California State University, San Bernardino

CSUSB ScholarWorks

2013

Non-mandated reporters' attitudes on reporting child abuse

Christina Ramirez Rivera

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project

Part of the Social Work Commons

NON-MANDATED REPORTERS' ATTITUDES ON

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

_____

A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

_____

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

_____

by

Christina Ramirez Rivera

June 2013

NON-MANDATED REPORTERS' ATTITUDES ON
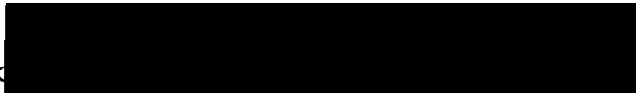
REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

———————————

A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

———————————

by

Christina Ramirez Rivera

June 2013

Approved by:

_____   _____
Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Faculty Supervisor   Date 6/6/13
Social Work

_____
Dr. Rosemary McCaslin,
M.S.W. Research Coordinator

ABSTRACT

This quantitative study aimed to find out the
beliefs of non-mandated reporters regarding the filing of
a child abuse report. It is not only an area that has not
been researched but one in which efforts to raise public
awareness are lacking. The number of child abuse reports
being filed is on the rise and many of these reports are
being evaluated out (not needing follow up).

Research was conducted through the use of purposive
sampling and a self-administered questionnaire to obtain
public opinion regarding the efforts of Child Protective
Services and perceptions on child abuse. Results indicate
that although a large majority of participants believed
child abuse is reportable and felt that they knew what
child abuse was only a few had filed an actual report
while a large number of participants reported having
suspected child abuse at one point.

These findings may lead to implementation of public
awareness programs and lead to a better generalized idea
of when to file a report and when a report is not
warranted. Social work practice may be impacted in
receiving referrals that can be investigated, lessening
the number of evaluated out referrals.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincerest appreciation to my academic research advisor, Dr. Rosemary McCaslin for all the support, insight, and guidance she offered throughout this process. I would also like to thank the many professors that at one point or another helped me along the way during the last three years while in this program. A special thank you goes out to all my cohort classmates, friends, and family who have offered their support in one way or another, from babysitting the kids to late night school discussions, it made this all possible.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my fiancée, William and our beautiful children Kaitlyn, Daijah, and Urijah, who have afforded me their patience, understanding, encouragement, and love through it all. I have been blessed to have you all in my life and am forever grateful for the amount of support you have provided me.

I would also like to dedicate this to my parents who instilled the importance of education in me at a very young age and encouraged me to follow my dreams.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One will begin with introducing the problem statement for what was researched. The purpose of this study will then be discussed. Last to be addressed will be the significance of this study to the field of social work.

Problem Statement

Child abuse has come to gain national attention in the United States as well as internationally with the United Nations (Hart, Lee, & Wernham, 2011). Child abuse has been recognized as a social problem and has incrementally gained much attention through the high number of child abuse incidents being reported. An estimated 3.3 million reports received by the Department of Children and Family Services involving the alleged maltreatment of children were received in 2010 (Children's Bureau, 2011). It has been noted that the incidence of children being harmed or dying as a result of such harm has decreased worldwide but the number of children being mistreated remains high and therefore the problem remains significant (Hart, Lee, & Wernham, 2011).

1

A problem currently exists in the lack of research addressing public opinion on reporting child abuse. Most studies have concentrated on surveying the opinion of mandated reporters and the need to implement training programs geared to those populations. However, there is great need to address possible barriers to reporting that the general public may have.

Why is the public reporting so many unfounded reports? Why is the public not reporting child abuse in amounts greater than mandated reporters? Could it be a lack of knowledge? It is no secret that the non-mandated reporter population outnumbers that of mandated reporters. Thus it can be stated that reaching out to this population would provide extra sets of eyes in the detection and reporting of child abuse. Removing barriers would benefit society as a whole.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify what barriers to reporting child abuse may exist within the population of non-mandated reporters. Identification of the barriers will provide insight and enable the department of Children and Family Services to be able to

remove and address identified barriers. Data was collected through the distribution of a questionnaire and use of purpusive sampling. Quantitative analysis was used to evaluate data and identify relationships between variables. It was through the use of quantitative analysis that the study sought to gain insight into the opinions of the non-mandated reporter population. The need to gain public recognition of child abuse is eminent in the prevention of the problem. Clarification of what is considered child abuse may provide a concrete framework from which the public may draw.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

Gaining insight into obstacles or barriers preventing the general public from recognizing or reporting child abuse is necessary in protecting the well-being of children. Social work practice may be directly impacted in a possible decrease in the number of evaluated out referrals where the need to obtain resources for a family is being reported rather than to deal with child abuse. The time and money that the agency spends on such referrals could be saved and used to deal with actual child abuse reports. Based on 2010 reported

data from the Children's Bureau (2011) it was found that 60.7 percent of referrals were screened in. The reported numbers show 39 percent of the 3.3 million were screened out (p. viii). Screened in referrals are referrals that are investigated (receive a response from the agency) and screened out referrals are not investigated.

