuracy. A face-to-face group meeting was scheduled with the three CPS workers who volunteered in which they received a sheet of paper with questions pertaining to demographic information (e.g., age, gender, occupation/position, certifications) as well as questions that defined them as professionals in the field of mandated reporting to include:

1. How many years' experience do you have working in the Child Protective Service field?
2. What is the average number of monthly child abuse/neglect reports you have documented in the last six months?
3. What is the average number of monthly child abuse/neglect reports you review in one week?
4. What is the average number of monthly cases assigned to you?
5. How many Child Protective Service workers do you oversee/manage on a daily basis?

6. How many hours of professional development training do you receive in a typical year and what was the content focus of the trainings?

Of the three CPS workers who volunteered, all were female with a mean age of 34 years ($SD = 5.35$, ranging from 27-40 years). All volunteers noted holding the position of “Caseworker” and each obtained a masters degree in social work or community counseling. CPS volunteers averaged 7.3 years of experience ($SD = 3.30$), were each assigned an average of 12.3 ($SD = 2.05$) child abuse/neglect reports per month for the last six months, and consistently reviewed child abuse/neglect reports each week ($M = 10$; $SD = 0$). Furthermore, the CPS workers received additional hours of professional development training each year ($M = 43.33$; $SD = 4.71$) to include training in signs of safety, child development, domestic violence, substance abuse, forensic interviewing, and family assessment response.

Although research does not specify the number of professionals needed to develop vignettes; Heverly, Fitt, and Newman (1984) suggested that raters should be experienced in the content area. They noted that a group discussion should be used to identify “any particular vignette that is contributing to disagreement among raters” (p. 49) and that this discussion will help raters reach a consensus. Therefore, following the demographic questions, a copy of each vignette (which included the four item list of consistent information) was given to each CPS worker. The CPS worker circled a response of “yes” or “no” indicating whether each of the four parts of “consistent information” was included in the vignette. Each CPS worker noted that all four parts of “consistent information” was included in each of the 12 vignettes. The CPS workers were then asked to rate whether the vignette was reportable, not reportable, or more

information is needed before a determination of reportable can be made. Next, ratings were collected by the researcher and, if disagreement existed, each disagreeing professional was asked what content could be added/removed/changed in order for them to agree with the proposed rating. Following the addition of information, the remaining group was again asked if they agreed with the proposed rating. If disagreement still existed, the process was repeated until a unanimous rating was reached.

No serious concerns were noted by CPS workers, and a unanimous decision was reached on the ratings of all 12 vignettes after adding “was angry at her mother” to vignette 2 and “the child begins to sob” to vignette 10 (See Appendix A). The researcher purposefully selected 10 vignettes to be used in each of the four survey versions, ensuring that at least three vignettes of each type (reportable, not reportable, more information is needed before a determination of reportable can be made) were randomly selected and included. To accomplish the selection process, vignettes were assigned numbers 1-12 and were equally separated into three categories (reportable, not reportable, more information is needed before a determination of reportable can be made) based on their assigned rating from CPS workers. Three vignettes were randomly selected from each of the three categories and one additional vignette was randomly selected from the three vignettes that remained. To account for order bias, the order of these 10 vignettes was randomized. This process was repeated for each of the four survey versions. See Table 1 for the list of vignettes that were included in each survey version.

Table 1
Categorized Vignettes Included in Each Survey Version

Survey Version	Vignette	Category
Survey Version 1	2	Reportable
	3	Reportable
	4	Reportable
	1	Not Reportable
	7	Not Reportable
	11	Not Reportable
	5	More Information is Needed
	6	More Information is Needed
	9	More Information is Needed
	12	More Information is Needed
Survey Version 2	2	Reportable
	3	Reportable
	10	Reportable
	1	Not Reportable
	7	Not Reportable
	8	Not Reportable
	11	Not Reportable
	6	More Information is Needed
	9	More Information is Needed
	12	More Information is Needed
Survey Version 3	2	Reportable
	3	Reportable
	4	Reportable
	10	Reportable
	1	Not Reportable
	7	Not Reportable
	8	Not Reportable
	5	More Information is Needed
	6	More Information is Needed
	12	More Information is Needed
Survey Version 4	2	Reportable
	3	Reportable
	4	Reportable
	10	Reportable
	1	Not Reportable
	7	Not Reportable
	11	Not Reportable
	5	More Information is Needed
	6	More Information is Needed
	9	More Information is Needed

Data Collection Procedures

Upon receiving the email, each principal was requested (within the body of the email) to complete the survey and to forward the email/survey to all officials or employees in their school. To stress the importance of forwarding the email to all officials or employees within their building the word “**ALL**” was bolded and written in all caps, and a list of personnel to include administrative assistants, bus drivers, coaches, cooks, custodians, groundskeepers, nurses, occupational therapists, paraprofessionals, physical therapists, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, speech language pathologists, superintendents, and teachers etc. followed in parentheses. Principals were also informed, within the content of the email, that they would not be receiving school specific results, nor would they know the responses of their staff members.

Once school personnel/employees received the email they were instructed within the email content to click on the instant.ly hyperlink in order to be taken to the survey site. Once at the site, participants read through the digital consent (See Appendix D) and selected the “I Agree” option if they were willing to participate in the survey. Participants who declined to take part in the survey selected the “I Disagree” option and were forwarded to a page thanking them for their consideration. In addition, the digital consent notified the participants that they would have the opportunity to provide their email address following the survey if they wished to be entered into a drawing to receive one of four \$25 gift cards.

Those choosing to participate answered various questions pertaining to their demographics, school environment, and reporting history, using a response selection or

typed response format. Following the background questions, participants were presented with 10 vignettes each containing a possible child maltreatment scenario. Participants were asked to read each vignette and determine whether the case contained a reportable event, an event that was not reportable, or whether insufficient information was provided for making a decision about reporting. Vignettes were counter-balanced by creating four survey versions that were identical to each other except that the order of presented vignettes was changed to manage order bias. The version participants received was randomized.

Survey versions contained variable numbers of participants and response rates (See Table 2). Participants responded correctly to a mean of 5.53 vignettes in survey version 1, with a standard deviation of 1.36 (correct responses ranged from 3 to 8). In survey version 2, participants responded correctly to a mean of 5.19 vignettes with a standard deviation of 1.38. Their correct responses ranged from 2 to 8. Participants who received survey version 3 ($M = 5.52$; $SD = 1.39$) and version 4 ($M = 5.35$; $SD = 1.49$) responded similarly to vignettes with correct responses ranging from 3 to 9 and 2 to 9 respectively. In terms of overreporting and underreporting child maltreatment, 22.9% of vignettes ratings were shown to over report child abuse and neglect while 10% under reported abuse and neglect.

