

The University of Nevada, Reno

**Police and Social Worker Perceptions of Child Maltreatment: An Examination
through the Context of the Defund the Police Movements**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts in Criminal Justice

by

Emily M. Ruff

Dr. Emily R. Berthelot/Thesis Advisor

May 2022

© Copyright by Emily M. Francom 2022

All Rights Reserved



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

We recommend that the thesis
prepared under our supervision by

entitled

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Advisor

Committee Member

Graduate School Representative

David W. Zeh, Ph.D., Dean
Graduate School

Abstract

Over the past several years there has been a shift in the conceptualization of what police work ought to consist of, with some recent social movements such as “defund the police” arguing that social workers are better equipped to handle various societal issues such as homelessness, petty crime, mental health crises, and issues of family dysfunction. Despite this recent call for the reallocation of funds, there has not been a thorough analysis of how social workers and police officers *perceive* different behaviors and societal issues, and how their perceptions may inform their decision-making and subsequent action or inaction.

Prior research has found that extralegal factors such as race, gender, demeanor, and personal characteristics of the perpetrator and victim have been shown to influence the outcome of police investigations. Law enforcement officers also have varying views regarding what qualifies as child maltreatment and have conflicting views as to what should constitute an arrestable offense. Similar findings have been found in the field of social work, as social workers have not been found to have uniform views regarding child maltreatment and have also been shown to make decisions based on extralegal factors such as race. However, other research has shown that consensus among the family and professional team and social worker experience has been shown to impact decision-making.

Advocates of social movements such as defund the police have argued that social workers are better equipped to respond to various societal issues such as mental health, homelessness, and family issues because of their nuanced and solution-based approach,

in contrast with the punitive approach often associated with law enforcement. Existing research has not settled the question of how social workers and law enforcement officers perceive behaviors similarly or differently—and thus has not settled which field would be better at handling specific complex issues.

The study consisted of an online survey, a semi structured interview, and an online exit survey. Descriptive statistics, principal component analyses, and independent samples t-tests were used to analyze quantitative data. Results indicated that there is a significant difference between the perceived relevancy of morality in child maltreatment investigations between law enforcement officers and social workers. Thematic analysis of the semi structured interviews also revealed some differences between law enforcement and social worker perceptions for child maltreatment cases. Policy implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Dedication

In dedication to the little guy growing with me. I haven't met you yet, but this work and all of my accomplishments are for you.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, mentor, and friend, Dr. Berthelot. I would have been lost without your guidance, thoughtfulness, and hours dedicated to this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Holbrook and Dr. Marsh for their support and advice. I could not have done this without you all.

An expression of gratitude is also due for my husband for his love, support, and encouragement throughout this process. I am so lucky to have you.

Table of Contents

Police and Social Worker Perceptions of Child Maltreatment: An Examination through the Context of the Defund the Police Movements	1
Literature Review.....	4
Background - History of Child Welfare	4
Criminalization of Child Welfare.....	6
Police Perceptions and Decision-making.....	9
Social Worker Perceptions and Decision-making.....	11
Defund the Police Movements	12
Common Misconceptions	12
Police Involvement in Social Issues: Critiques	14
Criminalization of Noncriminal issues	15
Reallocation as a Solution	17
Theoretical Foundations.....	20
Heuristic Theory of Perception and Decision-making.....	20
Methods.....	24
Hypothesis	24
Data and Sample.....	24
Data Collection	25
Changes to Survey Design after Pilot Phase	33
Data Analysis and Results	35
Survey Analysis.....	35
Descriptive Statistics	35
Principal Component Analysis (PCA).....	40
Independent Samples T-Tests.....	42
Semi-Structured Interview Analysis	47
Important Factors During an Investigation.....	50
Law Enforcement Response to Child Maltreatment.....	51
Social Worker Response to Child Maltreatment	52
Reallocation of Resources from Law Enforcement to Social Services	52

Discussion	54
Quantitative Data.....	55
Qualitative Data.....	58
Directions for Future Research.....	61
Limitations	63
Conclusion.....	64
References.....	67
APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENTS.....	82
APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW INSTRUMENTS.....	90
APPENDIX C: EXIT SURVEY INSTRUMENTS.....	92

List of Tables

Table 1	29
Table 2	36
Table 3	36
Table 4	37
Table 5	37
Table 6	38
Table 7	38
Table 8	39
Table 9	39
Table 10	41
Table 11	43
Table 12	47
Table 13	49
Table 14	58

Police and Social Worker Perceptions of Child Maltreatment: An Examination through the Context of the Defund the Police Movements