What is leading the public to make so many unfounded reports? Could it be a lack of knowledge on the functions of the department? And why are so many referrals not made when there is clear evidence that the child has suffered repeated abuse? The information gathered may provide important information regarding the ideas or misconceptions of the general public as it pertains to the work of CFS. Gaining such knowledge from the study would affect the implementation phase of the generalist intervention process.

The study is relevant to child welfare practice as it is geared towards gaining awareness of the public's perceptions of child abuse and of Children and Family Services in general. The study anticipates determining what barriers could be overcome in order to be able to gain public support in combating child abuse.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will address the definition of child

abuse at the federal and local level along with the

literature reviewed regarding mandated reporters and

findings regarding factors that play a role in reporting.

The chapter will also address literature dealing with the

general population of non-mandated reporters and possible

issues that can be affecting their disproportionate

numbers in reporting as it compares to mandated

reporters. Also, addressed will be the theoretical

framework that affects conceptualization of this problem

in the identification and reporting of child abuse.

Defining Child Abuse

Child abuse is defined at the state and federal

level. Federal agencies define child abuse through the

Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) as:

>   Any recent act or failure to act on the part of a
>
>   parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious
>
>   physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or
>
>   exploitation, or an act or failure to act which

presents an imminent risk of serious harm (Child
Welfare Information Gateway, n.d.).

Sexual abuse as defined by CAPTA is:

The employment, use, persuasion, inducement,
enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in,
or assist any other person to engage in, any
sexually explicit conduct or simulation of such
conduct for the purpose of producing a visual
depiction of such conduct; or the rape, and in some
cases of caretaker or interfamilial relationships,
statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other
form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest
with children (Child Welfare Information Gateway,
n.d.).

To further inform the following general definitions
were gathered from the website of Children and Family
Services in San Bernardino:

- Physical Abuse is defined as Non-accidental
physical trauma or injury inflicted by a parent
or caretaker on a child. It also includes a
parent's or a caretaker's failure to protect a
child from another person who perpetrated
physical abuse on a child. In its most severe

6

form, physical abuse is likely to cause great bodily harm or death.

- Physical Neglect is defined, as the failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm to the child's health or safety. This may include, but is not limited to abandonment, lack of supervision, life endangering physical hygiene, lack of adequate nutrition that places the child below the normal growth curve, lack of shelter, lack of medical or dental that results in health threatening conditions, and the inability to meet basic clothing needs of a child. In its most severe form, physical neglect may result in great bodily harm or death.

- Sexual Abuse includes penetration or external touching of a child's intimate parts, oral sex with a child, indecent exposure or any other sexual act performed in a child's presence for sexual gratification, sexual use of a child for prostitution, and the manufacturing of child pornography. Child sexual abuse is also the

7

willful failure of the parent or the child's

caretaker to make a reasonable effort to stop

child sexual abuse by another person.

- Emotional Abuse includes verbal assaults,

    ignoring and indifference or constant family

    conflict. If a child is degraded enough, the

    child will begin to live up to the image

    communicated by the abusing parent or caretaker

    (Children and Family Services, n.d., para. 15).

Research Concerning Mandated Reporters

A recent report generated by the United States

Children's Bureau (2011), reported that there were an

estimated 3.3 million reports received by the Department

of Children and Family Services involving the alleged

maltreatment of approximately 5.9 million children of

which 60.7 percent of referrals were screened in

(p. viii). Screened in referrals are referrals that are

investigated. The majority of referrals received were

generated by mandated reporters (United States Children's

Bureau, 2011) which is supported by the tendency of most

research to focus on this segment of the population

(Melton, 2004; Al Eissa & Ahmuneef, 2009; Emich-Widera,

Kopyta, Laluzna-Czyz, & Kazek, 2009; Ashton 2000). It is

clear that the nature of the investigative approach of

Children and Family services may lead to distrust among

groups in society (Melton, 2004; Garcia & Herrero, 2005).

The perception of society of the functions of Children

and Family Services directly impacts their trust in the

process. Society may perceive the department as a tyrant

looking to tear families apart rather than a resource to

provide supportive services.

It has become an important issue to understand some

of the barriers to reporting that professionals

encounter. Studies have shown that there exist

significant differences in the identification of child

abuse among professionals (Emich-Widera et al., 2010,

p. 309) and personal beliefs on corporal punishment

(Ashton, 2000, p. 395) that influence decisions of

mandated reporters to file a report or not. It is

difficult to understand that differences exist in the

identification of child abuse among trained professionals

considering that all mandated reporters should have

received like training. It appears there exists varying

levels of what is acceptable as a form of punishment

often being deduced from the individual's own

experiences. "There is a wide range of beliefs, knowledge bases and attitudes toward different forms of violence against children, in many cases making the dialogue extremely difficult even among politicians, policy makers, those implementing these policies, parents and children themselves" (Svevo-Cianci, Merczog, Krappmann, Cook, 2011, p. 984). The focus has been to identify barriers to reporting and further understand the difference in opinions among professional's attitudes on reporting.