Table 2
Response Rates for Survey Versions

Survey Version	<i>n</i>	Response Rate
Survey Version 1	40	70%
Survey Version 2	43	65%
Survey Version 3	31	69%
Survey Version 4	54	71%

Upon completing the survey, participants were presented with a text box informing them to send the researcher an email (to a disclosed address) if they were interested in entering the drawing. This method ensured that their responses remained confidential and were in no way linked to their identity. If participants did not wish to be included in the drawing they clicked on a survey arrow which directed them to the survey “thank you” page. Four winners were randomly selected using Microsoft Excel’s Random Number Generation and had the choice of receiving either a Starbucks or Amazon.com \$25 gift card. The drawing was held within 3 months of distributing the survey via email and the four winning participants were notified through email that they had won. This email message also instructed them to reply to the researcher as to whether they selected the Starbucks or Amazon.com gift card. Upon receiving the response email, the researcher purchased and had the selected gift card emailed to each individual within one week of receiving their preference. At this time, completed surveys were automatically sent to the survey website where the data were downloaded into a Microsoft Excel program.

Data Analysis

Using the data collected, SPSS 20 was the statistical package used to run data analysis. The first step in the data analysis was to assign each participant a numerical code which served as a guide to organizing the data. Categorical variables were also dummy coded accordingly. Next, data frequencies were checked and patterns of out of range data, distribution of data items, as well as missing data were assessed. A case wise deletion method was used for missing data. Descriptive analyses were then run to obtain means, standard deviations, and minimum/maximum values. Histograms were observed to check for skewness and kurtosis for the continuous variables amount of mandated reporter training received and reporting accuracy. To assess reliability of the reporting accuracy scores, a KR-20 was run to assess internal consistency reliability of the responses to the 10 vignettes. Following this procedure, an item analysis was conducted to determine which items, if any, contributed to the overall variance as well as if any items were problematic. Next, a linear regression analysis using simultaneous entry with $\alpha = .05$ was run to assess potential relationships between the independent variables and the dependent variables (reporting accuracy).

Q1 Does the amount of mandated reporter training received predict school personnel's reporting accuracy?

A linear regression analysis was used to indicate whether a significant relationship existed between the dependent variable (reporting accuracy) and the independent variable, amount of mandated reporter training received.

Q2 Are school personnel more likely to accurately report if there is a social worker assigned to his/her building?

A linear regression analysis was used to indicate whether a significant relationship existed between the dependent variable (reporting accuracy) and the independent variable, social worker.

Q3 Does school personnel's perception of Child Protective Services, either positive or negative, predict their reporting accuracy?

A linear regression analysis was used to indicate whether a significant relationship existed between the dependent variable (reporting accuracy) and the independent variable, Child Protective Services perception.

Q4 Is there a significant difference in reporting accuracy among school personnel positions?

A multiple linear regression analysis was used to indicate whether a significant relationship existed between the dependent variable (reporting accuracy) and the independent variable, school personnel position.

Assumptions of linearity, normality of residuals, independence of observations, homoscedasticity and absence of measurement error were tested through the observation of residual scatter plots and QQ plots as well as running reliability checks on the data.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented in this chapter. A brief description of the sample to include reporting history is provided, followed by preliminary analyses. Primary statistical analyses of data specific to each research question will then be presented. Finally, additional analyses of the data will be presented through the secondary analyses which analyzed data not pertaining to the research questions.

Sample Description

The total *N* of 168 was comprised of school officials and employees. Positions of participants included administrative assistants, assistant principals, bookkeeper, campus security, cook, counselors, director of operations, executive director, family partner specialist, head start director, health tech, home-based educator, librarian, nurses, paraprofessionals, principals, program manager for community schools, school psychologists, speech language pathologists, superintendent, teachers, technology coordinator, and technology director.

These participants were contacted through the Tointon Institute's email listserv, which included 322 principals from Colorado schools who received an invitation email and survey link from the researcher. Six additional Colorado principals, who were not included on the Tointon Institute's email listserv, also received the email and survey link. To ensure a sufficient sample size was attained to run analyses, the 23 different school positions were divided into three categories: Administration/Specialist ($n = 45$), Teacher

($n = 91$), and Support Staff ($n = 32$) (See Table 3). Based on G*Power 3 (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007), the required N for this sample was 85. The sample size was based on using a linear regression analysis with four predictors, an effect size of $R^2 = .15$, $\alpha = .05$, and power of .80; as recommended by Cohen (1992).

Table 3
Categories, Positions, and Sample Sizes of School Personnel

Category	Position	<i>n</i>
Administration/Specialists		45
	Principal	27
	Counselor	6
	Assistant Principal	2
	Nurse	2
	School Psychologist	2
	Speech Language Pathologist	2
	Executive Director	1
	Head Start Director	1
	Program Manager for Community Schools	1
	Superintendent	1
Teachers		91
	Teacher	91
Support Staff		32
	Paraprofessionals	13
	Administrative Assistant	9
	Bookkeeper	1
	Campus Security	1
	Cook	1
	Director of Operations	1
	Family Partner Specialist	1
	Health Tech	1
	Home-based Educator	1
	Librarian	1
	Technology Coordinator	1
	Technology Director	1

Note. Categories and category sample sizes are in boldface.

The overall sample consisted of 134 female and 34 male participants who had a mean age of 42.6 years ($SD = 11.37$, ranging from 22-63 years). This sample had a wide

range of years of experience ($M = 15.40$; $SD = 9.89$) but noted receiving few hours of mandated reporter training in the last three years ($M = 2.62$; $SD = 4.21$). The type of mandated reporter training received appeared to vary, with 67% receiving in-person training ($n = 112$), 22% receiving no training ($n = 38$), 9% receiving online/internet training ($n = 15$), and 2% ($n = 3$) noted receiving “other” types of training to include online and in-person, handbook, as well as staff meeting announcements. Additionally, 21% percent of participants worked in schools with 0-10% of their students qualifying for free and reduced lunch, 5% were in schools between 11-20%, 6% between 21-30%, 5% between 31-40%, 14% between 41-50%, 6% between 51-60%, 1% between 61-70%, 7% between 71-80%, 1% between 81-90%, 8% between 91-100% and the remaining 26% of the sample did not know what percent of their school qualified for free and reduced lunch.

School Environment

Fifty-two percent of participants ($n = 87$) worked at a school located in an urban area (>2,500 residents) while 46% ($n = 77$) worked in rural areas of less than 2,500 residents. Fifty-three percent ($n = 90$) reported not having a social worker assigned to their building, while 29% ($n = 48$) noted that they did have a social worker assigned to his/her building, and the remaining 18% ($n = 30$) responded as not knowing whether a social worker was located in his/her building. Regarding their most recent experience of suspecting child abuse or neglect, 44% of participants ($n = 73$) responded that the decision to report was made by a school official other than themselves. Twenty-nine percent ($n = 49$) noted that they made the decision and 27% ($n = 46$) answered the question as being “Not Applicable” to them (indicating that they have not made a report

of abuse or neglect). Finally, 2% of school officials/employees ($n = 3$) reported viewing CPS very negatively, 12% ($n = 21$) negatively, 28% ($n = 47$) had a neutral stance, while 51% ($n = 85$) noted a positive perception, and the remaining 7% ($n = 12$) had a very positive perception of CPS.

