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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

BUILDING A CLIMATE THAT SUPPORTS AND PROTECTS MANDATED
REPORTERS: SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND THEIR PERCEIVED ROLES AND
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN K-8 SCHOOLS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PROGRAM IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

GINA T. BARTUCCI

CHICAGO, IL

AUGUST 2012

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ABSTRACT

Schools are designed to be safe and healthy places for children to grow and learn, and principals are the instructional leader charged with creating this climate. The role of the mandated reporter, which is the role assigned to all individuals who work in schools, is intended to protect children. The mandated reporter is supposed to be the voice for children—not just for the child who actually speaks out against the individual who is perpetrating against them, but also for the child who does not have the words to report the abuse. A suspicion is all a mandated reporter needs to make the call to DCFS. This study sought to discover the following research questions: (1) How do building principals perceive their role in the mandated reporting process in elementary schools (K-8) in three suburban counties in Illinois? (2) What types of policies and procedures do districts have in place concerning mandated reporting and child maltreatment? (3) How do principals implement these policies in their school buildings when it comes to mandated reporting and child maltreatment detection? (4) What components do principals perceive to be essential to improve mandated reporting structures? This study was conducted within three counties in suburban Illinois and employed both qualitative and quantitative information and utilized two instruments created by the researcher, the Building Principal Mandated Reporting Questionnaire and a semi-structured principal interview protocol. Further analysis was completed post-data collection due to a finding that 26% of the respondents did not strictly adhere to the law according to one of the responses on the

questionnaire. The current state of mandated reporting in schools is discussed as well as steps schools can take to better support mandated reporters. Further research on this topic is needed on a broader scale and with principals from outside of Illinois.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Her name is Natalie. Four years ago she was four years old and attending a private preschool in central Illinois when she started acting out sexually towards a few of the other students in the preschool classroom. Her teacher's eyebrows furrowed when she saw this behavior and eventually brought it up to the head of the program. "Kids will be kids," was the response she received from her building leader, so she dropped it. New to the field of education, this teacher continued on in her daily work of trying to excite the children's minds and spirits in the classroom. Natalie's behavior continued. One day, Natalie picked up the class pet, a baby chick, and threw it against the wall. The teacher reported Natalie's behavior to the head of the program and Natalie's parents were told it might be best if she found another preschool. The teacher never saw Natalie again.

All of the behaviors Natalie displayed were indicative of a potentially abusive situation occurring at home (Putnam, 2003, The Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2007). Natalie's teacher knew her actions were not those of the average student in her classroom, so she looked to her immediate supervisor for support. When this support was not given to the first year teacher, the opportunity to give Natalie some sort of early intervention was lost. Perhaps at the next school Natalie attended there was a teacher with enough knowledge to be aware of the signs of abuse and a principal with a strong

enough sense of the law and professionalism to the students to report a suspicion of abuse to the authorities, but perhaps not.

The majority of the population will never know what it feels like to head home at the end of the school day with fear weighing heavily on the heart and thoughts consumed with uncertainty. However, hundreds of thousands of children and adolescents in this country are affected daily by the violence and neglect that occurs in their homes. Many of them do not have the language to describe or the cognitive capability to fully understand that what they experience as “normal” is, in fact, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect. If the people these children are depending on to provide a safe environment for them are the same people who are committing these heinous acts, how can the situations be helped? How can early intervention occur and the healing process begin for our most vulnerable population of children? The answer must start with where the children can find a hiatus from the violence or neglect in their lives – which is ideally at the school they attend five days out of the week.

The federal government sees the potential school personnel have in keeping children safe, which is why in all 50 states individuals who work with children are federally mandated to report to a government agency (Child Protective Services, or CPS) their suspicions of child abuse or neglect. In Illinois, this governmental agency is called the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). The standard for reporting in Illinois is an individual needs “to have reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected” (§ 325 ILCS 5/4). However, although all school personnel are aware of their role as mandated reporters, previous studies have found that teachers,

counselors, school psychologists and many others do not get the appropriate amount of training on the topics of abuse and neglect to be fully capable of identifying certain signs of abuse and neglect (Cerezo & Pons-Salvador, 2004; Champion, Shipman, Bonner, Hensley & Howe, 2003; Kenny, 2004). Natalie's teacher, for example, knew something was "different" about Natalie's behavior, but she apparently had *no idea* the behaviors she saw in the classroom were the textbook signs that Natalie was being victimized.

The number of children that are abused or neglected every year is immense. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, from 2004-2005 one in every 58 students experienced some form of child maltreatment (2010). Additionally, it was the conclusion of this study that mandated reporters have not been reporting, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services guidelines, and therefore even more cases should be investigated, but are not (2010). This, coupled with the ambiguity of the term "reasonable cause" in the Illinois mandated reporting law, makes it appear that more training needs to be provided for school personnel in Illinois.

How then can these teachers and other school staff be expected to suspect abuse or neglect if they are unclear on the indicators and prevalence of abuse and neglect? A certain knowledge base must be present in order for someone to have the clarity in knowing when to suspect that something is happening to a student. To gain this base of knowledge, teachers and other school staff need the support of the building principal to obtain school-wide professional development in this area. Research has shown that when teachers and other school staff obtain additional training on mandated reporting and abuse and neglect, they are better able to recognize signs and are more willing to act as a

mandated reporter (Cerezo & Pons-Salvador, 2004). Knowledge becomes power—and this power better protects the children we are trying to serve.

Professional development on mandated reporting and/or abuse detection is not common. It is even less common with school building principals as it is with teachers and other school staff. Building principals also need this knowledge in order to best serve their students. Not only is this information important so principals are prepared when a teacher is in need of support, but this is also important as the example set forth by the school leader. The school leader must lead and not just manage the teachers and staff in the school buildings (Kotter, 1996). As the leader, Giancola and Hutchinson (2005) describe the importance of the principal's own information sharing and personal development in the areas in which the principal is providing leadership. Therefore, in the area of mandated reporting and abuse detection, the principal's own professional development can contribute to more successful leadership in this area and improved support for teachers who suspect abuse.

Words such as “child welfare” and “safety” are often present in the mission statements of schools, but without a clear understanding of what children need to be protected from and what the warning signs are, the efforts could be considered to be in vain. Additionally, the National Education Association's Code of Ethics does not directly address the issue of Mandated Reporting of child abuse and neglect. It does mention an ethical responsibility of all professionals to uphold and follow all laws pertaining to professional practice (National Education Association of the United States, 2010). The American Association of School Administrators' Code of Ethics also does

not specifically reference mandated reporting, but does subscribe to the importance of implementing local, state and national laws (American Association of School Administrators, 2010).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has a Code of Ethical Conduct that describes their position on abuse and neglect detection and reporting specifically (NAEYC, 2005). This code describes the need for principals to familiarize themselves with the risk factors of abuse and neglect, to report abuse and neglect, and to support others who want to report abuse or neglect.

Natalie's story illustrates the three basic and essential pieces necessary in a school to keep children safe from abuse and neglect:

1. A school staff that has been provided with professional development so that they have the opportunity to develop a strong knowledge base on the signs and prevalence of abuse and neglect;
2. A building principal who communicates the importance of the mandated reporter role to the school staff and the appropriate steps to take; and
3. A building principal who is willing to support the staff when a concern about a student is described.

These three pieces that specifically relate to the role of the building principal, which are also highlighted in the Code of Ethical Conduct by the NAEYC, will be the foundation of this study.

Purpose of the Study

Of the three essential pieces needed to create effective violence prevention in the schools, the first component of staff training has been studied fairly thoroughly. In essence, research has shown that most school personnel have not had the desired amount of education in the area of violence prevention, specifically abuse and neglect detection, and with professional development school staff can gain an increased knowledge base (Cerezo & Pons-Salvador, 2004; Champion et al., 2003; Kenny, 2004). Although this finding in itself does appear to be positive in that there is a problem and a clear solution with the current state of school staff as mandated reporters, the question remains—how does the professional development find its way to *every* school so that we can protect *every* Natalie?

This leads to the second component, which specifically focuses on the building principal. This individual can certainly shift or strengthen the school-wide understanding of the mandated reporter role. The principal is necessary for: (1) communicating the need for and providing access to professional development for the school staff; (2) supporting school staff when they are not certain how to proceed as a mandated reporter; and (3) providing expert advice in times school staff are not sure how to proceed. Therefore, the building principal is the pivotal individual in the school who has the opportunity to play potentially the most essential role in abuse detection in the school. The opportunity exists—but the question remains: What are the principals doing about mandated reporting and child maltreatment detection in their schools?

Due to the unique role building principals hold in the schools in that they have the ability to initiate system-wide change, they are the focus of this research study. By understanding the current state of the training principals have received in mandated reporting and violence prevention, professional development efforts can be created to directly impact schools through the building principal. Additionally, if the principals do not have a strong knowledge base of the indicators of abuse and neglect detection and are not aware of the prevalence of child maltreatment, they cannot be expected to see this as a priority in their schools.

The DCFS has created a Manual for Mandated Reporters (2006). It is clear that the reporting of suspected abuse and neglect needs to occur, but what remains to be seen is the principal's perception of the role in the process. The principal may or may not play an active role at different schools, though DCFS suggests that a supervisor be informed that the call is made, this is not a necessary step in the mandated reporting process. In order to gain a better understanding of what is common practice in the schools, what part the principal takes in the mandated reporting process and how principals view their roles in this area needs to be explored.

Finally, it is important that teachers feel comfortable bringing the mandated reporter questions to the school principal. That comfort, or trust, in such a high risk interaction as making a call to a governmental agency could potentially be promoted by four main structures, as described by Kochanek (2005). These four components of implementing formal structures of complex interaction, developing a school mission, pursuing a plan of strategic action, and shifting control from administrators to teacher

need to be examined to see what parts currently exist in schools. In addition to these components described by Kochanek (2005), a variety of other components that may increase a culture of mandated reporting of suspected child maltreatment of the school also need to be examined. By looking at these potential components, a larger understanding of what other indicators of trust in the schools can be improved and utilized to create a clear message of the importance of the mandated reporter role in the schools.

Endless initiatives are introduced into schools every year, and with every new initiative, another item is added to teachers' to do lists. If mandated reporting and violence prevention is not clearly on the agenda of the building principal because professional development is not being offered in that area, or structures are not set up to clearly follow in the case of mandated reporting, then mandated reporting will not be a focus of all school staff. It is up to the principal to define mandatory reporting and violence prevention as a significant part of every person's role within the school.

Research Questions

1. How do building principals perceive their role in the mandated reporting process in elementary schools (K-8) in three Illinois suburban counties?
2. What types of policies and procedures do districts have in place concerning mandated reporting and child maltreatment?
3. How do principals implement these policies in their school buildings when it comes to mandated reporting and child maltreatment detection?

4. What components do principals perceive to be essential to improve mandated reporting structures?

Significance of the Study

Children are being maltreated at an alarming rate. Specifically, by the time children reach the age of 18, 20% to 33% of girls and 10% to 16% of boys will be sexually victimized (Russell & Bolen, 2000). However, the number of children being investigated by Child Protective Services in the United States does not appear to accurately reflect the number of childhood survivors of sexual abuse when compared to research on adult survivors (Lambie, 2005). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2010) found 794,000 children were victims of some form of maltreatment in 2007.

In order to understand how building principals perceive their role in the school building full of mandated reporters, principals must be queried regarding what is currently happening in the schools. What components principals perceive contribute to strong mandated reporting practices are also important to explore. To address these questions, this study will explore the practices of principals in K-8 schools in three suburban counties in Illinois. Exploring the roles principals perceive they currently have in the schools in regard to mandated reporting will elicit a better understanding of the current state of affairs. Additionally, the components they perceive as essential to improve mandated reporting structures in schools will be investigated.

These principals will be sent a survey asking questions specifically related to the research questions described above. Additionally, the principals will have the option to

include their names if they would like to be interviewed for the study in order to obtain a clearer idea of what they have experienced as a building principal. Thus, another source of data can be included to answer the research questions.

Limitations of the Study

This study will employ a newly developed questionnaire for principals. Very little is known about the instrument's reliability, and therefore that is a limitation to the study. In order to address this limitation, surveys will be sent out in a staggered fashion in order to address any issues before all principals receive the instrument. Another limitation is the sample of principals is in a concentrated area (specifically three suburban counties in Illinois). Therefore, it will be difficult to generalize the findings to the broader United States when the study's focus is on principals in the three suburban counties in Illinois.

Additionally, to reduce the researcher bias in this study, the researcher will keep a field journal in order to document thoughts and feelings on the process and keep the personal component out of the current study (Sanjek, 1990). The personal and didactic writings kept in this field journal will only be utilized as a check and balance for the researcher to keep the emotional piece out of the data collected from this research study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study intends to answer the following questions:

1. How do building principals perceive their role in the mandated reporting process in elementary schools (K-8) in three suburban counties in Illinois?
2. What types of policies and procedures do districts have in place concerning mandated reporting and child maltreatment?
3. How do principals implement these policies in their school buildings when it comes to mandated reporting and child maltreatment detection?
4. What components do principals perceive to be essential to improve mandated reporting structures?

The following chapter will review the pertinent literature in child maltreatment, the responsibility of a mandated reporter, the barriers to mandated reporting and the role of a building principal as an instructional leader. First, the broad topics of child maltreatment and mandated reporting are explored. Child maltreatment will be described in terms of definition, prevalence and the warning signs. Mandated reporting will be defined in terms of the law and then by the Department of Children and Family Services. Then barriers to mandated reporting will be described and ultimately the role of the building principal and how that can aid in creating an environment conducive to mandated reporting will be discussed.

Child Maltreatment

Definition and Incidence of Child Maltreatment

Four forms of child maltreatment exist and they include sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, and emotional abuse. Federal and state legislation provide definitions of child abuse and neglect through the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008). The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (42 U.S.C.A. §5106g) defines child abuse and neglect as, at minimum, “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.” The state of Illinois offers specific definitions of child maltreatment, as described in Table 1.

To cast more clarity on the subject of sexual abuse, because that topic is given little verbiage in the Illinois state definition, the literature gives a more detailed description of sexual abuse. Webster and Hall (2004) describe child sexual abuse as exploitation, humiliation, or degradation that is sexual in nature. Additionally, Webster and Hall (2004) state that the act is either against the victim’s will or that the act is aggressive, exploitative or threatening in nature.