The General Public

Child abuse has been accepted as a social problem in society and thus programs have been implemented in an attempt to protect children (Krugman & Leventhal, 2005; Svevo-Cianci, Herczog, Krappmann, & Cook, 2011). It is evident that although the problem has been recognized the majority of the reports are coming from mandated reporters (United States Children's Bureau, n.d.). It is important to find out why and what is making the difference in reporting trends among this population and the general public.

The research that has been conducted with regards to the general public has been primarily limited to child physical abuse (Gracia & Herrero, 2005; Gracia & Herrero, 2008). Gracia and Herrero's work from 2008 looked at the relationship between the perception of families in regards to the use of corporal punishment and their view of child physical abuse as a social problem (2008, p. 1058). It has been determined that the perception of an individual regarding the use of corporal punishment can and will affect their decision to intervene on behalf of a child (Gracia & Herrero, 2008, p. 1058; Gracia & Herrero, 2006, p. 362; Ashton, 2000, p. 396). Another barrier in reporting could be fear of retaliation on behalf of the family they are reporting or perceived failure of the system (Blom, 2009; Gracia & Herrero, 2006).

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Social cognitive theory attempts to understand social problems through the lens of individual psychology, it believes that an individual and his behavior affects and is affected by society (Pilgrim, 2010, para. 4). Herrero and Gracia's work of 2008 and

2005 both highlight the idea that people are influenced by the ideas of their surroundings (society) which is in line with social cognitive theory. Increasing awareness begins with the individual who will directly impact the beliefs of society.

It is the intent of this study to identify barriers to reporting child abuse among non-mandated reporters in society and identify ways to change the mindset centered on reporting. Using the social cognitive theory as an approach can facilitate overcoming barriers to reporting and aid in increasing awareness.

Summary

Chapter Two aimed to define child abuse and the scope of the problem. Studies analyzed and information collected focus on mandated reporters. The clear gap in studies is evaluating another segment of the population, non-mandated reporters.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

The chapter will cover how and what was used to obtain results in identifying barriers to reporting among non-mandated reporters. Included in the discussion are study design, sampling, data collection, and instruments. The remaining discussion includes the step-by-step procedures in obtaining the sample and data, protection of human subjects, and data analyses.

Study Design

The purpose of the study is to explore what barriers may be affecting the number of reports being generated by the population of non-mandated reporters. The research method used was quantitative; this method was used to capture as much information as possible.

The survey developed for the study incorporates the dependent and independent variables to measure the opinions of non-mandated reporters. Levels of measurement incorporated into the survey include: nominal, ordinal, and ratio levels.

Sampling

Purposive sampling to obtain a sample of the population was used for this study. The sample of the population was non-mandated reporters. All completed questionnaires (See Appendix A) were counted and taken into consideration. The only questionnaires excluded from the sample were those obtained by mandated reporters because the study focuses on the non-mandated population.

The sample was obtained through purposive sampling. An electronic mail and facebook post was sent out to personal contacts regarding the need for non-mandated reporters to complete a questionnaire for a thesis project. A flyer regarding the thesis project was handed out to personal contacts. Co-workers and personal contacts aided in distributing questionnaires to people they knew who fit the non-mandated reporter criteria.

Data Collection and Instruments

Data collection consisted of attitudes about or barriers to reporting as reported by non-mandated reporters. The dependent variable was reporting and the independent variables attitudes or barriers to reporting.

Level of measurements used for the study included variables at the nominal and ordinal level.

The survey includes six demographic questions, four questions regarding child abuse reporting, and four questions regarding identifying barriers to reporting child abuse. Demographic questions included gender, age, level of education completed, household income, if they consider themselves spiritual or religious, and ethnic identification. Level of measurement used for each of the demographic questions ranged from nominal, interval, and ordinal.

The four questions regarding child abuse reporting will be measured at the nominal level. The questions regarding child abuse reporting include: Is child abuse reportable?, Have you ever reported child abuse?, Have you ever suspected child abuse?, and Do you know what child abuse is?

Questions surrounding identification and barriers to reporting child abuse include: If you have suspected child abuse and did not report please circle as many from the following list as to why you did not report?, What from the following list do you believe constitutes child abuse?, Which of the following scenarios do you believe

15

are reportable incidents of child abuse?, and what do you

believe is the function of the Department of Children and

Family Services? The nominal level of measurement used

will be used for these questions.

Procedures

Data were gathered through the use of a

questionnaire. Purpusive sampling was done with

information regarding the study posted on Facebook,

e-mails to personal contacts and posting of flyers (See

Appendix B) and arrangements were made to mail

questionnaire out to those interested in participating in

the survey or hand delivered to participants. Data was

collected in hard copy from respondents as surveys were

returned by mail in sealed self-addressed postage paid

stamped envelopes or returned personally by participants.