Reporting History

In the last three years, participants' mean number of reports made to CPS and other law enforcement agencies was 3.22 ($SD = 8.16$, ranging from 0-75). Upon further investigation, the majority of participants had not made a report of abuse or neglect while those who had made the majority of reports were all categorized as "Administration/Specialist" (See Table 4). Furthermore, abuse/neglect reporting over participants' entire career indicated that 36% of the sample ($n = 61$) had not made a report of abuse or neglect to CPS or other law enforcement agencies. Twenty-one percent ($n = 35$) reported making 10 or more child maltreatment reports over their entire career; 91% of that sub-group were categorized as "Administration/Specialist", 6% as "Teacher", and 3% as "Support Staff."

Table 4
Reports Made to CPS or Other Law Enforcement in the Last Three Years

Number of Reports	n	% of sample
≥ 25	5*	3
10-20	13*	8
1-9	62	37
0	88	52

Note. * Indicates all participants were categorized as Administration/Specialist (participants categorized as Administration/Specialist were also included with those who made between 1-9 and 0 reports)

Within the last three years, an average of 1.42 reports ($SD = 4.28$, ranging from 0-50) were made to other school personnel (such as principals) within the participants' building while an average of 2.12 ($SD = 5.06$, ranging from 0-50) reports had been made to other school personnel within the participants' building over their entire career. Of those participants who reported suspected abuse/neglect to other school personnel ($n = 101$), the majority believed that other personnel "almost always" or "always" followed up on their concerns by reporting to CPS or other law enforcement agencies; while a portion of the sample believed that their suspected reports were "never" or "sometimes" reported to CPS or other law enforcement agencies (See Table 5).

Table 5
Belief that Other School Personnel Reported the Participants' Suspicions of Child Abuse/Neglect

Reported Suspicion	<i>n</i>	% of Sample
Always	66	65
Almost Always	18	18
Sometimes	12	12
Never	5	5

Preliminary Analyses

A case wise deletion method was used to delete two missing responses (one from the variable hours of mandated reporter training received and the other from the variable maltreatment reports made over the participants' entire career). To assess reliability of reporting accuracy scores, a KR-20 was run to assess internal consistency reliability of responses to the 10 vignettes in each of the four survey versions. The analysis found the

measure to be limited in its ability to measure reporting accuracy of school officials/employees (Survey Version 1 $\alpha = .09$; Survey Version 2 $\alpha = .06$; Survey Version 3 $\alpha = .14$; Survey Version 4 $\alpha = .14$). The low internal consistency reliability can be attributed to the variability in vignette ratings (Ebel, 1968; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007) and that vignettes may have been too easy or too difficult for this particular sample (Feldt, 1993). The item analysis revealed that the KR-20 would have been increased ($\alpha = .33$) if vignette 2 were deleted from the analysis of Survey Version 1; while the KR-20 for Survey Version 2 would have increased ($\alpha = .21$) with the deletion of vignette 11. Additionally, the reliability of Survey Version 3 and Survey Version 4 would have increased ($\alpha = .24$; $\alpha = .22$) if vignette 1 were deleted from the analysis of Survey Version 3 and vignette 9 from Survey Version 4.

While internal consistency of reliability was low, descriptive scores were consistently low for each survey version indicating that there was no apparent pattern with which items were scored correctly or incorrectly by participants. A Chi-Square Goodness of Fit Test was run to determine whether participants' rate of answering correctly was higher than chance. The analysis revealed that, although reporting accuracy scores were low, there was a significant difference in responses which indicated that answering correctly was higher than chance $X^2 (9, N = 167) = 31.75, p > .05$. Table 6 highlights the means (average number of vignettes rated correctly) and standard deviations for each survey version.

Table 6
Sample Size, Mean, and Standard Deviation for Each Survey Version

Survey Version	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1	40	5.53	1.36
2	43	5.19	1.37
3	31	5.52	1.39
4	54	5.35	1.49

Additional preliminary analysis revealed that of 1,680 total ratings of vignettes (168 participants rating 10 vignettes each) 22.9% ($n = 385$) of ratings were shown to over report abuse and neglect while 10% ($n = 168$) under reported abuse and neglect. This overreporting/underreporting of abuse is consistent with previous research (Kenny, 2001a; Zellman, 1990; Zellman & Fair, 2002).

Primary Analyses of Research Questions

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 20 to answer each of the four research questions.

Q1 Does the amount of mandated reporter training received predict school personnel's reporting accuracy?

A linear regression analysis was conducted to determine whether a significant relationship existed between amount of mandated reporter training received and school personnel's reporting accuracy. The level of significance was set at $p < .05$. Data suggest that no significant relationship existed between these variables (See Table 7).

Assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were determined to have not been met based on the identification of a discernible pattern in the residual scatter plot. Observation

of the data through the residual plot also suggested an absence of measurement error. Normality appeared to have been violated based on the positively skewed, leptokurtic histogram, as well as the residual plot. However, when analyzing the data, the sample appeared to lack mandated reporter training, given that 83% of the sample received three hours or less of training while only 6% received 10 or more hours of mandated reporter training (See Table 8).

Table 7

Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Reporting Accuracy to Amount of Mandated Reporter Training Received

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>R²</i>
Mandated Reporter Training Received	.18	.67	.01	.001

Table 8

Hours of Mandated Reporter Training Received By Participants

<i>Hours of Training</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>% of Sample</i>
≥10	9	6%
4-9	19	11%
0-3	139	83%

Q2 Are school personnel more likely to accurately report if there is a social worker assigned to his/her building?

A linear regression analysis, using a level of significance of $p < .05$, was conducted to determine whether a significant relationship existed between school personnel's reporting accuracy and whether a social worker was assigned to his/her school building. For the regression analysis, the independent variable (social worker) was

run as a binary variable due to all responses of “I Do Not Know” being removed from the analysis. According to the analysis, a significant relationship did exist between the two variables, $F(1, 136) = 6.78, p = .01$ and roughly 5% of the models variance was accounted for ($R^2 = .047$). However, this was a negative relationship indicating that those participants who responded as having a social worker assigned to the building displayed a significantly lower mean score ($B = -.65$) on the vignettes than those who did not have a social worker in the building. Assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity, independence of observations, and absence of measurement error were determined to have been met based on the residual scatter plot. Normality appeared to have been met based on the normal probability plot.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was then run to include responses of participants who selected “I Do Not Know” in order to see if significant differences existed between the three responses (Yes, No, I Do Not Know). As noted in Table 9, results indicated a significant difference between the variables. A Bonferroni post hoc analysis indicated that the significant difference occurred between those who responded with “Yes” and those who responded with “No” ($p = .028$). The difference between those who responded “No” and those who responded “I Don’t Know” was noteworthy but not significant ($p = .055$). Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance indicated that the data met the assumption of equal variance among groups ($F = 1.12, p = .33$).