Over the past several years there has been a shift in the conceptualization of what police work ought to consist of. Some have made calls to “defund the police” and reallocate police funds to social service programs to address complex societal issues. Advocates of police reform have argued that various societal issues such as homelessness, petty crime, mental health crises, and issues of family dysfunction should be addressed with social programs rather than law enforcement (Jacobs et al., 2020). Despite this recent call for the reallocation of funds, there has not been a thorough analysis of how social workers and police officers *perceive* different behaviors and societal issues, and how their perceptions may inform their decision-making and subsequent action or inaction. There is often an assumption that social workers and social services agencies are better equipped to handle certain societal issues, but research in support of this claim is lacking. To understand the benefits and drawbacks of reallocating resources from police departments to social services agencies, there must first be an understanding of how individual actors within each agency perceive and react to the societal issues they are meant to address. Without data informed decision-making regarding how each agency operates and responds to the issues they may be tasked to resolve, policy makers and government actors cannot make sound decisions.

Currently, it is not routine practice for law enforcement agencies and social workers to work collaboratively, nor is reallocation from police funds to social services agencies particularly widespread. As a result, existing research opportunities to examine

how police officers and social workers tackle issues similarly or differently remain limited. However, one societal issue that police officers and social workers routinely attempt to address is child maltreatment. Police officers regularly respond to calls of child maltreatment, and child welfare social workers dedicate their careers to addressing child maltreatment in their communities. Frequently, police officers and social workers may respond to cases together (Cross et al., 2005). Because child maltreatment is a societal issue that is already tackled jointly and has involvement from both agencies, it provides for a unique examination of how the issue is perceived differently or similarly by each agency.

The purpose of the present study is to understand how law enforcement officers and social workers perceive behaviors related to child maltreatment, and to understand what implications the results have for recent calls to defund the police. In other words, to what degree do social workers and law enforcement officers share perceptions of child abuse and neglect, and how do social workers and law enforcement officers differ in their perceptions of child abuse and neglect?

The aim of this study was to explore what perceptions of behaviors were relevant to law enforcement officers and social workers in child maltreatment cases, specifically through the lens of recent discussion surrounding defunding the police. The study consisted of an online survey, a semi structured interview, and an online exit survey. Descriptive statistics were analyzed to discover any differences between populations. A principal component analysis was completed to determine what factors were relevant to law enforcement officers and social workers when making decisions in child

maltreatment cases. Eight child maltreatment/abuse relevancy factors were discovered: severity, vulnerability, demeanor, intoxication, frequency, morality, deterrence, and criminality. An independent samples t-test was used to compare factor ratings between law enforcement officers and social workers.

Results of quantitative analysis of survey data indicated that there is no significant difference between law enforcement and social worker perceptions of child maltreatment related to the severity, vulnerability, demeanor, intoxication, frequency, deterrence, and criminality child maltreatment relevancy factors identified during the principal component analysis. However, there is a significant difference between the perceived relevancy of morality in child maltreatment investigations between law enforcement officers and social workers. Thematic analysis of the semi structured interviews also revealed some differences between law enforcement and social worker perceptions for child maltreatment cases. Broadly, both law enforcement officers and social workers viewed the direct circumstances of maltreatment as being important to their investigation. Most social workers interviewed expressed that there are circumstances in which a law enforcement response to child maltreatment can be unwarranted or inappropriate, drawing on personal experience of escalation in the field and a perceived lack of training or skill for law enforcement officers to handle some complex issues. None of the law enforcement officers interviewed expressed an opinion that a social worker's response to child maltreatment can be unwarranted or inappropriate, while most social workers disagreed, citing issues of false reports (pertaining to custodial issues between caregivers or blatantly false reports). In regard to discussions around reallocation of resources, a majority of both law enforcement officers and social workers expressed disagreement

with reallocation of police funds to social services agencies, citing issues such as increased problems for law enforcement in responding to crime, and decreased funding for training. However, nearly half of law enforcement officers and social workers discussed the perceived benefit of collaboration between social services and law enforcement agencies, with some envisioning a transformation of law enforcement response to always include collaboration with social workers. Policy implications and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Literature Review

Background - History of Child Welfare

To understand the context of social workers and law enforcement officers working together to address the issue of child maltreatment, a historical review of the development of the child welfare system is useful. Broadly, the development of the child welfare field resulted out of a societal desire to protect children from abuse and neglect. In 1974, The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act was passed, which defined child maltreatment as “any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker, which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse, or exploitation, or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm” (Font & Maguire-Jack, 2020). The definition provided in the 1974 Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act is similar to how individual states across the nation have since defined child maltreatment, although it is worthy to note that there is not a single standard definition of child maltreatment used across the US (Abrams, 2013). Lawmakers in the 1970s codified

child protection into law as research had begun to illustrate the profound negative effects that child maltreatment could cause. Estimates of the prevalence of child maltreatment vary, but data suggest that 38.1% of children from birth to age 18 will experience some form of child maltreatment (i.e., neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, etc.) (Font & Maguire-Jack, 2020). Child maltreatment is frequently organized into categories of child abuse and neglect. While child abuse is frequently perceived as being more severe, child neglect is the most common form of child maltreatment and can cause similar—if not worse—harm than forms of abuse (Finkelhor et al., 2014; Stoltenborgh et al., 2013).