Table 1. State of Illinois Definitions of Specific Forms of Child Maltreatment

Physical Abuse	<p><i>Abused child</i> means a child whose parent, immediate family member, any person responsible for the child's welfare, any individual residing in the same home as the child, or a paramour of the child's parent:</p> <p>Inflicts, causes or allows to be inflicted, or creates a substantial risk of physical injury by other than accidental means, that causes death, disfigurement, impairment of physical or emotional health, or loss or impairment of any bodily function</p> <p>Commits or allows to be committed an act or acts of torture upon the child</p> <p>Inflicts excessive corporal punishment</p> <p>Commits or allows to be committed the offense of female genital mutilation</p> <p>Causes a controlled substance to be sold, transferred, distributed, or given to the child under age 18, in violation of the Illinois Controlled Substances Act or Methamphetamine Control and Community Protection Act</p> <p>(Citation: Comp. Stat. Ch. 325, § 5/3)</p>
Neglect	<p><i>Neglected child</i> means any child who:</p> <p>Is not receiving proper or necessary nourishment or medically indicated treatment, including food or care, that is not provided solely on the basis of the present or anticipated mental or physical impairment as determined by a physician, or otherwise is not receiving the proper or necessary support or medical or other remedial care as necessary for a child's well-being</p> <p>Is not receiving other care necessary for his or her well-being, including adequate food, clothing, and shelter</p> <p>Has been provided with interim crisis intervention services under chapter 705, § 405/3-5 and whose parent, guardian, or custodian refuses to permit the child to return home and no other living arrangement agreeable to the parent, guardian, or custodian can be made, and the parent, guardian, or custodian has not made any other appropriate living arrangement for the child</p> <p>Is a newborn infant whose blood, urine, or meconium contains any amount of a controlled substance or a metabolite thereof</p> <p>(Citation: Comp. Stat. Ch. 325, § 5/3)</p>
Sexual Abuse /Exploitation	<p>The term <i>abused child</i> includes a child whose parent, immediate family member, person responsible for the child's welfare, individual residing in the same home as the child, or paramour of the child's parent commits or allows to be committed any sex offense against the child.</p> <p>(Citation: Comp. Stat. Ch. 325, § 5/3)</p>
Emotional Abuse	<p>The term <i>abused child</i> includes impairment or substantial risk of impairment to the child's emotional health.</p> <p>(Citation: Comp. Stat. Ch. 325, § 5/3)</p>

Child maltreatment is more common than many would care to think. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2010) found 794,000 children were victims in 2007. However, this number may not be accurate because not all children who are in abusive homes are reported to the CPS. Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner, and Hamby (2005) found that of the nationally representative sample they studied, one-eighth had experienced some form of child maltreatment in the year of the study. Because child sexual abuse is particularly underreported, it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of its

prevalence. Large-scale incidence reports are not common and vary depending on the structure of the questions and the particular definition of child sexual abuse employed (Putnam, 2003). An estimate of the prevalence was an occurrence rate of 20% for women and 5% to 10% for men, which was found using retrospective studies with adults who had experienced abuse as children (Finkelhor, 1994). Many in the study had never reported the abuse to anyone until adulthood.

A large study published by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Sedlak et al., 2010) found that from 2005-2006, one out of 1000 children were the victim of child maltreatment in at least one form. This study, the National Incidence Study (NIS-4), potentially underestimates the prevalence because the child is only counted if the child's main caregiver was the perpetrator of the maltreatment. The breakdown by type of abuse is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. NIS-4 Estimates of Maltreatment

Category of Maltreatment	NIS-4 Estimates 2005-2006	
	Total No. of Children	Rate per 1,000 Children
All Maltreatment	1,256,600	17.1
All Abuse	553,300	7.5
Physical Abuse	323,000	4.4
Sexual Abuse	135,300	1.8
Emotional Abuse	148,500	2.0
All Neglect	771,700	10.5
Physical Neglect	295,300	4.0
Emotional Neglect	193,400	2.6
Educational Neglect	360,500	4.9

Warning Signs

Children who are experiencing maltreatment may exhibit a wide variety of indicators. For example, some children experiencing sexual abuse may display inappropriate seductive behavior, self-mutilation, poor self-esteem, and depression, to name a few (Sunderland, 2002). The Child Welfare Information Gateway (2007) provides a list of a variety of behaviors a child may demonstrate that can indicate child maltreatment. The child may have sudden changes in behavior or academics, may have difficulty focusing on his or her work, may appear “watchful,” or may demonstrate a clear desire to avoid going home.

These warning signs are often the only way a school psychologist or other school personnel are able to identify students who are suffering. Other children may show no signs of the maltreatment occurring in their lives. Research by Kendall-Tackett, Williams, and Finkelhor (1993) has shown that close to one-third of children and adolescents do not show any immediate signs after experiencing sexual abuse, which are described as sleeper effects. By avoiding thoughts and not talking about their abuse, these children might be creating more post-trauma stress (Valente, 2005). It is thought that in instances of sexual abuse, children generally will not tell anyone because of the attachment and manipulation that often accompanies child sexual abuse (Webster & Hall, 2004). Therefore, many children live silently with the abuse for years before ever telling anyone. Boys are even less likely to disclose than girls, perhaps because of the stigma of homosexuality (Valente, 2005) and the inaccurate cultural perception that women cannot perpetrate against males. If students are not disclosing until adulthood, then school

personnel may have no possible clear indication that the student is in mental and sometimes physical anguish.

Outcomes

When children are being maltreated at home, the outcomes for these individuals can be bleak, especially if no one investigates or intervenes. Obviously all children and adolescents have different outcomes relying on many different protective and risk factors in their lives. However, some potential outcomes for children who have been maltreated have been death, and behavioral, emotional and social development issues (Appleton & Stanley, 2009). These poor outcomes have been thought to be directly related to the children's attachment issues (Appleton & Stanley, 2009). Additionally, children who have been exposed to child abuse had higher levels of externalizing and internalizing behavior problems than those who had not been exposed to maltreatment (Moylan, Herrenkohl, Tajima, Herrenkohl & Russo, 2010). Kong and Bernstein (2009) found that childhood trauma was a predictor of eating psychopathology, especially due to emotional abuse, physical neglect and sexual abuse.

Responsibilities of a Mandated Reporter

A mandated reporter is an individual who is legally required to report the suspected abuse or neglect of a child. In 1974 the Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (42 U.S.C.A. §5106g) was first passed and currently all 50 states have laws requiring individuals in certain professional capacities to report suspicions of child maltreatment. The specific standards for reporting in Illinois are as follows according to Illinois law: "A report is required when there is reasonable cause to

believe that a child may be an abused or neglected child” (Stat. Ch. 325, § 5/4). In 2006, this category was broadened to include all school personnel, including administrators, school board members and non-certified staff.

The Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (ANCRA) (1975) requires that those individuals designated as mandated reporters protect the children with whom they work in a few specific ways. The suspicion of abuse must be reported immediately, and privileged communication does not allow an individual to neglect her or his duties as a mandated reporter (Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, 1975). The mandated reporter may have to testify in court, though the mandated reporter’s identity is protected by Illinois law. Reports must be confirmed in writing within forty-eight hours that the hotline call is made (Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, 1975).

According to the Department of Children and Family Services, there are certain criteria needed for an investigation of child maltreatment. The victim must be under the age of eighteen and the perpetrator of the maltreatment must take care of the child, live with the child, or be in a position of trust with the child. (Although students with disabilities might attend the school up until they reach the age of 21, the DCFS does not investigate cases for individuals after they reach the age of 21 and it is up to individuals to contact Adult Protective Services (APS) (National Center of Elder Abuse website, 2011). There must be a specific situation or some circumstances that support the abuse or neglect and finally, the harm must have been “demonstrated” in some way (Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, 2006).

Unfortunately, the definition the law has chosen to use is ambiguous in that there is no clear conceptualization of what “reasonable cause” would look like in a school setting. Although DCFS offers an online training for educators and any other mandated reporter, the training consists of a thirteen pre- and post-test questions and does not contextualize the information in a school or describe the steps administrators should take in order to most effectively describe to teachers what “reasonable cause” might look like in their school building.

The schools are the first line of defense to protect children, but other than the mandated reporting federal law and Illinois act, which are both vague and do not come with required specific training programs for school professionals, there is very little structure through the federal or state structures in Illinois in place to protect children in schools.

Barriers to Mandated Reporting

Although it is a federal mandate, there are a variety of barriers to mandated reporting for teachers and other school professionals. Teachers are on the front line and arguably in the best position to notice a change in a student’s behavior or any type of abnormal behavior in the classroom. The most important piece in the mandated reporting equation has historically been the teachers because in order to make a report, they must first suspect abuse is occurring. However, there are a variety of factors acting against teachers faced with the mandated report.

As a mandated reporter working in the school, regardless of whether a person is a teacher, administrator or school psychologist, some basic understanding of child

maltreatment needs to be present in professional development sessions in the schools. Individuals in the school building need to have a strong understanding of what child maltreatment is in order to begin to suspect any abuse or neglect of occurring. So the question is—what do school based professionals know about child maltreatment?

A seminal study designed by Crenshaw, Crenshaw and Lichtenberg (1995) surveyed many individuals in schools across the country. The survey asked questions using various scenarios of potential abuse situations and asked if the individuals would make the mandated reporter call. Crenshaw et al. also asked about the barriers those individuals who worked in the schools saw standing in the way of making the mandated reporter call. Their study found that the likelihood of responding was not related to the profession of the educator. In other words, principals, counselors and teachers had similar reporting habits according to the scenarios in the study. Additionally, when asked about their training and understanding of child maltreatment, the principal respondents rated their preparedness as “fairly well prepared,” however, most respondents reported a desire for more training in this area.

This study shed light on the mandated reporting issue and demonstrated that individuals in different educational positions have a variety of levels of knowledge when it came to mandated reporting. It was also concluded that many mandated reporters depend heavily on the disclosure of the child and are not actively looking for the signs that children sometimes, but not always, display when they are being victimized.

In the abovementioned study, the individuals on the front line had suspicions that they did not report to Child Protective Services (Crenshaw et al., 1995). What stood in

the way of the mandated reporters? Hinkelman and Bruno (2008) identified the five main barriers teachers face in reporting sexual abuse to Child Protective Services, which are as follows: (1) Lack of Education on the Topic; (2) Emotional Difficulty; (3) Ethical Concerns; (4) Concern about Liability; and (5) Procedural Uncertainty

All of these barriers can also be seen as barriers to mandated reporting in general. The *lack of education on the topic* of child maltreatment and mandated reporting has been discussed in various studies. Many training programs that prepare school professionals lack a strong foundation in the signs and symptoms of child maltreatment neglect (Cerezo & Pons-Salvador, 2004; Champion et al., 2003; Kenny, 2004). In many studies, individuals state that they would prefer more training in this area, whether it be professional development or informational sessions (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Kenny & McEachern, 2002). Therefore, it should not be surprising that in a study by Kenny (2004), teachers were surveyed to determine their knowledge base in this area and it was found that most respondents reported that they were unaware of the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. These teachers also reported being unaware of reporting procedures when reporting to Child Protective Services (Kenny, 2004).

The *emotional difficulty* a school professional endures when making the decision to report a case of abuse is complicated. The experience of believing something is occurring to a student in the classroom means also accepting that abusers exist and that bad things can happen to innocent children. This realization that perhaps is new to the school professional may require additional emotional support in the school building while making the report (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008). Another concern could be that the

individuals who need to make the call to Child Protective Services were themselves victims of child abuse or neglect and require more support from the school due to potentially reliving their own trauma. Regardless of the situation, there is certainly some level of emotional intensity in supporting an individual in the classroom who has been maltreated.

Additionally, many teachers, as reported by Hinkleman and Bruno (2008), can partially blame the child for the abuse and therefore are unsure whether or not the report needed to be made. This victim blaming is very common in U.S. society, particularly when it comes to sexual assault and rape in the general population. It appears to be a way of creating emotional distance between the non-victim and victim. Currier and Carlson (2009) explored the connection between education and victim blaming and found that an educational program on violence against women changed the attitudes of the undergraduate students in the seminar specifically regarding victim blaming attitudes. Therefore, education may help with the emotional piece as well as creating social support structures in the school to deal with any emotional barriers that may occur.

Besides the emotional barriers that may exist, there are also *ethical concerns* that serve as barriers to reporting suspected abuse. In a study by Hermann (2002), school counselors reported that the decision to report or not report suspected abuse was one of the most common ethical dilemmas in their work in the schools. Literature on ethical decision-making concerning mandated reporting describes the safest strategy as reporting anything that gains one's attention (Wagner & Simpson, 2009). However, there are ethical considerations as to what happens both if the report is founded (i.e. the suspected

abuse is occurring) or not founded (i.e., the information was not found to support that the suspected abuse is occurring). How do reports impact the home-school relationship? Wagner and Simpson (2009) point out that making a report can intimidate stakeholders, especially when the report is against a family of certain ethnic or economic groups that may already be experiencing difficulty connecting with the school. These personal relationships, which can be destroyed when a call is made to DCFS, are essential to creating strong home-school collaboration.

Directly connected with the ethical dilemmas school staff face are their *concerns about liability*. Wagner and Simpson (2009) highlight the importance of keeping in mind that divorcing parents may be more willing to dishonestly accuse an ex-partner of maltreatment. Although in the mandated reporting law it is clearly stated that as long as the call to Child Protective Services is made in good faith then a person cannot be held liable if the case is unfounded. However, because reporting does appear to hold some kind of risk, school professionals may not be comfortable perhaps because they are unsure as to what the aftermath will be (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008). “What will Child Protective Services do?” the school professionals may wonder. “Will the student’s situation be made worse?” This becomes both a liability and ethics concern.

However, this concern can be addressed by creating clear policies and procedures of how to report and how to follow up with Child Protective Services. *Procedural uncertainty* is another barrier that teachers have identified to reporting suspected child abuse (Hinkelman & Bruno, 2008). A first year school psychologist recently visited her principal to tell her the details of the suspected abuse and ask if she should make the call

since she was unsure about the process in the school. The principal responded, “If you think you should.” This ambiguous statement confused the school psychologist, who was only asking if she should call Child Protective Services to be respectful to the principal. She had no doubt that she was going to make the call—but if she had ethical and liability concerns and a lack of understanding of the procedures, she might have decided not to make the call to Child Protective Services. When school professionals are prepared with the information of what to do, systematically, if they suspect child maltreatment, then that may alleviate some of the ethical and liability concerns.

It may first appear that the barriers need to be addressed directly with the teachers because the teachers are on the front line, working with students every day. However, teachers generally do not have the authority in the school building to provide access to professional development or create systemic and procedural decisions in their school buildings. In many cases, the building principal is the individual who has the power in the school building to create policies and procedures that will improve schools. It is also largely the principal who creates the climate of support for teachers and other school staff in the school building to make the call to DCFS.