Protection of Human Subjects

The informed consent addresses everything a

participant needs to know about the study (See Appendix

C). The questionnaire completed by subjects did not

collect any personally identifiable information. The

questionnaires were completed on a voluntary basis. No

potential risks were identified that may harm an individual (See Appendix C).

A Debriefing statement attached to the questionnaire provides participants with information regarding their right to withdraw from the study at any time prior to submitting their responses. Contact information on who to refer questions to and where to obtain results of the study are included (See Appendix D).

Data Analysis

A Quantitative approach to analyzing research was used in this study to be able to identify possible relationships between variables. Independent and dependent variables with various levels of measurements were used in the identification of causal and correlational associations. Univariate and bivariate analyses were used.

Univariate analyses were conducted for each variable included in the questionnaire. Univariate analyses provided a representative sample of the responses received. Univariate analyses will give the mean, mode, and median of the sampled responses. Bivariate analyses were used to compare two variables within the

questionnaire to capture differences in responses between groups.

Summary

Chapter Three discussed methods used in formulating and conducting the study. Procedures regarding questionnaire dissemination to the non-mandated population and data retrieval were discussed in depth. Identification of items on the questionnaire to include level of measurement and proposed data analyses were also included in this chapter. Another important topic for the protection of identity of participants and their right to withdraw from the study were discussed in detail.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The chapter will cover the findings of the study. Included in this chapter will be the presentation of univariate findings and bivariate findings. The discussion will present a description of the demographics of participants and their responses.

Presentation of the Findings

The total number of participants in this study was 52. The mean age of participants was 33.48 and the standard deviation 13.07. Participants were evenly distributed with 50% being male and 50% being female. Level of education varied from participants who had less than high school to having a Master's degree or higher. The large majority of participants reported being religious/spiritual. Ethnicity was represented in four categories that included Caucasian, African American, Hispanic/Latino, and other ethnicity/bi-racial. For descriptive information regarding participant demographics see Table 1.

Table 1. Demographics

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	26	50
Female	26	50
Level of Education		
> High School	5	9.6
High School Diploma/GED	14	26.9
Some College	16	30.8
2-year College (Associate's Degree	10	19.2
4-year College (Bachelor's Degree	6	11.5
Master's Degree or Above	0	0
No Answer	1	1.9
Religious/Spiritual		
Yes	36	69.2
No	11	21.2
No Answer	5	9.6
Ethnicity		
Caucasian	14	26.9
Hispanic/Latino	24	46.2
African American	7	13.5
Other Ethnicity/Biracial	5	9.6

The four questions regarding child abuse reporting were measured at the nominal level. These questions included: Is child abuse reportable?, Have you ever reported child abuse?, Have you ever suspected child abuse?, and Do you know what child abuse is? A large majority of participants believed child abuse is

reportable and feel that they know what child abuse is. Only 10 participants have filed an actual child abuse report and 51.9% of respondents report having suspected child abuse at one point. For descriptive information of responses see Table 2.

Table 2. Child Abuse Reporting

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Is child abuse reportable?		
Yes	50	96.2
No	2	3.8
Have you ever suspected child abuse?		
Yes	27	51.9
No	25	48.1
Have you ever reported child abuse?		
Yes	10	19.2
No	41	78.8
No Answer	1	1.9
Do you feel that you know what child abuse is?		
Yes	51	98.1
No	0	0
No Answer	1	1.9

Questions surrounding identification of and barriers to reporting child abuse included: If you have suspected child abuse and did not report please circle as many

reasons from the following list as to why you did not

report?, What from the following list do you believe

constitutes child abuse?, Which of the following

scenarios do you believe are reportable incidents of

child abuse?, and what do you believe is the function of

the Department of Children and Family Services? The

nominal level of measurement was used for these

responses. Of the responses for "suspected child abuse

but did not report" the most common reasons by ranked

order included not wanting to be involved in legal

proceedings (court), respondent not knowing who or where

to report child abuse to, fear that their name would not

be kept confidential, and fear of retaliation from the

family.

The most common responses in ranked order for what

constitutes child abuse included sexually abusing a child

for self-gratification, having no food for a child,

constant name calling and putting down of a child,

physically hitting a child and leaving marks, having no

shelter for a child, and not providing appropriate winter

clothing when it is snowing. The least common response of

what constitutes child abuse was spanking a child.

The most common responses for reportable scenarios
of child abuse included child disclosing
father/mother/caretaker often touches their privates,
child's home is filthy with animal feces scattered
throughout the home, child is hit with different objects
and is left with welts and bruises, child is often left
for days at a time to care for him/herself and his/her
siblings, and child is always asking you for food and
indicates there is no one home. The least common response
for reportable incidents of child abuse is a child being
spanked.