Table 9

One-way Analysis of Variance Comparing Reporting Accuracy and the Placement of a Social Worker in the School Building

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Social Worker Assigned to Building	(2, 165)	4.88	.009**

Note. **Significant at the $p < .01$ level

Q3 Does school personnel's perception of Child Protective Services, either positive or negative, predict their reporting accuracy?

A linear regression analysis, using a level of significance of $p < .05$, was conducted to determine whether a significant relationship existed between participant's perception of CPS and their reporting accuracy. The analysis indicated that no significant relationship existed with less than 1% of the variance being accounted for in the model (See Table 10). The assumption of normality appeared to have been met based on the histogram and normal probability plot. Linearity, homoscedasticity, and absence of measurement error were determined to have been met based on the appearance of the residual scatter plot.

Table 10

Simple Linear Regression Analysis of Reporting Accuracy to Perception of CPS

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>R²</i>
Perception of CPS	.27	.60	-.07	.002

Q4 Is there a relationship between reporting accuracy and school personnel positions?

A multiple linear regression analysis, using a level of significance of $p < .05$, indicated that no significant relationship existed between the independent variable (school personnel positions) and the dependent variable (reporting accuracy), $F(2, 167) =$

.10, $p = .90$. In addition, less than 1% of the models variance was explained ($R^2 = .001$).

Residual scatter plots of the data appeared to confirm that assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity were met while also testing the absence of measurement error.

Normality was met based on the histogram and normal probability plot. As highlighted in Table 11, a lack of significance in the relationship between the dependent and independent variable is understandable given the mean scores of reporting accuracy from each category (Administration/Specialist, Teacher, Support Staff).

Table 11

Sample Size, Mean, and Standard Deviation of Each School Position Category

<i>Category</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Administration/Specialist	45	5.42	1.45
Teacher	91	5.40	1.41
Support Staff	32	5.28	1.37

Secondary Analyses

Secondary analyses of data included three linear regression analyses which were run to identify whether a significant relationship existed between the independent variable (reporting accuracy) and the dependent variables (years' experience, number of child maltreatment reports made in the last 3 years, and number of child maltreatment reports made over the participants' entire career). In addition, two t -tests were conducted to compare the mean of reporting accuracy with means of urban/rural and hierarchy effect. Finally, a one-way ANOVA compared reporting accuracy and type of training received.

Results from the linear regression analysis indicated that no significant relationship existed between reporting accuracy and years' experience (See Table 12). Assumptions of homoscedasticity, linearity, and absence of measurement error were met based on the lack of pattern being identified in the residual scatter plot. Evidence from the histogram and normal probability plot suggested that the assumption of normality had also been met for this analysis.

The two linear regression analyses used to identify whether a significant relationship existed between reporting accuracy and two independent variables (number of child maltreatment reports made in the last 3 years and number of child maltreatment reports made over the participants' entire career) revealed that no significant relationship existed in either analysis (See Table 12). In both analyses, the residual scatter plots suggested a violation of both linearity and homoscedasticity, while normality appeared to have been met based on the histograms and normal probability plots. Violation of assumptions observed in the residual scatter plots could be based on the samples lack of reporting experience, given that 52% of participants had never made a maltreatment report within the last three years and 37% had never made a report over their entire career.

Table 12

Simple Linear Regression Analyses of Reporting Accuracy to Years' Experience, Reports Made in the Last 3 Years, and Reports Made Over Entire Career.

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>R²</i>
Years' Experience	.09	.93	.001	.00
Reports Made in the Last 3 Years	.002	.97	-.001	.00
Reports Made Over Entire Career	.69	.41	-.005	.00

T-tests were run to compare reporting accuracy with the dependent variables (urban/rural and hierarchy effect). Participant responses of “I Do Not Know” ($n = 4$) were removed from the urban/rural variable while responses of “Not Applicable” ($n = 46$) were removed from the hierarchy effect variable. Analyses revealed no significant difference in participants’ location (urban/rural) $t(162) = .51, p = .61$ or whether a report decision was made by a school official other than themselves $t(120) = 1.88, p = .22$ and their reporting accuracy. According to the histograms, both independent variables were equally distributed and Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance indicated that the data met the assumption of equal variance among groups for urban/rural ($F = .82, p = .78$) and hierarchy effect ($F = 1.51, p = .22$).

A one-way ANOVA revealed no significant difference between reporting accuracy and type of training received $F(3, 164) = .25, p = .87$. Assumptions of normality appeared to have been violated based on the histogram which revealed a negatively skewed distribution. This negatively skewed distribution is understandable given that 67% of the sample ($n = 112$) noted receiving “In-person” training. The assumption of equal variance was met based on Levene’s Test for Equality of Variance ($F = .88, p = .45$).

Summary of Findings

Linear regression, multiple linear regression, *t*-tests, and one-way ANOVA analyses were utilized to examine the relationship between the dependent variable, reporting accuracy, and numerous independent variables which encompassed participants’ demographic information, school environment, and reporting history.

Linear regression analyses revealed no significant relationships between reporting accuracy and the variables amount of mandated reporter training received, perception of CPS, school position, years' experience, number of reports made in last 3 years, and number of reports made over their career. However, a significant negative relationship existed between reporting accuracy and whether or not a social worker was assigned to his/her school building. A multiple linear regression analysis indicated no significant relationship between participants' reporting accuracy and their school position (Administration, Teacher, Support Staff). Furthermore, *t*-tests revealed no significant differences between reporting accuracy and whether the participants worked in an urban or rural environment as well as whether report decisions were made by school officials other than themselves. Based on the one-way ANOVA, participants' type of training received was not statistically significant in influencing their reporting accuracy. Finally, behaviors of overreporting and underreporting abuse and neglect were evident in the analysis.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a brief overview of the study and an interpretation of the findings from the study. Implications and limitations of the study are then discussed followed by recommendations for future research.

Overview of the Study

Over 400,000 children were victims of maltreatment in 2011 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2012). Potential effects of child maltreatment are extensive and can negatively impact both internalizing and externalizing behaviors of children at home as well as school (Berliner & Elliott, 2002; Jaffee & Maikovich-Fong, 2011; Sneddon, 2003; Tyler et al., 2008; Webster & Hall, 2004).

Although school officials and employees are mandated to report even suspected cases of child abuse and neglect, previous research has investigated the reporting procedures of some school personnel and has identified various factors that may impact their ability to report (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Horton & Cruise, 2001; Kenny, 2001a; Zellman, 1990). The purpose of this study was to identify factors that may contribute to school officials and employee's child abuse and neglect reporting accuracy.

Summary of Findings

The total sample ($N = 168$) was comprised of school officials or employees from Colorado and included professionals from 23 different school positions. The survey was completed by nearly 69% of those participants who actually viewed it. When assessing

internal consistency reliability of responses to the 10 vignettes, the measure was found to be limited in its ability to consistently measure child abuse and neglect reporting accuracy of school officials/employees. Furthermore, linear regression analyses revealed no significant relationships between reporting accuracy and the amount of mandated reporter training received, perception of CPS, and school personnel position. However, a significant negative relationship existed between reporting accuracy and whether or not a social worker was assigned to his/her school building.