It is the building principal who is the instructional leader in the building. It is largely the responsibility of the building principal to ensure that the staff and students have the resources to be successful. For students in Illinois, success in all the learning standards includes social and emotional success in the schools. As described with the consequences of abuse and neglect, social and emotional skills may be delayed or difficult for children who are not in a safe environment at home. In order to support

students to achieve the Social and Emotional Standards at grade level, it is up to the building principal to provide support to school professionals to detect abuse and be clear in supporting all mandated reporters in the schools.

Role of the Building Principal as the Instructional Leader

As a mandated reporter, failure to report suspected child abuse is punishable by a misdemeanor in the state of Illinois as stated in the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (42 U.S.C.A. §5106g). However, the threat of a misdemeanor does not combat the aforementioned barriers to making the report to Child Protective Services for many school professionals. The role of the building principal is to create an environment that supports and protects the students and the school professionals in the building. According to the standards currently informing school leadership, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, Standard 2 states: “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and professional growth” (Green, 2009, p. 6).

Effective leadership associated with mandated reporting, according to this standard, is much more than threatening school professionals with criminal liability or simply informing school professionals of their roles as mandated reporters. In order to determine how principals can utilize their leadership position to support those on the “front line” in the school, the climate the principals create in their school building needs to be examined in terms of the five aforementioned barriers to mandated reporting. In order to promote a climate that actively supports teachers and other school staff in their

mandated reporting, building principals must consider a few different pieces that need to be present in their schools. The importance of training the staff to spot signs and bring the topic to their attention has already been described in preceding paragraphs. In the following section, that piece will be further explained. Additionally, there are both technical and social aspects to schools as organizations, according to Green (2009), and it is up to the principal to act as the manager of these aspects. Social aspects relate to the climate of collaboration in the school and supportive structures in place. Technical aspects are those that provide clear policies and procedures in the school building.

Although the building principal is the pivotal individual in the school building who can bring the professional development sessions into the schools to support school professionals in child maltreatment detection and mandated reporting, it is necessary to have a climate in the school that is collaborative and a culture of trust. The adults in the school building need to have a common understanding and must work together in order to implement any practice introduced to the school (Kochanek, 2005). The role of the instructional leader in the school then is not only to provide the training in mandated reporting, but is also to bolster the technical and social pieces in the school building.

Technical and social aspects that the building principal can strengthen will now be tied back to the barriers identified by Hinkelman and Bruno (2008). Strong social supports in the school provided by the principal can address the emotional and ethical concerns of the potential reporters. This includes trust building and creating a supportive school climate. Additionally, strong technical supports can address concerns about liability and procedural concerns. By clarifying procedures and providing school

professionals with systematic instructions and with supports built into those necessary actions, the culture of trust and supportive climate is also reinforced. These three pieces, education for staff, technical aspects and social aspects, can be created and strengthened as supports in the schools to mandated reporting by the instructional leader, and consequently will fortify the overall climate of trust and support in the building.

Education for Staff

Professional development and training programs with specific components on mandated reporting and child maltreatment will be described in the following paragraphs, as well as the outcomes from these programs. These programs are commonly referred to as “secondary prevention” to child maltreatment because they focus on the adults who are most closely in contact with the students and are in a position to detect and report abuse and neglect.

One such program was the Child Abuse School Liaison Program, which was provided to school personnel in order to increase the knowledge school professionals had of the risk factors to abuse and the signs of child maltreatment (Hanson et al., 2008). This program used various techniques to provide knowledge to the school professionals, such as workshops, videos, and training manuals while providing a liaison who assisted in school-community collaboration on the issue of child maltreatment (Hanson et al., 2008). Ultimately, individuals who participated in this program significantly increased their knowledge score from a pre- to a post-test (Hanson et al., 2008). This type of program appears to be effective in training teachers and other school professionals about child maltreatment.

Another study that illustrates the success of these training programs was examined by Walker and Smith (2009). The program focused on training school professionals and various other professionals on interpersonal violence that may occur at home with the use of presentations, videos, and various exercises (Walker & Smith, 2009). The program was successful in raising the awareness of the professionals, according to the increase in knowledge from pre- to post-test assessment (Walker & Smith, 2009).

Cerezo and Pons-Salvador (2004) sought to determine if there was an improvement in the detection of child maltreatment in the Balearic Islands by assessing both front line health and social services personnel and school professionals before and after a similar training program. The general goals of this program were to provide knowledge, to sensitize professionals to the topic of child maltreatment, thereby decreasing misconceived notions about child maltreatment, and to clarify procedures. In their pre- and post-assessment of professionals, Cerezo and Pons-Salvador (2004) found that detection of child maltreatment after training the population was increased threefold.

These three studies have demonstrated that providing training for school professionals can increase their knowledge base on the subject of child maltreatment. According to Hinkelman and Bruno (2008), there are many different pieces of knowledge that encompass professional preparedness in terms of child maltreatment prevention training. Communication, legal definitions, warning signs, what types of abuse exist and typical behaviors of children are the pieces they highlight. However, child maltreatment detection and mandated reporting have to be seen as a priority in a school building in

order for the administration to seek out the programs and provide them for their teachers and staff.

Specific Policies and Procedures for Mandated Reporting

The Ensuring Success in School Task Force (2010) created a report on the needs of children and youths who are the victims of domestic or sexual violence and specifically suggested specific training for school staff and clear policies and procedures on how to support and accommodate students who come forward with reports of abuse. As the Task Force (2010) did not find that schools in Illinois had policies that were effective at addressing the needs of students who survived sexual abuse, they stressed that this was a key component in supporting students. Specifically, the Task Force (2010) declared, “School policies must do more by delineating how the school will accommodate students, ensure confidentiality, provide for survivors’ safety, and collaborate with students so that they perform well in school” (p. 34).

Additionally, the Task Force (2010) suggested a liaison in the school, someone who receives training on the specific needs of children and youths that are survivors of abusive situations. This individual would be similar as the individual utilized in the Hanson et al. (2008) study described above, except that this person would be someone already employed in the school. As a point person in the school, this liaison would be a contact when a teacher or other school professional had a suspicion of child maltreatment and this person would be aware of resources in the community and the specific procedures in the school. Additionally, this person could also help to support teachers

and other school staff who suspect abuse, although the Task Force did not describe this part of the liaison role.

Clear policies and procedures can assist in eliminating some of the barriers teachers face when considering whether or not to report a suspicion of abuse. It is up to the building principals to facilitate a climate in the building to support teachers and other school staff in their mandated reporter roles in the school.

Professional Support for Staff

In order to create an environment that allows for mandated reporting, the building principal must create a culture and climate of trust and support. The decision to report a case of suspected child maltreatment to DCFS requires an individual to participate in what could be considered a high-risk interaction due to the ethical and liability concerns school professionals have. Kochanek (2005) describes promoting high-risk interactions in schools as part of the trust building that needs to occur to create positive outcomes for schools. These high-risk interactions can be promoted by principals by creating prescribed structures in the school, discussed in the previous section regarding policies, crafting a school mission, having a strategic plan, and shifting the control to the teachers (Kochanek, 2005). In the following paragraphs, the ways in which a principal can create a culture of trust and support will be discussed in greater detail.

Two of the pieces listed by Kochanek (2005), creating a school mission and a strategic plan, appear to have the same goal—to create a shared vision for all the school professionals in the building. Harris (2004) described the shared vision as a way of bringing school professionals back to the basic reason they probably came to work in the

schools, which was to help children succeed. This success, according to the Illinois State Board of Education (2003), includes the social and emotional success of students, which is why mandated reporting and maltreatment detection are also key components. However, principals need to make it clear that mandated reporting and maltreatment detection are a part of what they consider “success” for students in order to allow all school professionals to support the vision in the school.

The last part Kochanek (2005) included in promoting high-risk interactions was shifting the control to the teachers. In terms of mandated reporting, this means more than encouraging teachers to report their suspicions. According to Giancola and Hutchinson (2005), empowering teachers mean confronting the power structures that have historically existed in the school buildings. These historical hierarchies exist partially because of the lack of trust in schools (Giancola & Hutchinson, 2005). Surrey (1987) described this hierarchical environment, which perpetuated distrust, and suggested it be combated with relationships and empowerment. Empowerment and trust often co-occur in the school building (Harris, 2004), and both create positive supports for an environment in which mandated reporting can occur. Some of the ways Harris described that building principals can empower school professionals are by building leadership opportunities, delegating responsibilities, and listening to the school professionals.

The climate of trust and support that the building principal can create may address many of the aforementioned barriers teachers face when considering their role as a mandated reporter, such as procedural uncertainty and liability and ethical concerns. Hinkelman and Bruno (2008) described the ethical considerations school staff may have

when considering whether or not to report suspected child maltreatment. Ethically, the principal's main concern should be the welfare of the children in the school building (Wagner & Simpson, 2009). However, building principals have many other pieces that they must consider, such as home-school relationships. How can they support their school professionals in their roles as mandated reporters? In the frame of moral leadership, Sergiovanni (1992) described leaders as having moral responsibility to make everyone feel welcome. This is directly related to the ethical questions individuals might feel when deciding whether or not to report suspected abuse because a parent would no longer feel like part of the school if s/he felt attacked because the school had called Child Protective Services on the family. How can building principals combat this moral dilemma?

Schools can utilize strong communication in order to attempt to increase home-school collaboration at a difficult time such as this. For example, a leader in the school can call the non-offending parent after the mandated report has been made to let him or her know that the school reported the suspicion that the child is being maltreated. This use of communication can potentially establish a climate of openness and trust rather than isolating families who may already be experiencing many difficulties. Greene (2009) states that utilizing communication amongst staff, faculty, students and parents can remove barriers in the schools.

Increasing the trust and support individuals experience in the school and addressing the barriers to mandated reporting and child maltreatment detection are

essential to creating an environment where teachers feel comfortable speaking out when they have a suspicion of abuse or neglect.

Summary

The statistics of children affected by child maltreatment is staggering, and there are many poor outcomes associated. However, there are warning signs that mandated reporters can pay attention to in order to protect children. Five specific barriers to reporting abuse have been identified by Hinkelman and Bruno (2008), which can be better addressed by building principals than by the counselors, school psychologists or teachers who work directly with the students. The barriers Hinkelman and Bruno identified were: (1) Lack of Education on the Topic; (2) Emotional Difficulty; (3) Ethical Concerns; (4) Concern about Liability; and (5) Procedural Uncertainty

Building principals are in the position to implement a professional development plan for school staff, create specific policies and procedures for mandated reporting, and maintain professional support systems for staff who suspect abuse is occurring.

Information gathering must take place in order to discover what is currently occurring in Illinois elementary schools in regard to mandated reporting and child maltreatment detection. It is essential to discover how building principals view their role in the building in terms of leadership specifically with mandated reporting in order to better understand how to most effectively address implementing new procedures and policies in the school building. Also, the current state of procedures or policies that now exist in schools to support mandated reporting and protecting children in the schools is important to understand. Specifically, it is necessary to understand how current policies

and procedures might relate to barriers teachers could face when considering whether to report the suspicion of sexual abuse.

CHAPTER III

METHDOLOGY

This study sought to describe the current state of affairs in K-8 schools regarding mandated reporting and child maltreatment detection according to building principals. Building principals' experiences with regard to mandated reporting were explored, as was the role they perceive they have in the mandated reporting process at their school. Additionally, this study explored what policies, procedures, and other components the principals value in the schools that facilitate mandated reporting practices. The research questions that were addressed in this study included the following:

1. How do building principals perceive their role in the mandated reporting process in elementary schools (K-8) in three suburban counties in Illinois?
2. What types of policies and procedures do districts have in place concerning mandated reporting and child maltreatment?
3. How do principals implement these policies in their school buildings when it comes to mandated reporting and child maltreatment detection?
4. What components do principals perceive to be essential to improve mandated reporting structures?

Participants

The participants of this study included building principals of K-8 schools in three suburban counties in Illinois, who are holding principal positions during the 2010-2011

school year. Table 3 depicts the estimates of the demographics of Counties One and Two from the U.S. Census Bureau (2010). County Three includes a large urban city, which was not included in this study. Therefore, county-wide demographics do not accurately represent the sample. County Three also has a much more diverse demographic makeup, both in terms of diversity within the county and between cities in the county. Therefore, the countywide data does not accurately depict the demographic makeup of the county. In order to attempt to capture the extremes in County Three, four cities with striking differences were selected and are displayed below. Table 4 displays the 2010 estimates of the demographics of four cities in County Three (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). These three counties are located just outside a large city in Illinois and have some commonalities. One difference noted by the researcher is that County One has information regarding mandated reporting and school safety on the countywide website. This information will later be addressed in the discussion chapter.

Table 3. 2010 Estimates of Demographics of Counties One and Two (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010)

	COUNTY ONE	COUNTY TWO
Total Population	916,924	703,462
White Persons (%)	77.9%	75.1%
Black Persons (%)	4.6%	7.0%
Asian Persons (%)	10.1%	6.3%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin (%)	13.3%	19.9%
Median Household Income, 2009	\$73,554	\$76,336

Table 4. 2010 Demographics of Four Cities in County Three (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010)

	CITY A	CITY B	CITY C	CITY D
Total Population	12,187	16,816	37,042	30,276
White Persons (%)	94.8%	90.0%	19.2%	38.0%
Black Persons (%)	0.3%	1.3%	70.6%	41.5%
Asian Persons (%)	3.3%	6.4%	0.6%	0.4%
Persons of Hispanic or Latino origin (%)	2.2%	3.5%	15.0%	33.9%
Median Household Income 2005-2009	\$167,458	\$155,809	\$45,571	\$39,116

The principals of K-8 schools were the focus of this study because when students are in the elementary and middle school years, they are the most vulnerable and depend the most on caregivers for their protection. According to Finkelhor (1984), the potentially most dangerous years for sexual abuse to begin are between the ages of 9 and 12.

Demographics of Respondents

The Building Principal Mandated Reporting Questionnaire was sent via email to every K-8 school principal in three counties in Illinois. For the purposes of this study, a K-8 school was a school containing any of the K-8 grades, therefore middle school and junior high school principals also were provided the survey. The N for receiving questionnaires was 919 (County One has 215 school building principals, County Two has 169 school building principals, and County Three has 535). Of those individuals who

started the survey (n=88), 67.1% successfully completed the survey (n=59). Of those individuals who successfully completed the questionnaire, 69.5% identified themselves as female principals and 30.5% identified as male principals. The gender breakdown by county is displayed in Table 5. Principals ranged in age from 33 to 61 years of age, and the mean was 47.9 with a standard deviation of 8.0. This information is also displayed in Table 5.

Table 5. Demographics of Survey Respondents

Variable	COUNTY ONE		COUNTY TWO		COUNTY THREE	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Gender	33.33%	66.67%	54.55%	45.45%	17.39%	82.61%
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	46.83	7.65	48.64	6.71	48.41	9.00

The respondents of the survey identified themselves as being from the following counties: 41% from County One; 19% from County Two; and 40% from County Three. These principals were mainly (87%) working as principals with students primarily below the fifth grade level and the rest (13%) were working primarily with students in fifth grade level or above.