As for responses for function of Children and Family
Services, the most common belief is that department
provides services and resources to families with the
second marked response being that they take children
away. The least common response regarding the function of
Children and Family Services is the belief that they are
tyrants that tear families apart. For further information
regarding responses see Table 3.

Table 3. Identification/Barriers to Reporting

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Suspected child abuse and did not report:		
Felt that it was not their problem	4	19
Fear that your name would not be kept confidential	8	15.4
Fear of retaliation from the family	9	17.3
Did not know who to contact or report child abuse to	10	19.2
Did not want to be involved in legal proceedings (court)	11	21.2
What constitutes child abuse:		
Spanking a child	9	17.3
Not providing appropriate winter clothing for a child when it is snowing	40	76.9
Having no shelter for a child	44	84.6
Physically hitting a child and leaving marks	45	86.5
Constant name calling and putting down of a child	46	88.5
Having no food for a child	47	90.4
Sexually abusing a child for self gratification	52	100
Reportable incidents of child abuse:		
Child is spanked	7	13.5
Child sleeps on the floor	22	42.3
It is often noticed that people come in and out of the home at all times of the day.	26	50
Child always asks you for food and indicates there is no one home	42	80.8
Child is often left for days at a time to care for him/herself and his/her siblings	46	88.5
Child is hit with different objects and is left with welts and bruises	47	90.4
Child's home is filthy with animal feces scattered throughout the home	49	94.2
Child states to you that father/mother/caretaker often touches their privates	51	98.1

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Belief of the function of the Department of Children and Family Services		
Tyrants that tear families apart	3	5.8
Keep families together	20	38.5
Remove children from their homes	34	65.4
Provide resources to families	38	73.1
Provide needed services for families	38	73.1

Cross tabulations evaluated whether respondents have ever suspected child abuse and had reported, had suspected child abuse but did not report, and those that had never suspected child abuse. Twenty-five respondents reported they had never suspected child abuse and had never reported an incident. One resported they had never suspected child abuse but had reported it. Sixteen had reported they had suspected child abuse but did not report. Nine respondents had suspected child abuse and reported it. (χ^2 = 7.639, df = 1, p = .006). See Table 4 for results.

Table 4. Suspected/Reported Child Abuse

Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Never suspected and never reported	23	46.9
Never suspected and reported	1	2
Suspected and did not report	16	32.7
Suspected and reported	9	18.4

Summary

Chapter Four focused on the findings of the study. The results for the univariate and bivariate analyses were presented. Participant demographics and their responses to the self-administered questionnaire were described.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The chapter will begin with a discussion of the findings as it pertains to the study. The limitations of this study will also be discussed. Also to be discussed will be recommendations for social work practice, policy, and research. Last is a conclusion for the research topic.

Discussion

First to be discussed is the demographics of participants. The questionnaire was taken by an equal number of males and females making each gender evenly represented. The majority of participants reported having a level of education as having "some college" or higher education. Approximately 69% of the respondents reported being religious/spiritual. The respondents were comprised of fairly educated and religious/spiritual individuals. Ethnicity was not equally represented with the most common being Caucasian or Hispanic/Latino.

Second to discuss is the responses pertaining to reporting or identifying child abuse. Nearly all

respondents believed child abuse is reportable with only two indicating that it was not reportable. This could be that they do not have knowledge that the Department of Children and Family Services exists or may have rushed in answering the questionnaire. Responses indicating whether or not participants ever suspected child abuse were evenly divided with 27% stating they had and 25% indicating they had not. In the analysis of respondents who had suspected child abuse as compared to those who had reported child abuse it was found that 25 had never suspected child abuse, 16 suspected child abuse and did not report, and only 9 had suspected and reported child abuse. An interesting find was that two-thirds of respondents who had suspected child abuse failed to report it. The majority then responded they felt they knew what child abuse was.

Last are responses to the last four questions on the questionnaire. Most common responses among respondent's who had suspected child abuse but did not report included fear of retaliation from the family, fear that their name would not remain confidential, did not want to be involved in legal proceedings, and/or did not know who to contact to report child abuse. Respondent concerns are

all valid and support the barriers identified by researchers who have previously hypothesized a barrier in reporting could be fear of retaliation on behalf of the family they are reporting or perceived failure of the system (Blom, 2009; Gracia & Herrero, 2006).

An interesting finding for what constitutes child abuse is the identification of emotional abuse as it is one that is not common for people to identify as abusive behavior that is reportable. Since the majority of respondents are educated it is not surprising that this type of abuse was identified.

Nine respondents said spanking constitutes child abuse however, only seven respondents stated that it was a reportable incident. It is interesting to see that the majority of respondents selected physically hitting a child and leaving marks as constituting child abuse however, in examining this response closer spanking a child can leave a mark on a child. The word "spanking" somehow diminishes the severity respondents attribute to it. It appears that hitting a child with an open hand is what makes the difference in the way spanking is classified.