Children who experience maltreatment are more likely to experience depression, delinquency, and have lower levels of self-esteem (Arata et al., 2005), in addition to being more likely to perpetrate acts of violence against their partners in the future (Herrenkohl & Jung, 2016). Research has also shown that childhood maltreatment also results in a decreased ability to properly process and recognize emotions in others (Young & Widom, 2014), and a 66% increase in risk of teen pregnancy for adolescent girls (Garwood et al., 2015). Regarding the effects of childhood abuse, research has shown that men who have experienced childhood sexual abuse commonly experience long term effects of anger, self-harming behaviors, and suicidal ideation (O’Leary et al., 2017). Additionally, physical abuse has been found to be a predictor of adult health outcomes related to weight, with those experiencing physical abuse during childhood being significantly more likely to have a higher BMI in comparison to adults who did not experience childhood physical abuse (Bentley & Widom, 2009).

Children who specifically experience neglect are more likely to experience anxious attachments to others, have lower IQ scores and difficulty reading later on in life, are four times more likely to develop a personality disorder, are more likely to engage in violent behavior, and are more likely to experience poor emotional regulation skills, among a plethora of other negative consequences (Hildyard & Wolfe, 2002).

Criminalization of Child Welfare

As child maltreatment has garnered more attention, child welfare agencies have increasingly involved law enforcement agencies in investigations of child maltreatment. In addition to social workers involving law enforcement officers in investigations of child abuse and neglect, law enforcement officers also frequently encounter cases of child maltreatment during their regular duties, as many significant instances of child maltreatment are reported directly to law enforcement agencies instead of to social services agencies. Moreover, many emergency situations, such as a parent being pulled over for a DUI with a child in the car, involve a law enforcement response. As such, law enforcement involvement in child maltreatment cases has become increasingly common and routine (Tonmyr & Gonzalez, 2015).

While it is now commonplace, child maltreatment was not always criminalized by the state. Beginning in the 1980s, “parental responsibility” laws began to arise. Parental responsibility laws began to criminalize certain parental behaviors, such as failing to supervise one’s child properly (Humm, 1991). This push towards criminalization was a result of two societal perceptions. First, there was a widespread perception that the state was not effectively containing “juvenile lawlessness”—such as juvenile gang activity—

seriously enough. Second, there was a desire to address the “welfare of children who are victims of violence and abuse” (Humm, 1991). Initially, child abuse cases such as physical abuse and sexual abuse were the focus of public concern. However, the singular focus on child abuse cases then morphed into a concern about perceived parental shortcomings, such as failing to act or failing to protect in select situations. These perceptions then began to be codified into state law.

One of the first impactful court rulings was that of *State V. Williquette*, where the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that failing to protect one’s child from abuse can be a criminal offense. The ruling established a significant expansion of the criminalization of parental behavior, as it set legal precedent for parental behaviors to be criminalized (Humm, 1991). The Wisconsin Supreme Court had set the precedent that behaviors of action—such as striking one’s child—could be criminalized in addition to behaviors of *inaction*, such as failing to supervise one’s child, failing to protect a child from domestic violence, and failing to maintain a clean environment for the child.

As a result of this paradigm shift, states have slowly begun to move towards a more punitive response in addressing the issue of child maltreatment. Additionally, as “tough on crime” political narratives became prominent the field of child welfare was impacted. Sensationalized cases of child maltreatment created a moral panic, and an increased public desire to begin arresting parents and caregivers for child maltreatment arose (Vreeland, 2000). Instead of a desire to assist families with services, there was a widespread perception that punishing parental behavior was the best way to deter and prevent child maltreatment. Despite the fact that child maltreatment rates were not

increasing, arrest rates for child maltreatment skyrocketed. In New York alone, there has been a 60% increase in child endangerment arrests since 1995 (Vreeland, 2000). Police policy also began to reflect the changing societal perceptions and demand that officers make arrests for child maltreatment. In some areas of New York, officers are explicitly directed to make an arrest for child endangerment if they feel they have probable cause to do so (Vreeland, 2000). Currently, roughly a quarter of child maltreatment cases that are being investigated by social workers are also jointly investigated by law enforcement officers, with sexual and physical abuse cases being the most common forms of maltreatment that have a joint response. Social workers have also increasingly begun to refer cases to law enforcement for criminal investigation, especially when they perceive a greater threat of harm to the children in question (Cross et al., 2015).