In terms of the years they had been working in the field of education, the principals ranged from 9 years to 39 years of experience. The median of years of experience was 21 and the mean was 22.69, with a standard deviation of 8.01 (which is

displayed in Table 6). As far as years acting as principal at the school at which they are currently working, the principals ranged in experience from 1 year to 19 years, with a median of 5, a mean of 6.17 and a standard deviation of 4.37 (which is also displayed in Table 6). The respondents' years acting as principal at the school at which they are currently working can be broken down as follows: 20% had been principal at their schools for up to two years; 37% had been principals at their schools for three to five years; 25% had been principals for six to ten years; 14% had been principals for 11 to 15 years; and 3% had been principals for 16 to 19 years. Therefore, nearly half of the respondents had been acting as principal at the schools at which they currently worked for up to five years.

Table 6. Professional Experience of Survey Respondents

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Years in the Field of Education	22.69	8.09
Years As Principal of Current School	6.17	4.37

Four principals responded to a call for interview and therefore they are additional participants in this study. The four principals who participated in the interview are from Counties Two and Three. Principals from County One did not answer the request for interviews and therefore were not able to participate in the interview. Of these four principals, two are males and two are females. Two were from County Two and the other two were from County Three.

Instruments

This study utilized two instruments. The first was the Building Principal Mandated Reporting Questionnaire (see Appendix A) which was created by the researcher to address the four research questions of this study. The questionnaire had four sections (Role as a Building Principal, Policies and Procedures in Your School Building, Components Contributing to Strong Mandated Reporting Structures, and Demographics). The questionnaire took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

The questionnaire was designed to measure three specific constructs: (1) How the principals act as an instructional leader; (2) How they view their role as a leader specific to mandated reporting; (3) How they believe other principals can shift or strengthen staff's vision of the mandated reporting role. It consisted of quantitative questions and qualitative questions, which were designed to specifically address each of the aforementioned constructs. Eight demographic questions concluded the survey.

The first construct, how principals act as an instructional leader, consisted of six questions believed to be related to the components of instructional leadership. Those components are grounded partially in the social and technical aspects of the principal's managerial position suggested by Green (2009). This idea, combined with the ways principals create a climate of trust (Kochanek, 2005), were used to create the six questions in the first section. To explore the state of social and technical aspects in schools and various pieces related to trust-building, questions focused on communication, relationships between teachers, student-focus, policies, procedures and the school mission.

The second hypothesized construct, how principals view their role as a leader specific to mandated reporting, consisted of five questions. Three open-ended policy and procedural-related questions as well as a question that asked the first five steps a principal expects a teacher to take if abuse is suspected were included in this section. Additionally, two questions inquired about the frequency of teachers coming to the principal to ask for guidance and/or support.

The third and final hypothesized construct, how principals can shift or strengthen staff's vision of the mandated reporting role, consisted of seven yes/no/unsure questions. These questions asked specifically about the school in which the principals work and what they believe to be occurring with their staff and teachers. Due to concerns regarding principals' social desire to appear more successful in various areas of mandated reporting than they perhaps are, the introduction of this question was worded to assure principals "very few of the items are happening in the schools." The introduction also explained that the goal of the section was to learn how to better accomplish the items. In this way, the researcher attempted to obtain an accurate depiction of what is currently occurring in schools and reduce social bias.

The demographics section consisted of nine questions about the principal's position in the school, age, and gender. The final question in the demographics section asked if the participant was interested in being interviewed for the second part of the study. If a participant decided s/he wanted to complete the second part of the study, s/he was provided a link to another online survey where the participant was asked to provide name, phone number and email. This identifying information was used for contacting

purposes only. In this way, none of the identifying markers shared could not be linked to the answers provided in the survey or could be used in the analysis of the survey data.

The second instrument is the semi-structured principal interview protocol (see Appendix B). These principals were self-selected due to their responses on the survey (i.e., they clicked on the next survey and provided contact information). The structure of this instrument is very similar to that of the Building Principal Mandated Reporting Questionnaire, except that it elicited only qualitative data. This instrument took approximately 15 to 30 minutes to complete and was elicited via telephone by the researcher.

Procedure

Email addresses for individuals in the three counties were obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. A letter was submitted to the Illinois State Board of Education requesting the email addresses for the building principals in Counties One, Two and Three. Ultimately, the Illinois State Board of Education directed the researcher to the website (www.isbe.edu) to obtain the spreadsheet that contained the 919 email addresses of the principals in the three counties.

The questionnaire was sent in electronic format via email correspondence using the SurveyMonkey (surveymonkey.com) online survey program, with I.P. addresses suppressed, to every K-8 school principal in the three counties in Illinois beginning in February 2011.

To help ensure that the researcher-created questions were clear, the researcher employed a sampling plan. Email addresses for the three counties were divided into

groups of 45-85 email addresses per group. Each group was then emailed in a staggered fashion every week beginning in February 2011 in order to assess if any of the questionnaire questions were unclear to respondents. (The last question on the survey read, “Which, if any, of the preceding questions in this survey were unclear to you?”) Responses did not demonstrate that any question in particular was unclear (i.e., more than five respondents mentioned that a particular question was unclear when queried), so the researcher did not alter the survey in any way.

The initial email included a brief introductory explanation of the research study and specifically stated that participation in the study was voluntary. Appendix C contains the text that was included in the introductory email. The follow-up emails (found in Appendix D) were sent three weeks and then five weeks after the initial email was distributed. Additionally, a final email was sent 48 hours before the survey closed, which was identical to Appendix D with an additional sentence informing participants that the survey was closing in 48 hours.

The second phase of the study employed a phone interview with principals. Four principals provided contact information on another electronic survey, demonstrating they were willing to participate in the interview portion of the study. The researcher contacted those individuals via telephone or email to schedule a time for the interview, which took approximately 15 to 45 minutes to complete. The researcher also electronically provided the principal with the consent form (which can be found in Appendix E), which was signed by the principal, scanned and sent electronically to the researcher prior to the researcher conducting the interview.

The researcher took typed notes during the semi-structured interview. No participant identifying information was included in the Word Document that was created. This document was then emailed to the interviewee as an opportunity for a member check in order to establish the validity of the researcher's summary of the conversation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The email explained that the interviewee had a three-week window to respond with changes or additions (see Appendix F). The email also explained that if the interviewee did not respond within three weeks, then the researcher would assume no changes needed to be made to the summary. Two principals responded that the email attachments were accurate, and the other two did not respond. The information was then coded with the assistance of a graduate student in the School Psychology Graduate Program at Loyola University Chicago in order to code-check the information and create inter-rater reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Data Analysis

The questionnaire elicited both qualitative data and quantitative data. The interview elicited only qualitative data. Information contributing to the research questions was all qualitative in nature. Quantitative data were initially to be analyzed in terms of means of the constructs and to determine differences between the counties. However, the researcher went further on the quantitative analysis in response to trends in the data. In the following paragraphs, the qualitative analysis will be described and then the circumstances that led to a more extensive quantitative exploration of the data, and then the quantitative analysis will be described.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative information collected from both the survey and the interviews was exported from SurveyMonkey (survey data) and the Word document (interview data) and then organized in an Excel document. Codebooks were created based upon the literature on creating a climate of trust in schools (Greene, 2009; Kochanek, 2005) and successful practices in mandated reporting (Ensuring Success in School Task Force, 2010), themes found in the data and the research questions. Many of the responses from the survey provided information for the construct **how principals view their role as a leader specific to mandated reporting**. In regards to the survey data, each question coded utilized a different codebook and set of codes.

The same codebook was created and used for the analysis of the interviews. Specifically, the researcher looked for information that contributed to the research questions, themes, and “best practice” examples in the codes created when analyzing the interviews.

For all of the qualitative analysis, the researcher and the other graduate student at Loyola University Chicago individually coded the information. The defined codes were then compared to ensure reliability, and the reliability varied based on the question and codebook utilized. A range of reliability between 64% and 94% was found between coders during the first round of qualitative coding. This use of check-coding has been shown not only to increase reliability, but also to create clearer definitions in qualitative data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The researcher and another graduate student revised the codebook based on the responses and how the responses fit into the initial codebook.

Miles and Huberman refer to the initial codebook as the “start list” and prefer this form of coding. Once the researcher and other graduate student adjusted the codebook, the researcher and the other graduate student had 100% reliability.

In the process of qualitative coding, the researcher came across an interesting finding with the survey responses to the question, “A teacher suspects a child in her classroom is being sexually abused. What would you expect be the first five steps she should take?” While in the process of creating an initial codebook for this question, the researcher discovered that some of the participants provided responses that did not strictly adhere to the law. At this point, the researcher determined that more quantitative analysis was needed in an attempt to better understand this data. The steps the principal would like to take were coded by whether the principals’ steps strictly adhered to the law. That data were then assigned a YES if the principal strictly adhered to the law and NO if the principal did not demonstrate having strictly adhered to the law. The qualitative data were therefore transformed into a categorical quantitative variable, *Strict Adherence to the Law*, in order to be used in various logistic regressions and chi-square tests. The quantitative analysis that followed will be discussed in later paragraphs.

Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS in order to determine trends in the data and relationships between variables. Data cleaning was performed, which included a process of detecting and correcting inaccurate or missing records. Responses were not numerically distant from the rest of the data, therefore there were no outliers. Cronbach’s Alpha was used to compare answers in the

sections to ensure the questions are measuring similar variables on the first construct.

Additionally, the researcher used a Factor Analysis (described in the results section) to determine if the items were correlated with each other.

The first construct, **how principals act as an instructional leader**, was measured by combining the responses to each of the questions in that section and taking the mean. Each of the specific questions under this construct can be found in Appendix G. Those components included creating a climate of trust, communication with staff, creating camaraderie amongst staff, and clarification of policies (Kochanek, 2005). That mean was then transformed into a new variable, *Instructional Leader*.

The other construct, **how principals are shifting or strengthening staff's vision of the mandated reporting role**, consisted of seven yes/no/unsure questions. Each of the questions included in this construct can be found in Appendix G. This categorical data was used in two separate ways. For the purposes of a chi-square analysis, these yes/no/unsure responses were collapsed into two categories: yes and no/unsure. For the purposes of a logistic regression, the mean of the responses to each of the questions in this section were transformed into a new variable, *Mandated Reporting Supports*.

Additionally, this quantitative analysis utilized the categorical variable of the legality of the responses discussed earlier, *Strict Adherence to the Law*, and this occurred as an explorative quantitative analysis determined after the data was collected. Analyses were performed in order to examine the relationship between responses to various questions in order to determine whether relationships existed between various responses and whether or not principals were more likely to strictly adhere to the law.

A two by two chi-square analysis was completed using each individual variable in the third construct, how the principal shifts or strengthens staff's vision of the mandated reporting role, and the categorical variable Strict Adherence to the Law.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was completed on the three counties for each main construct variable (Instructional Leader, Strict Adherence to the Law, and Mandated Reporter Supports) in order to determine if any differences existed between the three counties.

Additionally, four logistic regressions were run with the independent variable as Strict Adherence to the Law with the two main construct variables Mandated Reporter Supports and Instructional Leader, to determine if the presence of either of these constructs predicted a principal being more likely to strictly adhere to the law.

Additionally, demographic data was examined in terms of supports and building climate to determine if there are any correlations to mandated reporting practices by principals and any specific aspect, such as length of career, age, or gender.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The following chapter will review the findings from the Building Principal Mandated Reporting Questionnaire, both quantitative and qualitative, and the qualitative findings from the semi-structured interview protocol. The researcher created both of the instruments to gather information to address the aforementioned research questions. First, the research questions and qualitative information collected will be discussed. Next, quantitative data and exploratory quantitative aims will be described.

The specific standards for reporting in Illinois are as follows according to Illinois law: “A report is required when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child may be an abused or neglected child” (Stat. Ch. 325, § 5/4).

Qualitative Results

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do building principals perceive their role in the mandated reporting process in elementary schools (K-8) in three suburban counties in Illinois?
2. What types of policies and procedures do districts have in place concerning mandated reporting and child maltreatment?
3. How do principals implement these policies in their school buildings when it comes to mandated reporting and child maltreatment detection?

4. What components do principals perceive to be essential to improve mandated reporting structures?

Research Question 1

How do building principals perceive their role in the mandated reporting process in elementary schools (K-8) in Midwestern suburban counties?

Principals surveyed and interviewed through the course of this study had distinct ideas as to what their role in terms of mandated reporting should be in their buildings. Of those surveyed, approximately 8% reported their role should be the same as any other mandated reporter in the school building, with no active leadership noted.

Approximately 12% of those surveyed wanted to be made aware of a teacher who was planning to make a call to report child maltreatment, but noted no other leadership role (see Figure 1). Of those individuals who noted taking various active leadership roles in mandated reporting (80% of the respondents), they noted various aspects of their role (see Figure 2), which included: providing support to the teacher (28%), informing and training teachers regarding their role (27%), and being actively involved in the process without the teacher being part of the process (20%). These principals also mentioned to a lesser extent the following: supporting the child involved (15%), making the call for the teacher (8%), and providing resources for teachers (7%). Of the principals interviewed, all of them reported that they would want the teacher who has suspicions of child maltreatment to contact someone before making the call.

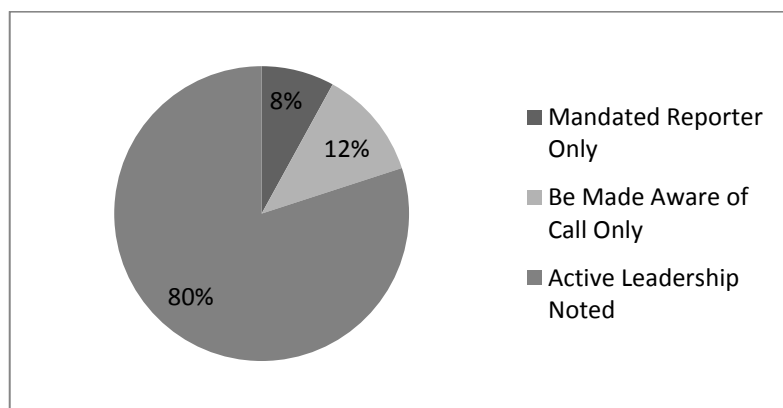


Figure1. Respondents' Perceived Roles

Active Leadership Roles	
Providing Support to Teacher	28%
Informing and Training Teachers	27%
Being Actively Involved in the Process (w/out Teacher)	20%
Supporting Child Involved	15%
Making the Call for the Teacher	8%
Providing Resources to Teachers	7%

Figure 2. Active Leadership Roles Noted By Respondents

Many of the principals noted providing support to the teacher as one part of their role. This was defined as consultation with teacher and potentially others, as well as collaboration with the teacher and others. Most often, this applied specifically to emotional support or a specific conversation with a teacher when s/he was unsure of how to proceed. As one principal wrote, “[To] support teachers as they become aware of

abuse. It's a hard thing many times for them to make that call." Additionally, another principal wrote, "My role should not only be a reporter, but also to help guide staff through the process in the name of student safety."