Among other responses respondents stated that "Child sleeps on the floor" is a reportable incident of child abuse and people coming in and out of the home at all times of the day is also a reportable incident. In taking a closer look at these latter responses it can be determined that the way respondents respond to these answers can be directly related to what is and is not acceptable culturally or what in line with the status quo. A child not having a bed in and of itself is not child abuse when comparing it to the definition of what child abuse is according to Children and Family Services. For some cultures it is common for people to sleep on the floor while for others it is not and is where acculturation can come into play.

As for responses concerning people coming in and out of the home at all times of the day this can raise suspicion as to what is really going on in the home but does not fit the definition of the Department's definition of child abuse. Let us think for a moment that multiple families are residing in the home and therefore the amount of activity in the home is obviously more than that of a normal residence this does would not constitute child abuse. Some of the scenarios or statements

presented are items that catch the attention of many

however, some scenarios independent of any other factors

are cannot be considered child abuse because the scenario

lacks having a child at risk or of being abused

physically, emotionally, or suffering from neglect.

Common responses in the belief of the function of

the Department of Children and Family Services included

identifying the department as providing resources,

services, and keeping families together which again leads

to the educational level of the majority of participants

playing a great role in their informed responses. Most of

the favored responses reflect a more positive outlook on

the Department than originally expected.

Other responses regarding the perceived function of

the department include removing children from their homes

and the least selected response was the belief that they

are tyrants that tear families apart which can be

considered contradicting of one another. Another

interesting point is that a close number of respondents

believed that removing children from their homes and

keeping families together were functions of the

department. Respondents again prove to have a good

understanding of the department in the way that they have

consistently responded to the questions of the self-administered questionnaire.

Limitations

A limitation of this study includes that many participants were directly associated with a mandated reporter. A majority of participants that volunteered to complete a questionnaire came from personal contacts of mandated reporters which could have skewed results. Even though participants were non-mandated reporters themselves they could be familiar with the reporting process of child abuse through their affiliation with a mandated reporter.

Another limitation of the study is that it failed to ask participants whether or not they had ever attended any type of training regarding child abuse or if they believe a public service announcement would help ease their concerns about Children and Family Services.

Additionally, as the questionnaire was constructed by the researcher, the reliability and validity of the questionnaire have not been confirmed.

Recommendations for Social Work
Practice, Policy and Research

Implementing change would begin with understanding

social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory

understands social problems through the lens of

individual psychology, believing that an individual and

his behavior affects and is affected by society (Pilgrim,

2010, para. 4). Increasing awareness begins with the

individual who will directly impact the beliefs of

society. In order to accomplish this society must become

aware of the existence and functions of the Department of

Children and Family Services.

One of the only outreach programs that currently

exist is the Lisa Project. The Lisa Project is an exhibit

that is powerful in its delivery of their message and is

focused on raising awareness within the community.

The exhibit is comprised of a various rooms that

depict different scenarios with different types of

families. The first room you walk into is black with

lighting enhancing the picture of a little girl in the

center. The audio playing was a 9-1-1 call that had come

through the police dispatcher. The caller is a terrified

little girl crying and all you can hear in the background

are her parents arguing. The sounds and her anguish as she tells the dispatcher that she is afraid for the safety of her baby brother is heart-wrenching and captures your attention right away.

The following room gives off a very unique type of smell. The room is filthy with a section in the corner being set up with what appears to be a blanket where the child who lives there sleeps. The viewer is able to see the blanket on the floor, trash scattered around, and dishes piled high. As a participant one is taken into the childs world.

The third room looks decent. The house appears simple. Looking around you cannot miss the awards posted on the wall in recognition of the child's accomplishments. The audio takes it all away as one hears the mother arrive home. Mother begins to yell at her son, complaining that the house is not clean enough. You hear the fear in this child and are able to hear him trying to keep his mother complacent and not make mom upset.

The fourth room you walk into is beautifully done up. One is able to easily recognize that this child comes from an affluent home. The girl seems to have everything

form the latest trends to the brand name things. The audio depicts what this child really endures in her home.

Every room tells a story and you can see, hear, and smell the environment. The setup of the rooms reaches out to every individual without focusing on one socioeconomic level. It begins telling a story regarding a boy who lives in the "slums" to the more "affluent" neighborhood. You are literally taken from one extreme to the other and transported into the lives of these children.

The exhibit brings the stories to life. The pain and anguish these children experience is felt. The exhibit is very well put together and its attention to detail really put it over the top. To my knowledge it is the closest thing that exists as a form of training for the members of society on the identification/awareness of child abuse. Mimicking something similar or taking this exhibit and launching it to reach across the United States will bring child abuse to light and will reach the large majority with its strong and powerful message.

The intent of this study was to look at the mindsets and beliefs among non-mandated reporters in regards to child abuse and from this identify ways to change the mindset centered on reporting. Using social cognitive

theory as an approach can facilitate overcoming barriers

to reporting and aid in increasing awareness. The

implementation of outreach programs, distribution of

informational materials, billboards, or an educational

infomercial regarding the functions of the department

would benefit society as a whole.