Interpretation of Findings

Although it was difficult to estimate the true response rate of the study given that each school principal was entrusted with forwarding the survey to all school personnel in his or her building, the rate of responding still appeared to be significantly less than the average response rate (approximately 34%) of web-based surveys as reported by Shih and Fan (2008). Given that 328 principals received the survey (each employing roughly 45 personnel), it was estimated that approximately 14,760 potential participants received the survey. However, only 244 school officials/employees actually clicked on the survey link, with 168 participants completing the survey.

One major factor that may have led to lower response rates (given that it was distributed to 328 principals across the State of Colorado) was the influence of Senate Bill 10-191. This Colorado bill “establishes new requirements for evaluating teachers and principals” (Colorado Department of Education, 2013, p. 1) and was being piloted for principal evaluations in the 2012-2013 school year. Due to the pressures on principals to meet these requirements, it is conceivable that tasks not aligned with meeting the requirements of this bill would receive very low priority. This may have translated to not

forwarding the survey to one's school staff. Furthermore, given the manner in which principals were entrusted with forwarding the email with survey information contained, it is impossible to estimate the actual number of school personnel who received access to the survey. In addition, it is unclear whether all school personnel had access to the email or whether certain employees had not received the email, due to not being included on the principal's forward list.

One concern in the study was the low reporting accuracy of participants. Analysis indicated that nearly 23% of vignette ratings in the study were shown to over report abuse and neglect while 10% under reported abuse and neglect. Overreporting was determined to have occurred when a vignette previously rated as "Not Reportable" by CPS workers was rated as "Reportable" by participants. Underreporting occurred when a vignette previously deemed "Reportable" by CPS workers was rated by participants as being "Not Reportable" or "More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made." Underreporting and overreporting of abuse may have occurred due to participants' unfamiliarity with reporting laws, to include understanding what constitutes child abuse and neglect (Kenny, 2001a). In addition, "fear of making an inaccurate report" may have also contributed to underreporting (p. 87).

Although the sample was diverse in many respects (to include gender, age, position, years' experience, urban/rural environments, social workers assigned to buildings), the apparent lack of knowledge regarding the identification of child maltreatment was consistent throughout the participants' vignette ratings. Evidence of the ratings for each survey version, as well as ratings from various occupational categories, confirms this. As noted in previous research, the lack of mandated reporter training

received by professionals influenced their inability to accurately recognize and report child abuse/neglect (Abrahams et al., 1992; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Horton & Cruise, 2001). The same phenomenon was evidenced in the current study. One reason for this lack of training may be due to school districts not being required to complete any type of formal mandated reporter training. Wakefield (2002) noted that school districts are required to have a school written policy that addresses various elements in the reporting of child maltreatment but nowhere in this policy is the delivery of formal mandated reporter training addressed.

An additional area of concern in the study was the low internal consistency reliability of the 10 vignettes. The low internal consistency could have been impacted by the scale used to assess reporting accuracy. Given that each participant had unique background experiences and perceptions pertaining to child maltreatment, challenges were presented in measuring this reporting accuracy construct. For example, it is difficult to assess how one's emotional bias based on previous experiences may have influenced his or her perception of the content presented in each vignette. This emotional bias may prove even more influential when a participant lacks knowledge pertaining to State mandated definitions of abuse and neglect which would assist him or her in making objective determinations of child maltreatment. It was also difficult to estimate how participants interpreted information provided in each vignette. For example, vignette 6 vaguely describes a drawing of two unequally sized figures. One participant may have interpreted those figures as engaging in some sexual act while another participant had interpreted the description of the drawing as two people participating in a non-sexual act.

As noted by Lane, Rubin, Monteith, and Christian (2002), bias may also exist in

the reporting of suspected abuse and neglect of minority versus non-minority children which may have influenced ratings on vignettes. Furthermore, determinations of abuse and neglect may have also been impacted by the participants' perception of what the expected outcome would have been for the child and family (Jones et al., 2008). Finally, in addition to the reliability of the measure being potentially influenced by participants' background experiences and/or perceptions, the reliability may have also been impacted by there being only 10 vignettes used in the instrument.

Measures were taken to improve the vignettes used in the original pilot study (e.g., establishing consistent criteria to be used in the writing of each vignette and assuring that CPS workers unanimously determined the "correct" rating for each vignette). The order of the 10 vignettes used in each survey version was also randomized to account for order bias. Despite these modifications, low internal consistency may have still occurred due to items being too easy or too difficult (Ebel, 1968; Gall et al., 2007). Feldt (1993) noted that item difficulty ideally resides between .27 - .79 (27% - 79% of participants rating a particular item correctly). According to this standard, vignettes 3 and 4 were shown to be too easy, given that >90% of participants rated them correctly. Additionally, vignettes 5 and 8 appeared too difficult given that 18% and 7% of participants rated them correctly.

It was interesting that the data indicated no significant difference in reporting accuracy scores and the amount of mandated reporter training received by participants. Based on past research, it would have been reasonable to assume that participants with more mandated reporter training would obtain a significantly higher reporting accuracy score. For example, King et al. (1998) found that those receiving 10 hours or more of

mandated reporter training improved their proportion of reportable/not reportable offenses. One explanation for finding no significance may have been due to the lack of variability in the hours of mandated reporter training received by the sample (83% received 0-3 hours of training). An additional explanation may be the quality/content of training received by participants. This may be likely, given that the participants ($n = 9$) who received 10 hours or more of mandated reporter training still correctly rated roughly the same number of vignettes as those with less than 10 hours of mandated reporter training.

The only variable that appeared to be related to reporting accuracy was whether or not a social worker was assigned to the school building. Participants who noted having a social worker assigned to their school building ($n = 48$) scored significantly lower on vignette ratings than those participants who did not. This result appears to contradict Kesner and Robinson (2002), who suggested that access to social worker's could improve recognition and detection of child abuse. This negative relationship could be explained by the psychological phenomenon "diffusion of responsibility," which would suggest that school personnel may be less likely to take responsibility for making a child maltreatment report if they could shift that responsibility to another person (Latane & Darley, 1968). This "shifting of responsibility" may lead school personnel to invest less time in effectively learning reporting procedures. This same phenomenon (as noted in previous research by Abrahams et al., 1992; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Horton & Cruise, 2001) could attribute to the poor reporting accuracy scores of much of the sample.

Data suggested that school personnel's perception of CPS had no significant effect on their ability to accurately report child abuse/neglect and only accounted for less

than 1% of the explained variance. This result seems to suggest that, although some school personnel may distrust CPS and view it as having poor quality (Bryant & Milsom, 2005; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Horton & Cruise, 2001; Kenny, 2001a; Zellman, 1990), it does not necessarily impact their ability to accurately report abuse/neglect.