Principals also often perceived their role as informing teachers of their role as mandated reporters or providing training on the topic. Some principals are telling teachers how important the role of mandated reporter is, and some are simply reminding staff of their specific role. One principal wrote, "I feel that it is important for me to explain what a mandated reporter is and make sure that my staff has access to the handbook and knows where to find information about it." Another principal simply wrote, "[My role is in] ensuring all staff are aware of their role as mandated reporters." Additionally, one principal wrote, "Present to the staff a yearly review of statutory obligation to report child abuse," as part of the role in the school.

Many principals noted taking a leadership role without specifically mentioning the involvement of the teacher who originally suspected the abuse. For example, principals mentioned meeting with the social worker without mentioning the person who suspected the abuse. For example, one principal wrote, "I support the school social worker who works with civil staff on the issue." Another principal commented, "When such incidents are reported to me I consult the social worker and we mutually determine the next steps."

Principals also mentioned providing support to the child involved and that the child's wellbeing is the principal's responsibility. As one principal surmised, "[My role is to] advocate for the child in whatever manner that is necessary, whether it is making

the necessary and appropriate contact or if it is to counsel students and teachers on matters that arise.” Another principal simply stated that the role of the principal is, “Acting as any adult responsible for children’s wellbeing.”

A lower percentage (8%) of principals view part of their role as making the call for the teacher after the teacher reports the suspicion to the principal. As one principal wrote, “I feel that I should take the lead in the process and if a call is to be made, I should be the one to make the call.”

In describing how they provide support to school staff in their role as mandated reporters, principals mentioned various ways they support their school staff (see Figure 3). The most frequently mentioned was supporting individuals through conversation as the most often form of support (46%). They also described explaining the process and legality to staff (42%) and sitting with school staff while they make the call to DCFS (27%). Some individuals direct staff to the social worker or the school nurse (19%) or make the call to DCFS for the staff member (15%) or collaborate as a group to determine the next steps (13%). Principals also mentioned helping with follow-up (8%) and dealing with the parent for the staff member (4%).

How Principals Support Mandated Reporters	
Through conversation	46%
Explaining Process and Legality to Staff	42%
Sitting with School Staff while call is made	27%
Direct Staff to Social Worker or School Nurse	19%
Make the Call for Staff Member	15%
Collaborate as a Group to Determine Next Steps	13%
Helping with Follow-Up	8%
Dealing with Parent for Staff Member	4%

Figure 3. How Principals Support Mandated Reporters

Research Question 2

What types of policies and procedures do districts have in place concerning mandated reporting and child maltreatment?

Participants were asked whether or not there was a mandated reporting policy in the district, and if so, to briefly describe that policy. Of the respondents, 84.4% responded that their districts have a policy on mandated reporting, 6.3% responded that their districts do not have a policy, and 9.4% responded that they are unsure as to whether their district has a policy (see Figure 4).

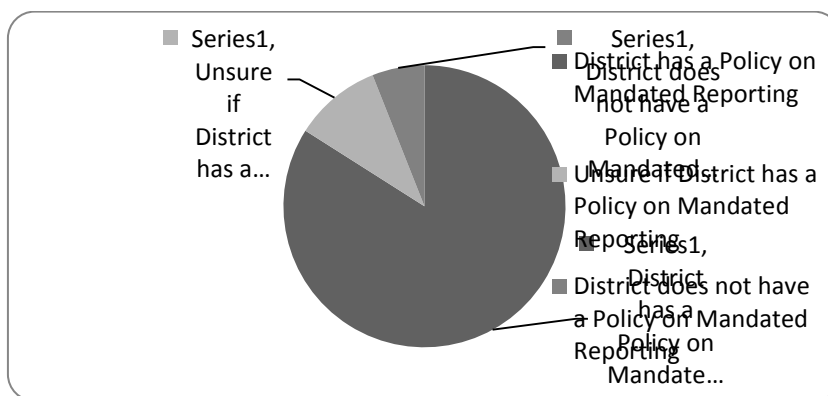


Figure 4. Districts' Mandated Reporting Policies

Principals commonly (68.6%) reported that their district's policy mirrors that of the Mandated Reporting Law (see Figure 5). One respondent described the district policy as follows, "A district employee who has reasonable cause to suspect a child is abused or neglected shall report to DCFS and cooperate in investigation. Employee must sign a statement that they have knowledge and understanding of the reporting requirements." Many (49.0%) respondents described the policy as simply that all employees are Mandated Reporters and/or having all the school employees sign the DCFS Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status.

Policies Described By Principals	
Mirrored that of the Illinois Law	68.6%
Described all employees as Mandated Reporters and/or must sign the DCFS Acknowledgment of Mandated Reporter Status	49.0%
Specific steps described as part of policy	21.6%
District policies did not strictly adhere to the law	9.8%

Figure 5. Policies Described by Principals

Specific steps were reported as being part of the district's policy by a smaller percentage of respondents (21.6%). One principal discussed a comprehensive district personnel policy related to mandated reporting. This individual reported that this policy has "a section on definitions, steps to follow, reporting requirements and procedures, cooperation in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect, dissemination of information to employees, child abuse or neglect allegations against school employees, and forms for all requirements."

Of the individuals who responded with specifics about the district policy, a small percentage of those policies appeared to neglect the Mandated Reporter Code. Approximately 9.8% of the respondents' reported district policies that did not strictly adhere to the law. For example, one principal wrote, "It is based on the best judgment of the principal and social worker." Another principal stated, "Principal or social worker determines if call should be made." Yet another wrote, "All cases are to be reported to one of the individuals listed above and a call is made if the person making the call deems it is warranted (either through a statement made by the student, by physical evidence or both)."

Research Question 3

How do principals implement these policies in their school buildings when it comes to mandated reporting and child maltreatment detection?

The survey asked the principals what first five steps they would like a teacher to take if that teacher suspected one of the students in the class were experiencing sexual

abuse. Of those principals who responded (n = 67), approximately 26% responded in ways that did not strictly adhere to the mandated reporting law. These principals commonly described the importance of meeting with the teacher and social worker to determine whether or not a call should be made, i.e. most often the term “to see if the call is warranted” was used.

Principals also included steps in the procedure that are not necessary. One principal who was interviewed reported the following steps as the school’s procedure to mandated reporting:

A teacher will talk to one of the two social workers or the counselor. That person either contacts the assistant principal or principal, and we discuss who is going to do what. The social worker or counselor interviews the kid as well. Then we decide what we are going to do. If it is suspected abuse, it is a report no matter what. Teachers are always given the option to make the report themselves if they feel strongly about it, but they are invited to come and discuss it as a team first.

Approximately 42% of the survey respondents also included part of the procedure that some form of investigation would take place, usually an interview with the student by the social worker or the principal. Respondents reported steps such as, “Have the student speak to the school social worker or psychologist for corroboration,” and “Teacher and social worker speak with the child.” DCFS specifically states that this is not part of the role of the mandated reporter and that the investigation should take place by DCFS (Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, 2006). Although basic information is necessary to make the report, the story does not need to be validated, according to DCFS—the only requirement of a mandated reporter is to have a suspicion of

child maltreatment and then to report that suspicion (Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, 2006).

Principals interviewed described the procedure differently than the principals surveyed. One principal described the procedure as follows:

The student services administrator gets involved. Teachers come to us and we try to take the burden off of the teacher – their version of mandated reporting is to tell one of us. We document for the teacher that they appropriately informed us so we can make the call. We then make the call. This keeps the teachers separate and keeps the trust with students and parents. An administrator or social worker will call the parent and notify after the fact to let them know the call has been made and why it has been made.

This principal also includes the step in the procedure of calling the student's parent to inform them that a call to DCFS has been made. This was also echoed in the survey, where when discussing the first five steps principals would like teachers to take if they suspect abuse, approximately 9% of the principals (n = 6) reported that someone would contact the parents to let them know that the call to DCFS has been made.

When those principals who were interviewed were asked if the procedure was specifically written down in a place that was accessible where the teachers could access it, all four of them said it was not, and they usually explained the procedure verbally to teachers at the beginning of the school year. One principal responded, "The specific steps of the process should be written down somewhere, but I do not think they are. We should probably have that written somewhere."

The survey also asked principals the number of times per month a teacher or school staff comes to them in need of guidance as to how to proceed with a potential

mandated reporting suspicion. The largest percentage of respondents said they supported individuals one time or less per month (70.49%). Many individuals responded that no one came to them in need of guidance (22.95%), and a small number responded that they supported their staff two to three times per month (6.56%). A separate question was the number of times teachers and staff come to the principal simply to inform the principal that s/he plans to make a mandated reporting call. Most of the respondents reported this does not occur at their schools on a monthly basis (52.54%). Many individuals reported that this occurs between a few times per year to once a month (44.07%). Very few individuals reported this occurs more than once per month (3.39%).

These two numbers were combined to determine the number of cases that come to the attention of the principal per month and then divided by the number of students in the schools to determine how many students per 1,000 were cases brought up to principals on a yearly basis, which from this sample appears to be 21.23 per 1000 students.

Research Question 4

What components do principals perceive to be essential to improve mandated reporting structures?

Additionally, those surveyed were asked if after taking the survey they were going to attempt to implement more supports to mandated reporting in their schools. Of the individuals who responded (n = 60), 38% said they would attempt to do more after taking the survey. Those who responded qualitatively (n = 36) commented that they would attempt to provide more access to training in this area (39%), remind staff of the specific responsibilities as a mandated reporter (17%), provide expert information (14%),

or increase the support to staff (6%). A larger number of individuals said they would not attempt to implement more supports (47%). Reasons principals gave as to why they would not attempt to increase the supports in their schools were because they either felt they were doing all they were currently able at this time (14%), or they did not feel there was a large need for further supports in their schools (3%). Approximately 15% of individuals were unsure if they were going to attempt to implement more supports.

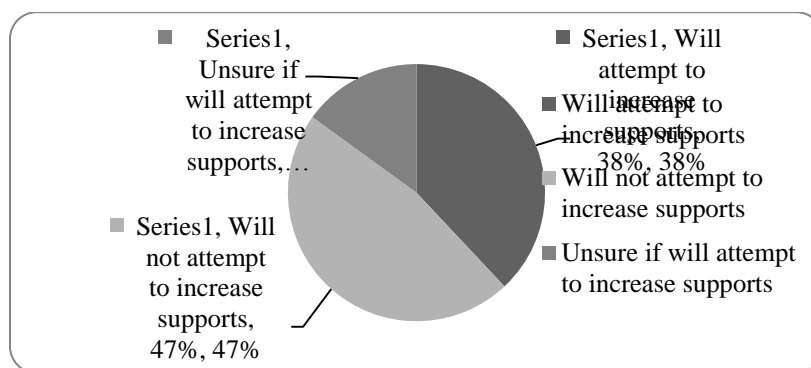


Figure 6. Percent of Respondents Altering Support in Schools Due to Survey

The principals who were interviewed described what pieces they felt contributed to strong mandated reporting practices. Two of the principals highlighted the necessity of trust in the building. One principal said, “I think there needs to be trust among staff with administrators and ongoing staff development and reminders, including the signs of abuse and what to look for.” Another principal stated, “Openness, honesty – making your staff feel safe that they can trust you to do the right thing.” The third principal focused on communication in saying, “Child-focus, openness of communication between administration and staff, an expectation that we will follow, collaboration around decision-making, check your perceptions.” The fourth principal discussed support and

active leadership and said, “The principal has to set the tone, provide information and look supportive and spell it out the way it is.”

Quantitative Results

The Exploratory Quantitative Aims that were created after the qualitative analysis were completed that will be addressed in the following section are as follows:

1. The factor of principals strictly adhering to the law will be related to mandated reporting supports.
2. Duration in professional field would predict strict adherence to the law.
3. There would be a positive relationship between the number of mandated reporting supports and strict adherence to the law.
4. County One will have a significantly higher difference in Mandated Reporter Supports, School Climate and Legality than the other counties.

Validation of Primary Outcome Scale

The six questions under the first construct were measuring instructional leadership.

To determine internal validity of the questionnaire, the Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated on each of the six questions. The alpha coefficient for the six items was .715, which suggested that the items had a relatively high internal consistency. Removal of any of the items on the questionnaires decrease construct validity to below that acceptable limit (which was considered .70), suggesting that this set of questions is internally consistent and contains no extraneous questions. However, if the item, “The school mission was created collaboratively with teachers and school staff” was removed,

the alpha coefficient would increase .728. Table 7 details the Cronbach's Alpha for each of the individual items included on the mandated reporting structures factor.

Aim One

The factor of principals strictly adhering to the law will be related to mandated reporting supports.

A two (Mandated Reporter Supports) by two (Strictly Adhering to the Law) chi-square test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the presence of any of the individual Mandated Reporter Supports and whether principals strictly adhered to the law. *Aim One* was the factor of principals strictly adhering to the law will be related to mandated reporting supports. Approximately 42.3% of those who strictly adhered to the law provided access to professional development, whereas 57.7% of those who did not strictly adhere to the law provided access to professional development. This difference was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 62) = 3.830, p = .048$. Additionally, 25.5% of those who did not strictly adhere to the law did not explicitly encourage faculty and staff to attend outside professional development in the area of child maltreatment detection and/or mandated reporting, whereas 74.5% of those who did strictly adhere to the law did not encourage faculty and staff to obtain outside professional development. This difference represents a slight trend, $\chi^2(1, N = 61) = 2.415, p = .122$. Therefore, one variable did have a significant relationship with principals adhering to the law and one demonstrated a slight trend. There was partial support for the first aim, as strictly adhering to the law was significantly associated with failing to provide access to professional development. Additionally, only a trend between

not strictly adhering to the law and explicitly encouraging faculty and staff to attend outside professional development.

Table 7. Individual Items Coefficients

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
District policies clearly identified in a user-friendly manner for school staff and faculty.	22.19	7.825	.381	.696
School staff and faculty appear to have strong bonds and good camaraderie among each other	21.93	7.058	.528	.649
There is a straightforward and effective communication process for me to use when I need to inform the staff of a system-wide change in policy/procedure concerning student safety.	21.80	7.554	.514	.657
The teachers appear to have a shared commitment to the over-all well-being of students in the school (including social, emotional and academic).	21.76	7.500	.514	.657
The school mission was created collaboratively with teachers and school staff.	21.84	8.087	.282	.728
The building strategic plan was created in part by using the shared vision of the faculty and school staff.	22.05	7.314	.488	.663

Aim Two

Duration in professional field would predict strict adherence to the law.