Conclusions

The validity and reliability of the questionnaire

has not been tested therefore, one must use caution in

reviewing the material. The study covered the history of

the problem and included research conducted in the area

of study. Non-mandated reporters as a group have not been

extensively studied. Instead much of the previous

research presented was actually conducted on the mandated

reporter population. Mandated reporting trends and

beliefs have been researched extensively and they were

the closest group that compared to what this study

proposed to look at.

Non-mandated reporters could play an important role

in combating child abuse. Looking at the mandated

reporters that do exist and comparing them to the general

public of non-mandated reporters, the disproportionate

numbers speak to the power this group can have in the

fight against child abuse. The more informed members of

society are the more likely they will be to file a report

when they do suspect child abuse.

.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire

1) What is your gender? _____

2) What is your age? _____

3) What is your highest level of education completed?
   ___ High School Diploma/ GED   ___ 2 year college (Associate Degree)
   ___ Less than High School   ___ 4 year college (Bachelors Degree)
   ___ Some College   ___ Masters Degree or Above

4) Do you consider yourself a religious or spiritual person? (circle one)
   Yes   No

5) What is your ethnicity? _____

6) Is child abuse reportable?   Yes   No

7) Have you ever suspected child abuse?   Yes   No

8) Have you ever reported child abuse?   Yes   No

9) Do you feel that you know what child abuse is?   Yes   No

10) If you have suspected child abuse and did not report please circle as many
    from the following list as to why you did not report?
    ___ Felt that it was not your problem
    ___ Fear of retaliation from the family
    ___ Fear that your name would not be kept confidential
    ___ Did not want to be involved in legal proceedings (court)
    ___ Did not know who to contact or report child abuse to
    ___ Other: _____

11) What from the following list do you believe constitutes child abuse?
    ___ Physically hitting a child and leaving marks
    ___ Constant name calling and putting down of a child
    ___ Spanking a child
    ___ Sexually abusing a child for self gratification
    ___ Having no food for a child
    ___ Having no shelter for a child
    ___ Not providing appropriate winter clothing for a child when it is
        snowing

12) Which of the following scenarios do you believe are reportable incidents of child abuse?
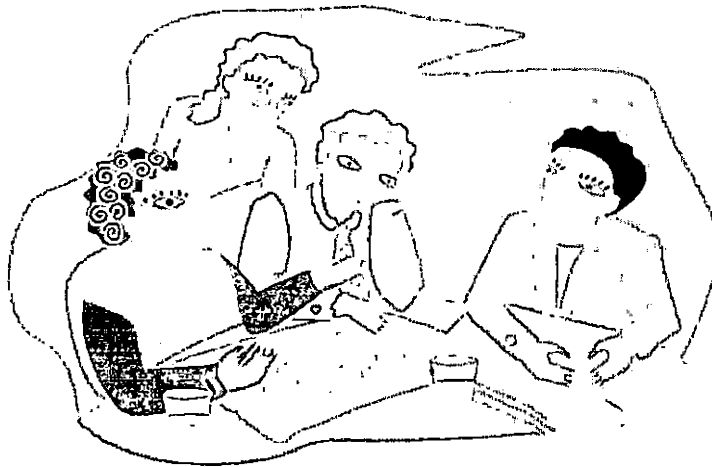
    ___ Child is spanked

    ___ Child is hit with different objects and is left with welts and bruises

    ___ Child states to you that father/mother/caretaker often touches their privates

    ___ Child always asks you for food and indicates there is no one home

    ___ Child is often left for days at a time to care for him/herself and his/her siblings

    ___ Child's home is filthy with animal feces scattered throughout the home

    ___ Child sleeps on the floor

    ___ It is often noticed that people come in and out of the home at all times of the day.

13) What do you believe is the primary function of the Department of Children and Family Services?

    ___ Remove children from their homes

    ___ Keep families together

    ___ Tear families apart

    ___ Provide resources to families

    ___ Provide needed services for families

Developed by Christina Ramirez Rivera

APPENDIX B

FLYER

Be a part of an important research study regarding the attitudes of non-mandated reporters of child abuse

- **Are you under the age of 18?**

- **Does your job require you to report suspected child abuse?**

If the answer is NO to both of these questions, you may be eligible to participate in this research study regarding the attitudes of non-mandated reporters of child abuse.

The purpose of this research study is to identify what barriers to reporting child abuse may exist within the population of non-mandated reporters (those not mandated by law to report based on their profession). Identification of the barriers will provided insight and identify barriers to be addressed.

If you would like to participate in this study please complete one of the questionnaires posted, place it in the envelope provided, seal the envelope and place it in the inbox. Your participation will be greatly appreciated. For further information on this study you may contact Dr. Rosemary McCaslin at (909) 537-5507 or by E-mail: rmcasli@csusb.edu

This is a Graduate Thesis Project that is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Rosemary McCaslin at California State University of San Bernardino (CSUSB). It has been approved by the School of Social Work Subcommittee of CSUSB IRB.