Surprisingly, no significant differences were shown to exist in the reporting accuracy scores of the various categories of school personnel positions (Administration/Specialist, Teacher, Support Staff). This result was of interest given that previous research indicated that the majority of child abuse and neglect reports were made by personnel in administrative positions (Abrahams et al., 1992) and that it was those personnel who often made the final determination to report/not report to CPS (Horton & Cruise, 2001; Kenny, 2004). Data from this study would suggest that no particular school professional has an advantage over another in the ability to accurately recognize and report child maltreatment. Given these results, one would also have reasonable cause to dispute the use of hierarchy effect procedures in schools, suggesting that other school professionals are equally as capable as principals in detecting and reporting child abuse/neglect. This latitude to report suspected child maltreatment would align with reporting laws (C.R.S. 19-3-304) and free school personnel from the fear of making a report against the preference of their employer (Horton & Cruise, 2001).

Implications

Given the negative implications of child maltreatment (which may impact maltreated children both at home and school), coupled with school personnel serving influential roles as mandated reporters (Kenny, 2001a), sufficient attention should be

devoted to the task of addressing this issue through proactive, well-targeted education. Attention to this matter is represented through practice and research implications.

Practice Implications

Responses suggested that participants lacked mandated reporter training; while they also demonstrated an inability to accurately report child maltreatment even with 10 hours or more of mandated reporter training. Therefore, practice implications should focus on increasing the amount of mandated reporter training received by school officials and employees as well as improving the content of mandated reporter training.

In this study, there was a homogeneous distribution of the variable “Amount of Mandated Reporter Training Received”, given that 95% of the sample reported receiving less than 10 hours of mandated reporter training. The initial step in addressing this dilemma may be to follow the recommendation of Kenny (2004) and confirm that “schools have clear, accessible, written policies (consistent with state statutes) for school personnel regarding child abuse reporting” (p. 1317). Included in these written policies should also be some specificity regarding how much training school personnel should receive. The research conducted by King et al. (1998), who suggested 10 hours as the minimum amount of training received to demonstrate significant improvement in determining reportable/not reportable offenses, appears to be the best starting point in establishing these criteria.

However, the content of mandated reporter training should also be a major focus in improving whatever training is currently being received. Of the nine participants who received 10 hours or more of mandated reporter training, data revealed that these participants still correctly rated roughly the same number of vignettes as those with less

than 10 hours of mandated reporter training. School psychologists could be charged with the task of developing “a cooperative, working relationship with the county agency” (Wilson & Gettinger, 1989, p. 100). This relationship could streamline training content, which may increase reporting accuracy of child maltreatment while decreasing the overreporting and underreporting of abuse/neglect. As noted by Bryant and Baldwin (2010), this approach would also allow school personnel to ask CPS questions pertaining to reporting procedures.

The task of addressing school policies surrounding hierarchical reporting should also be explored given that no significant differences in reporting accuracy were found among the three categories (Administration/Specialist, Teacher, Support Staff). This result suggests that no particular “position” was better than another at recognizing abuse/neglect. Furthermore, the diffusion of responsibility phenomenon (Darley & Latane, 1968) may be playing a role in school personnel’s ability to take responsibility for recognizing and reporting indicators of child maltreatment.

Research Implications

After further refining the reporting accuracy scale (given its internal consistency reliability), a pre-screening process could eventually be developed for school systems that would identify staff who may not demonstrate proficiency at recognizing and reporting child abuse/neglect. Those identified would receive further training explicitly targeting non-proficient areas. The scale could then be expanded upon and altered to align with each state’s reporting laws and procedures.

Limitations

Limitations included the inability to analyze the demographics of those 31% who accessed the survey link but chose not to participate in the study. It is unclear whether these individuals declined participation because of their lack of experience/mandated reporter training or due to other factors that may have led to different results.

An additional limitation of the study involved the sample's homogeneity in particular areas of analyses, including "Amount of Mandated Reporter Training Received" and "Reports Made in the last 3 Years/Over Entire Career." If more diversity was evidenced, additional results of significance may have been attained.

One final limitation that must be discussed is the vignettes not serving as a reliable indicator of reporting accuracy for school personnel. As previously mentioned, measures were taken to improve the vignettes used in the original pilot study. However, due to the KR-20 analysis indicating low internal consistency reliability, the vignettes presented to school personnel may have proven too difficult (Ebel, 1968) even though they were written according guidelines used by Colorado Children's Code Title 19 in defining various types of child maltreatment. Nevertheless, all results must be cautiously interpreted given the low internal consistency reliability of the reporting accuracy measure.

Areas of Future Research

Future research should use qualitative analysis to explore school written policies and procedures pertaining to child abuse reporting. Content from these policies should be compared to state mandated reporting laws to measure the consistency with which school policy encompasses state law. This initial step would be imperative in creating a

curriculum which would serve to effectively train school personnel to understand reporting procedures as well as familiarize themselves with what state law considers reportable indicators of child maltreatment. Alvarez et al. (2004) examined mandated reporter training programs and determined that content in effective programs contain information regarding types and definitions of abuse as well as include reporting procedures such as who to make the report to as well as the timeline required to do so. Furthermore, effective training programs explore legal issues pertaining to mandated reporters and discuss information regarding the effects of reports on the child and how to involve non-offending family members (Alvarez et al., 2004). Finally, recommendations suggested that trainings be made readily available and that improvement is sought in the “working relationship with CPS” (p. 575). Kenny (2007) noted the effectiveness of administering a one hour online tutorial in which participants demonstrated significantly higher post-test scores.

Once the curriculum of mandated reporter training has been established and deemed effective, research should explore the amount of hour’s school personnel need to receive in order to be competent at recognizing and reporting child maltreatment. Future research should also continue to refine the use of vignettes in the reporting accuracy scale in order for it to be used as a pre-screening tool. This tool could serve to identify school personnel who lack the reporting knowledge necessary to accurately distinguish indicators of child abuse and neglect. Furthermore, future research aimed at obtaining a sufficient sample size which could compare the reporting accuracy of each school position (as opposed to categorizing positions to ensure a sufficient n was attained to run analyses) should be conducted.

Summary

This study sought to identify factors that may contribute to the reporting accuracy of school officials/employees. Research questions were addressed using the independent variables: amount of mandated reporter training received, social workers assigned to the school buildings, perceptions of CPS, and school positions. Statistical analysis identified a significant negative relationship between reporting accuracy and whether a social worker was assigned to the school building. This study was the first of its kind to attempt to explore differences in reporting accuracy between all school officials and employees; to which results demonstrated no significant difference between school position categories. Although it included a diverse population, the study revealed that school participants in Colorado lack mandated reporter training and the content of mandated reporter training received by participants was questionable at best.

Data obtained from this study identified various factors that could improve mandated reporting of school personnel in Colorado. Developing the content and application of maltreatment reporting may very well improve the lives and circumstances of children who continue to needlessly suffer abuse and neglect.