To determine whether the number of years the principals had been in the field was predictive of whether the principals would adhere strictly to the law, a logistic regression

was completed. *Aim Two* was that duration in professional field would predict strict adherence to the law. The number of years principals worked in the field did not predict whether the principal would strictly adhere to the law, so there was not support for Aim Two ($p = .681$, $\beta = 11.10$).

Aim Three

There would be a positive relationship between the number of mandated reporting supports and strict adherence to the law.

To determine whether principals with more of the Mandated Reporter Supports in place were predictive of whether principals would adhere strictly to the law, a logistic regression was completed. *Aim Three* was that there would be a positive relationship between the number of mandated reporting supports and strict adherence to the law. This analysis was significant, and the group of variables were found to be significant predictors after controlling for age ($p = .048$, $\beta = 3.685$). The relationship between Mandated Reporter Supports and age was found to be co-linear, as determined by a Pearson Correlation. Age was added into the equation as it has a significant relationship with the outcome (Mandated Reporter Supports); it was controlled to reduce homoskedacity in the model. Table 8 describes the individual predictors of Strict Adherence to the Law. However, not one of the individual factors was found to be significant. Only the total model with all of the responses to the eight questions was found to be statistically significant. Therefore, there is support for Aim Three.

Table 8. Logistic Regression Individual Variables

Factor	Predictor	B	SE	β	R2
Strict Adherence to Law		-1.025	.312	10.813	.098
	<i>Principal provides “expert” advice to faculty and staff.</i>	.865	.456	3.603	
	<i>Principal encourages faculty and staff explicitly to attend professional development.</i>	1.219	.521	5.474	
	<i>Principal provides “expert” advice to faculty and staff.*</i>	1.219	.521	5.474	
* $p < .05$					

Aim Four

County One will have a significantly higher difference in Mandated Reporter Supports, School Climate and Legality than the other counties.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was completed to test for differences in the presence of the Mandated Reporter Supports variables and School Climate variables in the three counties. *Aim Four* was that County One would have a significantly higher difference in Mandated Reporter Supports, School Climate and Strict Adherence to the Law than the other counties. The presence of Mandated Reporter Supports and School Climate variables did not differ significantly across the three counties ($F = ns, p > .05$). However, a one-way ANOVA was also used to test for county differences in the principals adhering to the law in the various counties. A trend was discovered in the differences in adhering strictly to the law in the three counties, $F(2, 55) = 2.073, p = 0.63$. Tukey post-hoc comparisons of the three groups indicate that County

Three ($M = 1.17$, 95% CI [1.01, 1.34]) trended towards giving more responses strictly adhering to the law than County One ($M = 1.42$, 95% CI [1.20, 1.63]), $p = .136$.

Comparisons between County Two ($M = 1.18$, 95% CI [.91, 1.45]) and the other two groups were not statistically significant at $p > .05$, nor were any trends in the data noted.

This trend suggests that there is a lack of support for Aim Four.

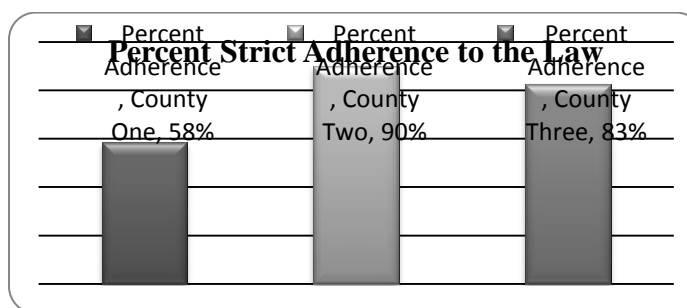


Figure 7. Percent Strict Adherence to the Law by County

Summary

This chapter reviewed the qualitative and quantitative findings from the Building Principal Mandated Reporting Questionnaire and the qualitative findings from the semi-structured interview protocol. Qualitative data were analyzed in an attempt to inform the four research questions. Quantitative data were explored and explorative quantitative aims were addressed to gain insight beyond the research questions.

The qualitative data provided by principals surveyed and interviewed through the course of this study were examined in an attempt to provide information for the four research questions. The first question is how do building principals perceive their role in the mandated reporting process in elementary schools (K-8) in Midwestern suburban

counties. Principals had distinct ideas as to what their role in terms of mandated reporting should be in their buildings.

The second research question is what types of policies and procedures do districts have in place concerning mandated reporting and child maltreatment. Most districts have policies that mirror the Mandated Reporting Code and also consist of having school professionals sign a form agreeing to be a mandated reporter. Additionally, some respondents reported having policies with specific steps.

The third research question is how do principals implement these policies in their school buildings when it comes to mandated reporting and child maltreatment detection. The procedures in the buildings were discussed, including principals reporting steps in the procedure that do not strictly adhere to the law.

The fourth research question is what components do principals perceive to be essential to improve mandated reporting structures. These components, according to principals, include trust, honesty, and clear communication.

In addition to the research questions, quantitative data and explorative quantitative aims were also explored. A validation of the primary outcome scale was completed. The six questions under the first construct were measuring instructional leadership. The alpha coefficient for the items was .715, which suggested that the items had a relatively high internal consistency.

Aim One was that the factor of principals strictly adhering to the law will be related to mandated reporting supports. One support (principals providing access to professional development) did have a negatively significant relationship with principals

adhering to the law. Another support (explicitly encouraging faculty and staff to attend outside professional development in the area of child maltreatment detection and/or mandated reporting) also demonstrated a slight negative relationship trend. Therefore, there was not support for Aim One.

Aim Two was that duration in the professional field would predict strict adherence to the law. The number of years principals worked in the field did not predict whether the principal would strictly adhere to the law, so there was not support for Aim Two.

Aim Three was that there would be a positive relationship between the number of mandated reporting supports and strict adherence to the law. This analysis was significant therefore; there is support for Aim Three.

Aim Four was County One would have a significantly higher difference in Mandated Reporter Supports, School Climate and Strict Adherence to the Law than the other counties. The presence of Mandated Reporter Supports and School Climate variables did not differ significantly across the three counties. However, a trend ($F(2, 55) = 2.073, p = 0.63$) was discovered in the differences in adhering strictly to the law in the three counties. Tukey post-hoc comparisons of the three groups indicate that County Three ($M = 1.17, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.01, 1.34]$) trended towards giving more responses strictly adhering to the law than County One ($M = 1.42, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.20, 1.63]$), $p = .136$. This trend suggests that there is a lack of support for Aim Four.

The research questions and explorative qualitative aims were explored in this chapter. In the following chapter, these findings will be discussed and explored further.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study intended to answer the following questions:

1. How do building principals perceive their role in the mandated reporting process in Illinois elementary schools (K-8) three suburban counties in Illinois?
2. What types of policies and procedures do districts have in place concerning mandated reporting and child maltreatment?
3. How do principals implement these policies in their school buildings when it comes to mandated reporting and child maltreatment detection?
4. What components do principals perceive to be essential to improve mandated reporting structures?

Children are maltreated at an alarming rate, and it is the school's responsibility to provide a safe environment for students to learn and to report suspicions to the authorities. The building principal potentially has the ability to shift or strengthen the school-wide understanding of the mandated reporter role. The specific standards for reporting in Illinois are as follows according to Illinois law: "A report is required when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child may be an abused or neglected child" (Stat. Ch. 325, § 5/4). Building principals hold a unique role in the schools in that they have the ability to initiate system-wide change. Are building principals leveraging this opportunity to protect the children in the school building? Additionally, if the principals

do not have a strong knowledge base of the indicators of abuse and neglect detection and are not aware of the prevalence of child maltreatment, they cannot be expected to see this as a priority in their schools.

Endless initiatives are introduced into schools every year, and with every new initiative another item is added to teachers' to do lists. If mandated reporting and violence prevention is not clearly on the agenda of the building principal because professional development is not being offered in that area, or structures are not set up to clearly follow in the case of mandated reporting, then it will not be a focus of all school staff. It is up to the principal to define mandatory reporting and violence prevention as a significant part of every person's role within the school. Additionally, if principals themselves do not understand the legal implications of the mandated reporter role, how can they be expected to advise their staff on this matter?

Main Findings

The following main findings are divided into two sections. The first section discusses the current state of affairs as reported by participants in this study. The second section describes what schools can be doing to better support mandated reporting in the schools.

Current State of Affairs

Generally, principals in this study are involved with mandated reporting in very different capacities even across three counties in Illinois. Some principals appear to be supporting professionals in their school buildings and some are not. Perhaps the most surprising finding is that some principals in this study appear to be strictly adhering to the

law, and approximately 26% do not appear to be strictly adhering to the law. If this finding is accurate and if these principals are representative of the three counties as a whole, calls to DCFS are probably not being made as often as they should and some situations are not being investigated as they should. This coupled with the fact that mandated reporting district policies in schools are not all strictly adhering to the law makes for a dismal situation for students in difficult situations. Additionally, mandates coming from the district, county or government are not enough to get school professionals to call DCFS. More needs to be done to support mandated reporters.

Steps Schools Can Take

Building principals are in a unique position to protect children through mandated reporting. In order to support mandated reporters in the schools, climates of trust, honesty and clear communication are essential. Specific supports, such as professional development for the staff, supporting staff, and explicitly communicating the importance of the mandated reporter role were identified as a whole do appear to be correlated to adhering to the law more strictly. Additionally, principals need to know the law and discuss the ambiguity that is inherent to the suspicion of abuse.

In order to continue to foster relationships with families who are suspected of maltreating their children, some schools have had success in contacting the families immediately following the report to share that the call has been made and why the call was made. The implications of this action are unknown, but some schools make this a part of regular practice.

The first step principals can take to support mandated reporters is simply bringing up the topic of child maltreatment to the staff. Opening the lines of communication and discussing what supports exist and how to better protect children will allow individuals to see the benefit of this approach. However, the topic must first be made a focus for school buildings.

Qualitative Findings and Interpretations

Research Question 1

How do building principals perceive their role in the mandated reporting process in Illinois elementary schools (K-8) Midwestern suburban counties?

The role principals play in the schools in terms of mandated reporting ranges from the uninvolved, with no active leadership noted, to supportive. Although only a small percentage (8%) of respondents appeared to prefer to be uninvolved in the mandated reporting process, this is an unfortunate finding. Although the principal's role in mandated reporting has not previously been discussed at length in the research, it is clear from research on the role of the principal that this lack of support can be detrimental in schools (Kochanek, 2005). Particularly with such high-risk interactions such as mandated reporting, the principal needs to provide support and communication in a managerial sense (Greene, 2009). Particularly with new teachers, social workers and school psychologists, the principal is in a unique position to provide direction and support in the process and ensure individuals are reporting their suspicions. Many principals also suggested that they would like to be part of a meeting to discuss how to proceed.

According to Crenshaw, Crenshaw and Lichtenburg (1995), this team-based response can lead to groups of professionals “talk[ing] themselves out of reporting” (p. 1110).

When discussing how the principals support staff, they often describe themselves as providing emotional support in the form of a conversation. A principal who is not aware of how to adhere strictly to the law, cannot provide appropriate feedback to a staff member. Supporting staff also consisted of informing staff of their role as mandated reporters. Although it is unclear how all of the respondents make this information known to their staff, it appears in many cases this consists of providing faculty and staff with a district form that states that the individual is a mandated reporter and then the staff member needs to sign it. Unfortunately, it is unclear how typical or atypical this is in schools due to the lack of research on the topic, but one might speculate that this is a common occurrence in the schools. In some instances, principals described discussing it as a matter of “housekeeping” at the beginning of the school year. This is disconcerting because the safety and wellbeing of children in a school ought to be discussed with more detail and urgency than simply as any other “housekeeping” item. Guidelines do not exist on sharing information regarding this mandated reporting in the schools, instead it is up to the principal (or in some cases, district) to determine how to share this information with the school.

Although specific suggestions do not exist, there are standards that inform school leadership that make the general suggestion that: “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and

professional growth” (Green, 2009, p. 6). This standard can be interpreted that leadership in terms of mandated reporting needs to be much more than simply informing school professionals of their roles as mandated reporters—principals need to promote student success by advocating and nurturing students. Advocating for students consists of action, and should consist of more than having teachers sign a sheet of paper saying they understand their roles as mandated reporters.

A few principals also discussed providing support to the child and family involved in the suspicion. These two components are not specifically mentioned in the best practices outlined by the Ensuring Success in School Task Force (2010). It is unclear as to whether these steps of supporting both the child and family can be done in some sort of systemized way might prove less damaging to the relationship between school and the student and the family.

Research Question 2

What types of policies and procedures do districts have in place concerning mandated reporting and child maltreatment?

Most of the policies principals reported that districts have in place follow the Mandated Reporting Code. Often, the policy was described in a vague manner and appeared to be limited to having school professionals sign the Mandated Reporter’s form to demonstrate that they were aware that they are mandated reporters. Some of the policies had basic procedural steps included in the policy. When analyzing the policies, it was also apparent that principals reported their districts’ policies and, moreover, the data analysis confirmed that the districts are also not strictly adhering to the law. It appeared

that this was another instance that principals are not clear on the mandated reporting law and lack a strong foundation. This begs the question, are individuals at the district level also not clear on how to strictly adhere to the law?

Having a policy in place for mandated reporting without the responsibility awarded to the schools to create their own policies demonstrates a “top down” initiative, which cannot be successful without educating teachers what child maltreatment is, how often it occurs, and the signs and symptoms that it is occurring. As with any school policy, without teachers’ buy-in, the policy likely will not be followed by action steps. According to Kochanek (2005), the adults in the school building need to have a common understanding and must work together in order to implement any practice introduced to the school. The school district, principals, and some teachers must determine what steps must be used (that also adhere to the mandated reporting code) in each particular school building.

Research Question 3

How do principals implement these policies in their school buildings when it comes to mandated reporting and child maltreatment detection?

Perhaps the most disconcerting finding from the questionnaire was the responses from respondents regarding the first five steps they would like a teacher to take if that teacher suspected one of the students in the class were experiencing sexual abuse. Of those principals who responded (n = 67), approximately 26% responded in ways that did not strictly adhere to the mandated reporting law. These principals commonly described

the importance of meeting with the teacher and social worker to determine whether or not a call should be made, i.e., most often the term “to see if the call is warranted” was used.