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate the views of non-mandated reporters on reporting child abuse. This study is being conducted by Christina Ramirez Rivera under the supervision of Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Professor of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Social Work Sub-Committee of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: Anybody can report suspected child abuse, many professionals are required to report suspected child abuse (ie: Doctors, Teachers), and this is a study of the opinions of individuals not required to report. The study aims to obtain information regarding potential barriers to reporting child abuse.

DESCRIPTION: The questionnaire will ask you questions regarding personal view and knowledge of child abuse reporting.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or decide to withdraw from participation at any time without risk of penalty or loss of benefits.

CONFIDENTIALITY OR ANONYMITY: Your identity will remain anonymous as we ask that you not write your name on the questionnaire. Identifying information will not be gathered for this study and no records will remain that can be used to identify you as a participant. Questionnaires will only be seen by the researchers conducting this study and results will be presented in group form only.

DURATION: The questionnaire will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

RISKS: No forseeable risks have been identified.

BENEFITS: Benefits of the study may not directly impact you but we hope that the results will yield information regarding what the general public thinks concerning the reporting of child abuse and provide information as to potential barriers in reporting.

CONTACT: If you have any questions or concerns regarding this questionnaire you may contact Dr. Rosemary McCaslin by phone at (909) 537-5507 or by E-mail: rmccasli@csusb.edu

RESULTS: The results of this study will be made available after September 2013 at the Pfau Library, California State University, San Bernardino.

SIGNATURE: Please place a check mark in the space below if you acknowledge that you have been informed of the nature and purpose of this study and agree to voluntarily participate.

_____ I agree

APPENDIX D

DEBRIEFING STATEMENT

Debriefing Statement

Thank you for completing the questionnaire. The purpose of the study conducted by Christina Ramirez Rivera was to explore the attitudes and knowledge of non-mandated reporters in regards to child abuse reporting.

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any point prior to the submission of your responses. The results of this study will be made available after September 2013 at the Pfau Library, California State University, San Bernardino. If you have any questions regarding your participation in this study please contact Dr. Rosemary McCaslin at (909) 537-5507 or via E-mail: rmccasli@csusb.edu.

REFERENCES

Al Eissa, M., & Almuneef, M. (2005). Child abuse and neglect in Saudi Arabia: Journey of recognition to implementation of national prevention strategies. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 34,* 28-33. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2009.08.011

Ashton, V. (2001). The relationship between attitudes toward corporal punishment and the perception and reporting of child maltreatment. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 25,* 389-399. Retrieved from: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11414397

Blom, E. (2009). April is child abuse prevention month. *Sho-Ban News Fort hall, 33,* 14, 7. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com

Child Welfare Information Gateway. (n.d). *Definitions of child abuse and neglect.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Retrieved from: http://www.childwelfare.gov

Department of Children & Family Services County of San Bernardino. (n.d.). *Frequently asked questions.* Retrieved from: http://hss.sbcounty.gov

Emich-Widera, E., Kopyta, I., Kaluzna-Czyz, M., & Kazek, B. (2011). The assessment of awareness of child abuse among certain social groups. *Journal of Pediatric Neurology, 9,* 305-310. doi: 10.3233/JPN-2011-0504

Gracia, E., & Herrero, J. (2008). Beliefs in the necessity of corporal punishment of children and public perceptions of child physical abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 32,* 1058-1062. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2008.05.004

Gracia, E., & Herrero, J. (2008). Perceived neighborhood social disorder and residents' atitudes toward reporting child physical abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 30,* 357-365. doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2005.11.001

Hart, S. N., Yanghee, L., & Wernham, M. (2011). A new age
     for child protection-General comment 13: Why it is
     important, how it was constructed, and what it
     intends? *Child Abuse & Neglect, 35*, 970-978.
     doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2011.09.007

Krugman, R. D., & Leventhal, J. M. (2005). Confronting
     child abuse and neglect and overcoming gaze
     aversion: The unmet challenge of centuries of
     medical practice. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 29*,
     307-309.
     doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2005.03.003

Melton, G. (2005). Mandated reporting: A policy without
     reason. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 29*, 9-18.
     doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2004.05.005

Pilgrim, G. (2010). *Social work theories*. Retrieved from:
     http://www.buzzle.com

Svevo-Cianci, K. A., Herczog, M., Krappmann, L., & Cook,
     P. (2011). The new UN CRC general comment 13: "The
     right of the child to freedom from all forms of
     violence" —Changing how the world conceptualizes
     child protection. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 35*,
     979-989.
     doi: 10.1016/j.chiabu.2011.09.006

United States Children's Bureau. (2011) *Child
     maltreatment 2010*. Retrieved from:
     http://www.acf.hhs.gov