Interestingly, criminalization has not been found to reduce the occurrence of child maltreatment categorically. Some literature has shown that making child maltreatment illegal does not in fact reduce or deter the behavior. One study of driving under the influence (DUI) laws and child endangerment laws found no significant impact on their ability to reduce child fatalities regarding drinking incidents (Kelley-Baker & Romano, 2016). In other words, making it illegal to drink and drive with one's child does not reduce the likelihood that it deters the behavior. Police presence in child maltreatment cases has also been complicated by the fact that issues of police decision-making and discretion are present during investigations in addition to there being variation in how law enforcement officers perceive factors related to child maltreatment (Baiden et al., 2017; Heinonen & Ellonen, 2016).

Police Perceptions and Decision-making

Police perception—specifically police perception of certain behaviors—has consistently shown to influence police decision-making in the field (Baiden et al., 2017; El Sayed et al., 2020; Heinonen & Ellonen, 2016; Mellor & Deering, 2010; Tasca et al., 2013; Willis & Wells, 1988).

Unfortunately, factors that have been found to be relevant to law enforcement decision-making are not always directly tied to the facts of the case or the investigation. For example, literature has shown that extralegal factors such as age, gender, race, and demeanor influence how police officers make decisions (Lundman, 1994; Waaland & Keeley, 1985). Research has also shown that police discretion often involves disproportionate use of force against minority community members, that there is often widespread variation in decision-making around deciding to arrest a member of the community, and that there is consistent over-policing of minorities and minority communities (Alexander & West, 2012; Geller & Fagan, 2010; Gelman et al., 2007; Kramer & Remster, 2018; Meares 2014; Ross, 2015). While Blacks and Whites commit crimes at similar rates, one study estimated that Blacks are up to 7 times more likely to be arrested for a crime (Schleiden et al., 2020), and 2.5 times more likely to be stopped by police than their White counterparts (Gelman et al., 2007). Demeanor has also been shown to have a significant impact on discretion, with citizens who are argumentative or combative being significantly more likely to be arrested (Johnson, 2017). Personal characteristics of the victim also impact law enforcement perceptions of the victim's credibility during investigations. In one study examining sexual assault cases, factors

such as drug use by the victim were shown to influence how seriously or credible an officer believed the allegations were (Tasca et al., 2013). Even personal characteristics of the officer themselves have been shown to influence decision-making in the field, with gender, rank, age, and years of experience of the officer being influential factors in their perception of a crime (Tasca et al., 2013). In a study of law enforcement perception of domestic violence cases, personal characteristics of the responding officer such as their gender, rank, age, and years of experience were shown to influence how they perceived intimate partner violence (El Sayed et al., 2020).

With specific regard to law enforcement involvement in child maltreatment cases, there is some—albeit limited—research indicating that certain characteristics and behaviors are especially important to law enforcement officers when determining whether a crime occurred. For example, research has shown that perpetrators who are male, 41 years or older, not the caregiver, and who are unemployed are more likely to receive formal charges when they are the subject of a child abuse investigation (Baiden et al., 2017). Female perpetrators of sexual abuse of children are also viewed more leniently than their male counterparts (Mellor & Deering, 2010). Other research has indicated that law enforcement officers have varying views as to what constitutes child maltreatment. Heinonen and Ellonen (2016) indicated that law enforcement officers view excessive discipline very differently and often have conflicting views as to what ought to constitute an arrestable offense. Despite the training law enforcement officers receive, there is still significant variation in how police officers perceive threats to children.