Again, this specific idea of a group of professionals meeting to discuss the mandated report was also reflected by Crenshaw, Crenshaw and Lichtenburg (1995). The role of the mandated reporter is to report a suspicion, not to decide if a suspicion warrants a call. The DCFS Manual for Mandated Reporters (2008) states that if the suspicion exists, the mandated reporter must report that suspicion to the authorities.

Very few principals mentioned that they saw part of their role as providing resources for teachers. Those that mentioned specific resources mentioned providing teacher’s time to make the call and/or the DCFS Mandated Reporter Manual.

The survey also asked principals the number of times per month a teacher or school staff comes to them in need of guidance as to how to proceed with a potential mandated reporting suspicion, and the number of times teachers and staff come to the principal to inform the principal that s/he plans to make a mandated reporting call. These numbers of cases that are brought to the attention of principals is comparable to the number of cases reported to DCFS in Illinois every year (Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, 2010) (see Figure 8) and are also fairly comparable to the cases included in the National Incidence Study–4 (NIS-4) (Sedlak et al., 2010). However, all of these numbers show a marked difference from the numbers Finkelhor et al. (2009) estimated as the incidence of child maltreatment per year.

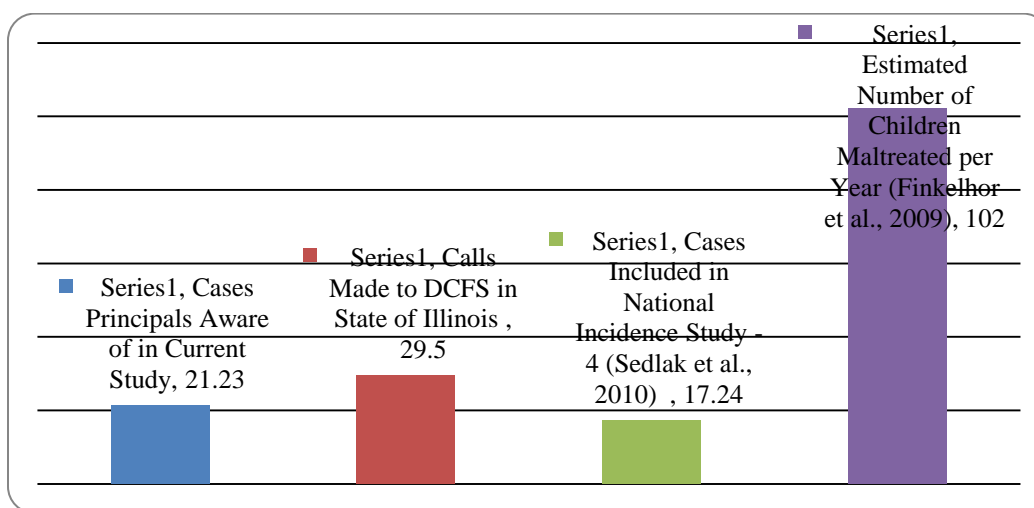


Figure 8. Number of Maltreated Children per 1000 per Year

Research Question 4

What components do principals perceive to be essential to improve mandated reporting structures?

When asked to name what factors support strong mandated reporting practices in schools, principals named many of the same factors that also contribute to a strong instructional leader. Honesty and trust in the school, communication, and collaboration were all named as contributors to strong mandated reporting practices. The principals interviewed deemed variables that contribute to good managerial practices and a climate of trust as also supports to strong mandated reporting practices. These components mirrored the research on leadership in the schools, which states that utilizing communication amongst staff, faculty, students and parents can remove barriers in the schools (Greene, 2009). Honesty and trust in schools have also been identified in the research as a support for high-risk interactions (Kochanek, 2005).

After taking the Building Principal Mandated Reporter Questionnaire, many principals (38.3%) said they would attempt to provide more supports to mandated reporters in their buildings. Many said they would attempt to provide more access to training in this area and a few said they would remind staff of the specific responsibilities as a mandated reporter. This may demonstrate that such a brief encounter with the topic of child maltreatment has prompted some principals to think critically about their current practices in the building. Of the principals who said they would not attempt to provide more supports to mandated reporters in their building (46.7%), they either felt they were doing all they were currently able at this time, or they did not feel there was a large need for further supports in their schools.

Quantitative Findings and Interpretations

A validation of the primary outcome scale was completed to determine if the six questions under the first construct were measuring instructional leadership. This determination was made based on a Cronbach's Alpha that was calculated on each of the six questions under the construct. This construct was created in part from the literature on building principals creating a climate of trust (Kochanek, 2005) and principals as managers in the school (Greene, 2009). This has implications for creating a basis to measure those structures that may ultimately act as supports to mandated reporting practices in schools.

A principal would potentially be more likely to endorse these six variables if s/he is acting as a strong instructional leader. The variables that make up the construct of Instructional Leader are made up of those pieces that have been found to contribute to a

positive, trusting school climate (Kochanek, 2005) and administrative leadership (Greene, 2009). In order to address the Research Question however, these variables need to be examined in terms of their relationship with principals strictly adhering to the law.

Aim One

Aim One was the factor of principals strictly adhering to the law will be related to mandated reporting supports. These supports were determined based on potential best practices in mandated reporting (Ensuring Success in School Task Force, 2010) and the hypothesis that these supports would have a significant relationship with principals strictly adhering to the law. One support, which was principals providing access to professional development, did have a statistically significant relationship with those who did *not* strictly adhere to the law, therefore there was partial support for Aim One. The relationship may appear perplexing due to the fact that principals who are not strictly adhering to the law are more likely to provide access to professional development. This begs the question – are these principals who do not appear to understand the law also the individuals actually providing the professional development at their schools? Or are the principals inviting outside experts and then not attending the professional development themselves? It is possible that the relationship demonstrates an awareness on the part of the principals that they are unclear on the role of the mandated reporter and believe it is the responsibility of others in the school to have the expertise.

Additionally, there was a slight trend in that those who did not strictly adhere to the law are more likely to encourage faculty and staff to obtain outside professional development. This trend may indicate that principals who are aware of information

surrounding mandated reporting (and therefore strictly adhering to the law) are less likely to send their staff and faculty for outside professional development because they understand the implications and feel they are experts on the topic and therefore other staff does not need more information.

Aim Two

Aim Two was that the longer the principals had worked in the field, the more likely they were to strictly adhere to the law. The number of years principals worked in the field did not predict whether the principal would strictly adhere to the law, so there was not support for Aim Two. Experience in years does not necessarily determine whether or not principals strictly adhered to the law in their responses. This is surprising because one might assume that the more experienced the principal, the more experience in mandated reporting and therefore a higher possibility that these individuals will strictly adhere to the law. This does not appear to be the case. Crenshaw, Crenshaw, and Lichtenberg (1995), who surveyed principals, counselors and teachers, found that reporting practices were also unrelated to gender and to the profession of the individual. This begs the question, what pieces are related to a principal, or anyone for that matter, strictly adhering to the law? Hinkelman and Bruno (2008) suggested that an issue in mandated reporting is that many educators are not clear on the law and the ambiguity that comes with the idea of a suspicion of abuse. In many cases, it appears that abuse is only reported when it is obvious and unambiguous and therefore suspicion is not necessary.

Aim Three

Aim Three was that more Mandated Reporting Supports variables that principals had in place the more likely it was that principals would be strictly adhering to the law. This analysis was significant, and the group of variables was found to be significant predictors. Therefore, there was support for Aim Three. However, each individual support did not have significance—it was only when the principals had a majority of the pieces in place that they were more likely to strictly adhere to the law. When grouped together, these six supports were significant. Therefore it should be the aim of the principal to provide as many of these supports as possible in schools. Most of these pieces were determined based on potential best practices in mandated reporting (Ensuring Success in School Task Force, 2010). Schools should be encouraged to employ many of these pieces in order to better support mandated reporting in schools.

Aim Four

Aim Four was that there would be differences in the counties in the presence of the Mandated Reporter Supports variables, School Climate variables, and in the number of principals that strictly adhered to the law. The presence of Mandated Reporter Supports and School Climate variables did not differ significantly across the three counties. However, a trend was discovered in the differences in adhering strictly to the law in the three counties. Comparisons of the three groups indicated that County Three trended towards giving more responses strictly adhering to the law than County One. Comparisons between County Two and the other two groups were not statistically significant at $p > .05$, nor were any trends in the data noted. A trend, but not statistical

significance, was found, therefore there was mixed support for Aim Four for the principals strictly adhering to the law.

Interestingly, County One is the county that chooses to display information regarding violence prevention and their policy on mandated reporting on their website. This may indicate that county-wide support of violence prevention and mandated reporting does not necessarily translate to better practices in the school buildings. In many ways, this countywide support (and all of the various district-wide policies) is similar to the Mandated Reporter law. These policies are an essential and imperative first step. However, the mandated reporting process cannot stop there. Though the law and the policies are logical ways to address the issue of protecting the children schools serve, this does not appear to be enough. The policies can only stand if the school building provides support and education to the teachers in the schools in order to identify issues and a clear building-policy that strictly follows the law. Children are not protected when teachers sign a mandated reporter's agreement. Children are not supported when the county demonstrates broadly that they care about child welfare. Child protection in the schools is a far more complex and integrated process that must involve the whole school building and must be trusted by the professionals in the school.

Summary of Findings and Interpretations

Children are being victimized and maltreated on a constant basis (Russell & Bolen, 2000). Schools are designed to be safe and healthy places for children to grow and learn. The role of the mandated reporter, which is the role assigned to all individuals who work in schools, is designed to protect children. The mandated reporter is supposed

to be the voice for children—not just for the child who actually speaks out against the individual who is perpetrating against them, but also for the child who does not have the words to report the abuse. A suspicion is all a mandated reporter needs to make the call to DCFS. However, 26% of the principals who responded to the Building Principal Mandated Reporter Questionnaire are not strictly following the law in the mandated reporting process. How many children are being negatively affected because schools are not calling DCFS and intervening early in cases of maltreatment? It is impossible to tell.

Three counties were surveyed and two principals from each of two of the counties were interviewed in order to gather more information on principals' views of what is occurring in the schools in terms of mandated reporting. The climate the principal constructs in his/her school consists in part of the six pieces examined in the School Building Mandated Reporter Questionnaire. These six pieces are measuring an underlying construct, potentially that of the principal as an instructional leader. As an instructional leader, perhaps a principal can implement best practices for mandated reporting.

One piece that was determined by the Ensuring Success in School Task Force (2010) to be a support for mandated reporters may be related to principals' *not* strictly adhering to the law, which was providing professional development for staff and faculty. Though this finding is perplexing, the group of practices as a whole was found to be related to strictly adhering to the law. Additionally, of the counties surveyed, County One and County Three were slightly different in the percentage of principals strictly adhering to the law.

The role the principal would prefer to play in the mandated reporting process varies from principal to principal. Most of the principals wanted to participate actively in the role, however, a few of the principals wanted to play a passive leadership role. These individuals suggested they would prefer to play the role of any other mandated reporter. Of those who suggested they wanted an active leadership role, many described this as supporting staff by guiding them through the steps or by sitting with them as they made the call to DCFS.

Many principals suggested taking a leadership role and leaving the staff out of the process – which is not what DCFS suggests in the Manual for Mandated Reporters (Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, 2006). Many individuals also mentioned making the decision to report, or determining if “a call is warranted,” with a team, rather than simply making the call to DCFS based solely on a suspicion.

The relationship between the teacher and the parent was mentioned as something a principal needs to assist in maintaining when a DCFS call is made—which is why many principals mentioned making the telephone report for the teacher and sometimes went so far as to suggest making a telephone call to the parent to inform them the call was made. Generally, principals in this study reported the specific steps of the building procedure for mandated reporting are not written down. How can other mandated reporters be aware of the building procedure if it is not written down?

Study Limitations

This study was limited to a survey completed by 59 principals in the suburban Midwest and an interview with four principals in the same area. Additionally, due to the

fact that the respondents were asked to describe what they do and the study was based solely on self-report, information may have been skewed by the respondents' interpretation of their practices. Relying on the respondents' self-report is not as accurate as analyzing the respondents' actual practices. A potentially more accurate description of what is occurring in the schools could be completed utilizing observations in the schools during a situation where a teacher had a suspicion about maltreatment involving a child in the classroom.

It is unclear how much training the participants in this study have received and if that is similar or dissimilar to the general population of principals in schools. Additionally, it is unclear as to the principals' interactions, whether they be positive or negative, and how that impacted the responses. In general, the lack of contextual data is another limitation to this study.

Finally, one might hypothesize that the participants that agreed to complete a questionnaire on mandated reporting would be a self-selected group of people who have an interest in the topic. However, when considering this information, the finding that approximately a quarter of the respondents do not appear to strictly adhere to the law becomes even more concerning.

Recommendations

As a general rule, people do not like to talk about child maltreatment. It is a taboo topic and anyone who is involved with children would prefer it did not occur. However, it does occur, and at alarming rates. A call to action to all mandated reporters must come from principals across the country. Regional Offices of Education and others need to

provide opportunities for teams (including principals) to come together and create straightforward policies for their school building that take into account the culture of the school and strict adherence to the law. In Illinois, schools and the DCFS need to create and maintain a strong working relationship. Trust must be fostered in all schools starting with the principal and between school professionals, and that trust must also extend to the DCFS case workers and Hotline workers. Principals and all school professionals must be given professional development to understand how often child maltreatment occurs and the signs and symptoms of that maltreatment. School teachers must work in teams to discuss changes in children's behaviors, and must all be on the same page as to what child maltreatment looks like and that is probably occurring in their classrooms, or the teacher across the hall's classroom, and that it needs to be reported. These teams cannot be used to "determine if a call to DCFS is warranted." Teams, led by a school professional who is also a liaison with DCFS, can still exist and serve as part of a facilitative process for teachers involved with the student as suspicions are reported. When Teacher A reports a suspicion to DCFS, then Teachers B, C and D, who also work with the student, should be informed and asked to keep an eye out for the behavior that Teacher A reported to DCFS.

The school has the very serious responsibility of protecting children so that DCFS can intervene early and perhaps improve the lives of children. The first step in the process is often seen as the individual on the front lines, namely the teacher. However, the first step is the responsibility of the principal in creating climate that supports the mandated reporters in the building. If that step is overlooked, then teachers cannot be

expected to detect or suspect abuse, nor can they be expected to take the risk of making a report. It is the responsibility of the instructional leader in the school to create a climate to educate and support those individuals who are entrusted to act as the voice of the silenced and suffering child.

It is simply not enough to have teachers sign a piece of paper and tell them they are mandated reporters at the beginning of the school year. Research over the past twenty years has shown that this is *not enough*. Teachers have always seen the academics of the children in their classroom as their responsibility. As of late, through state curriculum frameworks in Illinois the responsibility of the social-emotional learning of those children has also been passed to the teacher. The future of the classroom must include the overall safety and wellbeing of those children, at home and at school. Perhaps teachers see this as yet another responsibility—however, it is up to the principal to demonstrate that this is an *opportunity* the school has been granted – an opportunity to intervene early and create a healthier and more productive life for a child.