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APPENDIX A
VIGNETTES

1) There are 4th grade students playing at recess. The fourth grade teacher notices one of the students (age 10) has a small half-dollar sized bruise on his left forehead. The teacher asks him how he received the bruise and he explains that his younger brother (a 2nd grader) “hit him in the head yesterday with a plastic bat.” At the end of the school day, the teacher speaks to the students’ mother about the bruise. The mother explains that the bruise occurred when the students’ younger brother hit him in the face with a plastic bat yesterday while playing in their backyard.

- Reportable
- Not Reportable
- More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made

2) A 6-year-old child approaches the principal near the end of the school day and tells him her mother will not be able to pick her up from school today because her father was angry at her mother and “pushed her against the bedroom wall last night.”

- Reportable
- Not Reportable
- More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made

3) The school basketball coach is walking to her car in the high school parking lot and witnesses a parent forcefully slapping his 4-year-old child in the back of the head 2-3 times and the child begins to cry.

- Reportable
- Not Reportable
- More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made

4) A 3rd grade teacher overhears one of his male students (age 9) telling another student that “my dad has me act out movies naked in front of him on the weekend.” Upon hearing this, the teacher brings the student outside the classroom and questions him about the comment. The student looks at the ground and asks the teacher to promise not to tell anyone about it.

- Reportable
- Not Reportable
- More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made

5) As the school bell rings, signifying the end of a class period, students get up from their desks to transition to the next class. The special education teacher sees a note that

was left on a 17-year-old students' desk. The note described a situation in which the students' father had touched her.

- Reportable
- Not Reportable
- More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made

6) An occupational therapist observes a 6-year-old boy during art class drawing a picture of two people (one figure is roughly 3 inches in height, while the other is approximately twice as tall) who appear to be engaging in a sexual act. The occupational therapist asks the child about the drawing. The child responds with "they are playing a game."

- Reportable
- Not Reportable
- More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made

7) The school librarian notices a 1st grade boy (age 7) in the library, who is typically kept fairly clean and cared for. This child has had lice in his hair for the past 3-4 days.

- Reportable
- Not Reportable
- More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made

8) During the winter time, the school psychologist consistently notices a 5th grade child (age 11) coming to school without a coat. When asked where her coat is, the child responds with "I don't have one."

- Reportable
- Not Reportable
- More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made

9) A grandparent picks their 12-year-old grandchild up from school and explains to the school counselor that the child's mother left four days ago and they have no idea where she is. The grandparent informs the counselor that the parent left a note instructing the grandparents to take care of the child. The grandparent tells the counselor to not be concerned with contacting authorities because they are already aware of the situation.

- Reportable
- Not Reportable

- More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made

10) It is the third week of school. At the end of the school day, the school groundskeeper is outside working as parents pick their children up. As they are walking to their car, he overhears a parent scream to her 5-year-old child that the child is “worthless” and “should have never been born.” The child begins to sob. The groundskeeper has noticed the child on a number of occasions and each time the child appears sad and only looks at the ground.

- Reportable
- Not Reportable
- More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made

11) At a high school track meet, the assistant principal witnesses a parent telling his 15-year-old daughter that she “has brought shame to their family” because of the effort she put forth during her previous race. The assistant principal confronts the parent about his comment and the parent responds with “This matter is none of your business!”

- Reportable
- Not Reportable
- More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made

12) Approximately 3 times per week for the last 4 weeks, a bus driver has witnessed a 10-year-old girl crying as she boards the bus in the morning. The girl consistently sits by herself and would be characterized by the bus driver as seeming “depressed.” This afternoon, the bus driver drops the girl off and, prior to pulling away, witnesses the girl’s mother sternly look at the girl and shake her head in disgust.

- Reportable
- Not Reportable
- More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made

APPENDIX B
IRB APPROVAL LETTER



Institutional Review Board

DATE: October 5, 2012

TO: Weston Finch, B.A.

FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [375774-2] Reporting Accuracy and Conscientious Reporting of Public and Private School Officials and Employees

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: October 5, 2012

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB verifies that this project is EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.

APPENDIX C
ONLINE SURVEY VERSION



CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Reporting Accuracy of Public and Private School Officials and Employees

Researcher: Weston J. Finch, Doctoral Candidate in School Psychology

Phone Number: (970) 302-7193 e-mail: finc6245@bears.unco.edu

Research Advisor: Dr. Michelle Athanasiou, Professor Department of School Psychology

Phone Number: (970) 351-2356 e-mail: michelle.athanasiou@unco.edu

My name is Weston Finch. I am a School Psychology doctoral student at the University of Northern Colorado. Much of my interest has been focused in the area of mandated reporting in the schools and the accuracy with which reports are made. The primary purpose of this study is gain a better understanding of school personnel's reporting accuracy.

If you volunteer, you will be agreeing to participate in an online survey. You will be asked to answer several questions pertaining to your demographics, school environment, and reporting history. Following these questions, you will identify whether the fictional scenario in each of 10 vignettes is reportable, not reportable, or more information is needed before a determination of reportable can be made. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

To maximize confidentiality, no identifying information will be included in the survey and no survey results from individual schools/districts will be shared with principals. A number will be assigned to your survey to protect your identity. However, since results of the study will be sent electronically, information is only as confidential as the mode of communication allows. There are no foreseeable risks for you as a participant and risks are no greater than those normally encountered during activities of a typical school day. Benefits to you include the opportunity to potentially contribute to and further develop ways in which mandated reporting is taught to school officials/employees thereby improving knowledge of reporting and better protecting our nation's youth. You, as a participant, will also have the opportunity to provide your email address following the survey if you wish to be entered into a drawing to receive one of four \$25 gift cards.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and clicking the "I Agree" box below you are giving permission for your participation. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-2161.

☐

I Agree

☐

I Do Not Agree





Demographics



powered by **Instantly** by **clear**



What position do you hold in your school?

- ☐ Administrative Assistant
- ☐ Bus Driver
- ☐ Coach
- ☐ Cook
- ☐ Custodian
- ☐ Counselor
- ☐ Groundskeeper
- ☐ Librarian
- ☐ Nurse
- ☐ Occupational Therapist
- ☐ Paraprofessional
- ☐ Physical Therapist
- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Assistant Principal
- ☐ School Psychologist
- ☐ Social Worker
- ☐ Speech Language Pathologist
- ☐ Superintendent
- ☐ Teacher
- ☒ Other





You selected "Other". Please indicate the position you hold in your school.



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What is your age?



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What is your gender?



Female



Male



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How many years' experience in all different positions do you have teaching/working in the schools (to include student teaching/internship)?

Enter your response here



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What type of mandated reporter training have you received?

- ☐ No training
- ☐ Online/internet
- ☒ In-person
- ☐ Other



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How many hours of mandated reporter training have you received in the last 3 years?

Enter your response here



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School Environment



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What percent of children in your school qualify for free and reduced lunch?