However, principals cannot complete their work to protect children without the support of the DCFS. The DCFS needs to bolster their supports and create a more obvious presence in the schools. Mandated Reporters need to be aware of who they are reporting to, and what to expect using real life examples in order to lower the risk they feel before they report. This will add to the trusting environment that needs to exist in schools so teachers feel safe in making a report.

Additionally, further research on this topic needs to be conducted and then applied in the schools. This research should have a wider scope to beyond the suburbs in

Illinois and should extend to a more national scope. More qualitative research on the specifics of each building's unique mandated reporting procedure. Additionally, more information on what other supports for mandated reporting may exist that were not explored in the context of this study. Qualitative data must also be gathered from DCFS and other Child Protective Service Agencies in order to determine how schools can best work with these agencies to ensure the safety of children. This common understanding will also build trust in schools. Another area of further research could be looking at reporting differences by gender of the principal.

Principals need to consult with experts on this topic in order to implement more of the best practice pieces in schools and a clear procedure that is written down in the school teachers' handbook. This consultation should exist in schools to produce quality professional development for teachers and administrators on the topic and to work with the school using action research to create and analyze best practices in the schools for mandated reporting. Every school in every county has its own unique set of issues and concerns around all topics, and this is especially the case around the sensitive and often overlooked topic of child maltreatment.

In the words of Hubert Humphrey, "Each child is an adventure into a better life—an opportunity to change the old pattern and make it new." Unfortunately, the negative pattern of child maltreatment exists. It runs deeply into countless homes and families—but the opportunity exists for schools to identify the signs and symptoms and show children that the old pattern is not acceptable. The time has come to make it new—and allow an opportunity for all children to safely flourish.

APPENDIX A
BUILDING PRINCIPAL MANDATED REPORTING QUESTIONNAIRE

Building Principal Mandated Reporter Questionnaire

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. In order to understand how improved mandated reporting policies and procedures can be created, we must first understand what is happening in the schools and what principals are doing and would prefer to do in terms of mandated reporting. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary.

If you are interested in completing this survey, please click the NEXT button. By doing so, you are consenting to take part in the survey. If at any time you would like to leave the survey, simply click the EXIT button.

Thank you!

Section 1: This section is designed to get a better idea of generally what your school climate looks like and what is happening at your school. Please rank the following items as they are occurring in your school building. Please rank 1 as Strongly Disagree and 5 as Strongly Agree.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable
1) Specific district policies are clearly identified in a user-friendly manner for school staff and faculty.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
2) School staff and faculty appear to have strong bonds and good camaraderie among each other.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
3) There is a straightforward and effective communication process for me to use when I need to inform the staff of a system-wide change in policy/procedure concerning student safety.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
4) The teachers appear to have a shared commitment to the over-all well-being of students in the school (including social, emotional and academic).	1	2	3	4	5	NA
5) The school mission was created collaboratively with teachers and school staff.	1	2	3	4	5	NA
6) The building strategic plan was created in part by using the shared vision of the faculty and school staff.	1	2	3	4	5	NA

Section 2: The Mandated Reporter literature is not clear on the role of the principal in the mandated reporter model. Different schools approach mandated reporting slightly differently. This section is trying to obtain a snapshot of how mandated reporting looks in your school building and where you see yourself fitting into that snapshot.

7) Ideally, what do you feel your role should be in your school in terms of mandated reporting?

8) A teacher suspects a child in her classroom is being sexually abused. What would you expect be the first five steps she should take?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Please indicate the number of times per month the following occur.

9) How many times does a teacher or school staff come to you in need of guidance as to how to proceed with a potential mandated reporting suspicion (on average)?

a. _____ times per month

10) How many times does a teacher or school staff come to you simply to inform you s/he plans to make a mandated reporting call (on average)?

a. _____ times per month

Additional Comments:

11) Is there a district policy on Mandated Reporting in your district? YES NO UNSURE

a. If YES – please briefly describe the policy:

12) Is someone in your school designated as the “go-to” for mandated reporting support?

YES NO UNSURE

a.

If YES – what is that person’s full-

time role at
the school? (SW,
School Psych,
Teacher, VP,
Nurse)

Section 3: We understand that very few of the items below are occurring in all schools. We are interested in which of these activities you have participated in as principal at your school. If you have participated in them, we would like to know how you went about the items below.

- 13) As principal, I have explicitly informed all faculty and school staff the vital importance of the role of the mandated reporter. YES NO UNSURE
a. If yes, how did you inform them:
- 14) As principal, I have explicitly communicated the specific responsibilities of the faculty and staff as mandated reporters. YES NO UNSURE
a. If yes, how did you communicate the responsibilities:
- 15) As principal, I have provided access to Professional Development in my school building the area of child maltreatment detection and/or mandated reporting. YES NO UNSURE
a. If yes, what specific topics did you cover in that PD:
- 16) As principal, I have encouraged faculty and staff explicitly to attend outside Professional Development in the area of child maltreatment detection and/or mandated reporting. YES NO UNSURE
a. If yes, how did you encourage them?
- 17) As principal, I have actively supported school staff when they are unsure how to proceed as mandated reporters. YES NO UNSURE
a. If yes, how did you support them:
- 18) As principal, I have provided “expert” advice to my faculty and staff when they had specific questions and/or provided them resources to obtain specific information if I did not know the answers. YES NO UNSURE
a. If yes, what advice and/or resources did you provide them:
- 19) After reading the above items (which research says are supports to mandated reporting), are you more likely to carry out any of the items you are not currently? YES NO UNSURE
a. If yes, which ones:
b. If no, please briefly describe why not:

Demographics

- 20) In which county is your school located?
a. DuPage County
b. Lake County

c. Other:

- 21) What grades does your school serve? (Please check all that apply.)
- a. Pre-K
 - b. K
 - c. 1
 - d. 2
 - e. 3
 - f. 4
 - g. 5
 - h. 6
 - i. 7
 - j. 8
 - k. Other:
- 22) How many students attend your school?
- 23) How many years have you been the principal at your current school?
- 24) How many years have you been in the field of education?
- 25) Please generally describe your experience with mandated reporting prior to becoming an administrator:
- 26) Please generally describe your experience with mandated reporting since becoming an administrator:
- 27) Gender
- 28) Age
- 29) Ethnicity
- 30) Which, if any, of the preceding questions in this survey were unclear to you?
- 31) Are you willing to be interviewed on this topic in order to allow the researcher with a broader knowledge base of what occurs in the schools in terms of child maltreatment detection and mandated reporting? If so, please include your name, phone number and email.

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Section One: Demographics

1. In which county is your school located?
 - a. DuPage County
 - b. Lake County
 - c. Other:
 2. How many years have you been the principal at your current school?
 3. How many years have you been an administrator (at any school)?
 4. Approximately how many students attend your school?
 5. What grades does your school serve?
 6. Gender:
-

Section Two: Your Role As Building Principal

7. How would you describe your leadership style in your building?
 8. What have your experiences been with mandated reporting?
 9. How has the way you have approached mandated reporting changed since you first became an administrator?
 10. If you could give one piece of advice to a new building principal about implementing policies regarding mandated reporting, what would it be?
-

Section Three: Policies and Procedures in Your School Building

11. What types of professional development are most frequently provided at your school and why are those specifically needed?
12. Have you also included professional development in child maltreatment detection and mandated reporting? Why or why not?

13. What is your general feel of the knowledge level of your school professionals on child maltreatment and mandated reporting? Why do you think they are at that level?
14. Are specific steps expected of your staff when they suspect child maltreatment of a student at your school? If so, please describe them. (i.e. Abuse is suspected by teacher, teacher goes to principal to make sure okay suspicion is enough to make report, report is made by teacher)
15. Is the above-written mandated reporting procedure explicitly written somewhere? If so, where? If not, where would it be appropriate for it to be written?
16. What do you think the barriers to mandated reporting are for individuals in your school? (i.e. Staff do not have a lot of training on the subject of child maltreatment or mandated reporting, emotionally uncomfortable with the topic, etc.)

Section Four: Components Contributing to Strong Mandated Reporting Structures

17. Have you had any experiences with mandated reporting at any point that you felt were especially successful? Why do you think they were they successful and what were the generalities of the situation?
 18. These situations can be very difficult. Please describe situations involving mandated reporting that were not so successful.
 19. What pieces do you think contribute to strong mandated reporting structures?
-

APPENDIX C
INITIAL EMAIL TO BUILDING PRINCIPALS

Dear Principal,

As a doctoral candidate at Loyola University Chicago, I am conducting research for my dissertation entitled, *Building a Climate that Supports and Protects Mandated Reporters: School Principals and Their Perceived Roles and Policies and Procedures in K-8 Schools*. The purpose of this study is to gain a snapshot of how mandated reporting is being dealt with at varying schools. As a building principal you are in a unique and pivotal position in the school and this research study seeks to understand how school staff are working as mandated reporters.

Your voluntary participation will provide an opportunity for your voice to be added to the discussion of other principals determining how to move forward to better protect and support the mandated reporters in the school buildings. There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. The IP addresses will be suppressed and no identifying information will appear in the study.

Please consider filling out this online questionnaire: (WEB ADDRESS)

If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.

I would ask that you complete the online questionnaire by _____. If you do not wish to participate, you need not respond.

If you have questions about this study, please feel welcome to contact me at (773) 403-2988. You may also contact Dr. David Shriberg, my dissertation director at Loyola University at _____ if you have any questions or concerns about the validity of this study. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Compliance Manager in Loyola's Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Thank you for your time.

Best,

Gina Bartucci

APPENDIX D
REMINDER EMAIL

Greetings!

As a doctoral candidate at Loyola University Chicago, I am conducting research for my dissertation entitled, *Building a Climate that Supports and Protects Mandated Reporters: School Principals and Their Perceived Roles and Policies and Procedures in K-8 Schools*. The purpose of my study is to identify what role principals have in mandated reporting and how they believe principals can support and protect the other mandated reporters in the school building.

If you have already completed and returned the Questionnaire, Building Principal Mandated Reporting Questionnaire, that was emailed to you, thank you. If not, please complete the Questionnaire online at the following website: _____.

Sincerely,

Gina Bartucci

APPENDIX E
CONSENT FOR INTERVIEW WITH PRINCIPALS

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Project Title: Building a Climate that Supports and Protects Mandated Reporters:
School Principals and Their Perceived Roles and Policies and Procedures
in K-8 Schools in DuPage and Lake Counties

Researcher(s): Gina Bartucci, M.Ed.

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. David Shriberg

Introduction:

You are being asked to take part in a research study being conducted by Gina Bartucci for a dissertation under the supervision of Dr. David Shriberg in the Department of Education at Loyola University of Chicago.

You are being asked to participate because as a building principal you are in a unique and pivotal position in the school and this research study seeks to understand how schools are working as mandated reporters.

Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before deciding whether to participate in the study.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to seek to understand building principal's perceptions of their role in the school in terms of mandated reporting and also to determine any policies or procedures that exist in the schools that support mandated reporting.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in an interview regarding mandated reporting and your role as principal in the school. Additionally, you will be asked about experiences that have felt particularly successful and the specifics of those experiences.

Risks/Benefits:

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits to you from participation, but your responses may contribute to the growing body of knowledge of how to best approach child maltreatment detection and mandated reporting.

Confidentiality:

- Information gathered will be confidential. No identifiable information (i.e. name or school) will be included on the interview protocol nor will it be able to be tied back to the participant. Protocols will be given a number and will be coded by that number.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Even if you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any question or to withdraw from participation at any time without penalty

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions about this research project or interview, feel free to contact Gina Bartucci at (773) 403-2988 or the faculty sponsor, Dr. David Shribert at (312) 915-7087.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Loyola University Office of Research Services at (773) 508-2689.

Statement of Consent:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above, have had an opportunity to ask questions, and agree to participate in this research study. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

APPENDIX F

EMAIL TO INTERVIEWEES FOR MEMBER-CHECK

Dear _____,

Thank you again so much for taking the time to interview with me. It was such a pleasure speaking with you.

Attached please find my write-up of our conversation. I hope I captured your comments accurately, but please let me know if you would like to see any changes in the document. If you have changes, please enter them in Track Changes and send the document back to me by _____. If you do not email the document back to me by that date, I will assume I captured your comments accurately and you have no changes.

Thank you again!!

Best,

Gina Bartucci

APPENDIX G
SURVEY QUESTIONS INCLUDED UNDER INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER
AND MANDATED REPORTER SUPPORTS CONSTRUCTS

**QUESTIONS INCLUDED UNDER INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER AND
MANDATED REPORTER SUPPORTS CONSTRUCTS**

Instructional Leader

1. Specific district policies are clearly identified in a user-friendly manner for school staff and faculty.
2. School staff and faculty appear to have strong bonds and good camaraderie among each other.
3. There is a straightforward and effective communication process for me to use when I need to inform the staff of a system-wide change in policy/procedure concerning student safety.
4. The teachers appear to have a shared commitment to the overall well-being of students in the school (including social, emotional and academic).
5. The school mission was created collaboratively with teachers and school staff.
6. The building strategic plan was created in part by using the shared vision of the faculty and school staff.

Mandated Reporter Supports

1. As principal, I have explicitly informed all faculty and school staff the vital importance of the role of the mandated reporter.
2. As principal, I have explicitly communicated the specific responsibilities of the faculty and staff as mandated reporters.
3. As principal, I have provided access to Professional Development in my school building the area of child maltreatment detection and/or mandated reporting.
4. As principal, I have encouraged faculty and staff explicitly to attend outside Professional Development in the area of child maltreatment detection and/or mandated reporting.
5. As principal, I have actively supported school staff when they are unsure how to proceed as mandated reporters.
6. As principal, I have provided “expert” advice to my faculty and staff when they had specific questions and/or provided them resources to obtain specific information if I did not know the answers.

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VITA

Gina Bartucci earned her Ph.D. in School Psychology from Loyola University Chicago in 2012. She is interested in research in violence prevention and early intervention for children experiencing maltreatment. Gina has been involved as a research assistant on the Chicagoland Partnership for English Language Learners (CPELL) grant, which worked with parents, school faculty and staff and administrators to better support English Language Learners in the schools, and as a research assistant on the Character Education: Application of Positive Behavior Supports grant, which worked with high schools to implement four areas of character education. Currently, Gina is working with adolescent males with harmful sexual behaviors and behavioral disorders. She plans to consult with administrators and teams to ensure that schools are safe spaces for all faculty, staff and students.