☐ 0-10%

☐ 11-20%

☒ 21-30%

☐ 31-40%

☐ 41-50%

☐ 51-60%

☐ 61-70%

☐ 71-80%

☐ 81-90%

☐ 91-100%

☐ I Do Not Know



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Do you work in a school located in an urban area (>2,500 residents) or rural area (<2,500 residents)?



Urban



Rural



I Do Not Know



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Does your building have a social worker assigned to it?



Yes



No



I Do Not Know



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In your most recent experience of having reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child, within your school, has been abused or neglected, was the decision to report made by a school official, other than yourself?



Yes



No



Not Applicable



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Do you believe your job in the school requires you to report suspected child abuse and neglect?



Yes



No



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How do you perceive Child Protective Services (CPS)?

☐ Very Positively

☒ Positively

☐ Neutral

☐ Negatively

☐ Very Negatively



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Reporting History



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How many child maltreatment reports have you made to Child Protective Services or other Law Enforcement Agencies in the last 3 years as part of your job in the public/private schools?



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How many child maltreatment reports have you made to Child Protective Services or other Law Enforcement Agencies over the course of your entire career in the public/private schools?



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How many child maltreatment reports have you made to other school personnel within your building in the last 3 years as part of your job in the public/private schools?



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How many child maltreatment reports have you made to other school personnel within your building as part of your job in the public/private schools?



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If you have reported suspected abuse/neglect to other school personnel, how often do you feel that they have reported your concerns of suspected child abuse/neglect to Child Protective Services or other Law Enforcement Agencies?

- ☐ Never
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Almost Always
- ☒ Always
- ☐ Not Applicable



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Vignettes

Please read through each vignette and select whether the scenario is Reportable, Not Reportable, or More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made.



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Approximately 3 times per week for the last 4 weeks, a bus driver has witnessed a 10-year-old girl crying as she boards the bus in the morning. The girl consistently sits by herself and would be characterized by the bus driver as seeming "depressed." This afternoon, the bus driver drops the girl off and, prior to pulling away, witnesses the girl's mother sternly look at the girl and shake her head in disgust.



Reportable



Not Reportable



More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made



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The school basketball coach is walking to her car in the high school parking lot and witnesses a parent forcefully slapping his 4-year-old child in the back of the head 2-3 times and the child begins to cry.



Reportable



Not Reportable



More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made



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A 3rd grade teacher overhears one of his male students (age 9) telling another student that "my dad has me act out movies naked in front of him on the weekend." Upon hearing this, the teacher brings the student outside the classroom and questions him about the comment. The student looks at the ground and asks the teacher to promise not to tell anyone about it.



Reportable



Not Reportable



More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made



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There are 4th grade students playing at recess. The fourth grade teacher notices one of the students (age 10) has a small half-dollar sized bruise on his left forehead. The teacher asks him how he received the bruise and he explains that his younger brother (a 2nd grader) "hit him in the head yesterday with a plastic bat." At the end of the school day, the teacher speaks to the students' mother about the bruise. The mother explains that the bruise occurred when the students' younger brother hit him in the face with a plastic bat yesterday while playing in their backyard.



Reportable



Not Reportable



More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made



powered by **Instant.ly** by atarg



A grandparent picks their 12-year-old grandchild up from school and explains to the school counselor that the child's mother left four days ago and they have no idea where she is. The grandparent informs the counselor that the parent left a note instructing the grandparents to take care of the child. The grandparent tells the counselor to not be concerned with contacting authorities because they are already aware of the situation.

- ☐ Reportable
- ☐ Not Reportable
- ☒ More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made



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At a high school track meet, the assistant principal witnesses a parent telling his 15-year-old daughter that she "has brought shame to their family" because of the effort she put forth during her previous race. The assistant principal confronts the parent about his comment and the parent responds with "This matter is none of your business!"

- ☐ Reportable
- ☒ Not Reportable
- ☐ More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made



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A 6-year-old child approaches the principal near the end of the school day and tells him her mother will not be able to pick her up from school today because her father was angry at her mother and "pushed her against the bedroom wall last night."



Reportable



Not Reportable



More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made



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The school librarian notices a 1st grade boy (age 7) in the library, who is typically kept fairly clean and cared for. This child has had lice in his hair for the past 3-4 days.



Reportable



Not Reportable



More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made



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An occupational therapist observes a 6-year-old boy during art class drawing a picture of two people (one figure is roughly 3 inches in height, while the other is approximately twice as tall) who appear to be engaging in a sexual act. The occupational therapist asks the child about the drawing. The child responds with "they are playing a game."

- ☐ Reportable
- ☐ Not Reportable
- ☒ More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made



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As the school bell rings, signifying the end of a class period, students get up from their desks to transition to the next class. The special education teacher sees a note that was left on a 17-year-old students' desk. The note described a situation in which the students' father had touched her.

- ☐ Reportable
- ☐ Not Reportable
- ☒ More Information is Needed Before a Determination of Reportable Can Be Made



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If you would like to be entered in the drawing to receive one of four \$25 gift cards to either Starbucks or Amazon.com, please send an email to finc6245@bears.unco.edu and title the subject line "Survey Gift Card". This will ensure your identity remains confidential and will in no way be linked to your survey responses.



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Thank you for participating!
Your responses have been saved and your time and opinion are greatly appreciated!

APPENDIX D
DIGITAL CONSENT



CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Reporting Accuracy of School Officials and Employees
 Researcher: Weston J. Finch, Doctoral Candidate in School Psychology
 Phone Number: (970) 302-7193 e-mail: finc6245@bears.unco.edu
 Research Advisor: Dr. Michelle Athanasiou, Professor Department of School Psychology
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My name is Weston Finch. I am a School Psychology doctoral student at the University of Northern Colorado. Much of my interest has been focused in the area of mandated reporting in the schools and the accuracy with which reports are made. The primary purpose of this study is gain a better understanding of school personnel's reporting accuracy.

If you volunteer, you will be agreeing to participate in an online survey. You will be asked to answer several questions pertaining to your demographics, school environment, and reporting history. Following these questions, you will identify whether the fictional scenario in each of 10 vignettes is reportable, not reportable, or more information is needed before a determination of reportable can be made. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

To maximize confidentiality, no identifying information will be included in the survey and no survey results from individual schools/districts will be shared with principals. A number will be assigned to your survey to protect your identity. However, since results of the study will be sent electronically, information is only as confidential as the mode of communication allows. There are no foreseeable risks for you as a participant and risks are no greater than those normally encountered during activities of a typical school day. Benefits to you include the opportunity to potentially contribute to and further develop ways in which mandated reporting is taught to school officials/employees thereby improving knowledge of reporting and better protecting our nation's youth. You, as a participant, will also have the opportunity to provide your email address following the survey if you wish to be entered into a drawing to receive one of four \$25 gift cards.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and clicking the "I Agree" box below you are giving permission for your participation. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-2161.

I Agree

☐

I Do Not Agree

☐