Social Worker Perceptions and Decision-making

Similar to research on law enforcement officers, research has also indicated that social workers do not have uniform or consistent views regarding child maltreatment, and decision-making in child maltreatment cases can often be influenced by factors that may seem unrelated to the facts of the case. In their systematic review of the literature on factors that determine decision-making in child protection investigations, Lauritzen et al. (2018) found that decision-making in child maltreatment cases was often influenced by characteristics of the case, the social worker, the organization, and other external factors. Robichaud et al. (2020) found that social workers possess discretion in decision-making and often make decisions in child maltreatment cases based upon personal preference, values, biases, and attitudes. Sadly, but not surprisingly, many of the same issues in policing regarding race and racism are present in the social work field, yet have not historically gained the proper attention they deserve. There are few academic papers written on the topic, and a general lack of attention to the issue as a whole (McElveen & Cramer, 2003). Race has been found to be associated with the closure status of cases and with placement decisions, as cases involving minorities are less likely to be referred for closure, and minority children are overrepresented in placements outside the home in the United States (Lauritzen et al., 2018; Gourdine, 2019) despite the fact that child abuse occurs at relatively constant rates once poverty is controlled (Drake & Jonson-Reid, 2011). Black families are also more likely to be assigned for formal investigations within child welfare agencies, as opposed to informal family assessments (Semanchin Jones, 2014).

Research by Stokes and Schmidt (2012) has shown that personal characteristics of the social worker such as their age, gender, job satisfaction, degree, and current social work role had a significant impact on their rating of the importance of home visits and contact hours with clients during their investigations. However, they also found that when making decisions about risk and service provisions in a case, social workers tended to focus more on the objective facts at hand. It has also been found social workers tend to perceive behaviors that have been formally criminalized as unacceptable, highlighting the often-overlapping work of social workers and law enforcement officers (Christopherson, 1998). Other factors such as workloads, a desired goal to have agreement in decision-making, and social worker experience have also been found to be relevant to social workers in child maltreatment cases. Nyathi (2018) found that social workers discretionally avoided certain high stakes decisions or actions and instead preferred to work on mundane or less intense tasks when they were feeling particularly overwhelmed, and that social workers frequently viewed consensus among the family and professional team as important in decision-making. Social worker experience has also been shown to impact how they may perceive future maltreatment cases, specifically in regard to perceptions of risk in child maltreatment cases (Nyathi, 2016)

Defund the Police Movements

Common Misconceptions

In the present study, an analysis of social worker and law enforcement opinions related to defund the police movements is analyzed. However, it should be noted for purposes of clarification that perceptions about what the defund the police movements

call for vary. As such, a differentiation between societal movements related to police reform or abolition is necessary for context.

Broadly, there are three camps that call for change to be made to how policing occurs in the United States. The three camps are abolitionists, reformists, and supporters of justice investment. Those who argue for abolishment argue that the framework for policing is so intertwined with systemic racism, bias, and violence that the structure of policing must be abolished in its entirety. This camp is not to be confused with “defund the police” movements, which do not call for outright abolition. Abolitionists often believe that the theoretical foundation for fighting crime with punishment is problematic and unsound, and thus should be deconstructed in its entirety as they argue it cannot be reformed (Cobbina-Dungy & Jones-Brown, 2021).

Alternatively, reformists argue that widespread changes regarding how policing is carried out in the United States can be made, such as increasing the amount of training and education that law enforcement officers receive, modifying laws that exacerbate the punishment many receive as a part of the “carceral state”, and implementing changes in the overall framework of how policing is carried out in order to reduce the psychological, racial, and financial burden that families are faced with as a result of incarceration (Brown & Schept, 2017). Others point specifically to police reform as a method to reduce negative and biased community interactions with the police, such as requiring police departments to publicly disclose all officer involved shootings, implementing a national standard for training and procedures across police departments in the United States (as a national standard does not currently exist), requiring all officers to be trained in data

informed de-escalation techniques, and implementing community review boards to review excessive force complaints, among many other suggestions for improving the practice of police work (Berthelot & Morrow, 2020).

The third camp of police change involves calls to reallocate police resources to other sources of social investment, otherwise referred to as “justice investment”. One of the primary goals of reallocation is to reduce the interaction between the public and the criminal justice system, with some noting the lack of efficacy the current criminal justice system in the United States has in reducing or preventing crime (Cobbina-Dungy & Jones-Brown, 2021). For the purposes of this study, “defund the police” movements are akin to reallocation movements arguing for a reinvestment in social services. It should be noted that defund the police movements are commonly misinterpreted as abolitionist movements, which are not the same.

Police Involvement in Social Issues: Critiques

As law enforcement has become increasingly involved in handling various societal issues such as child maltreatment, homelessness, and mental health, critics have made clear that their response is not effective or ideal. While it is a common expectation across the United States that law enforcement officers will respond to mental health calls or calls regarding those homeless on the streets, law enforcement officers have not been provided the adequate theoretical framework, training, or education necessary to tackle these issues (Patterson & Swan, 2019). As a result, many police encounters have made matters worse and subsequently fostered distrust in vulnerable communities, such as those with mental illnesses or who come from minority communities (Thompson &

Kahn, 2016). In recent years publicized instances of police brutality, unnecessary escalation by police, and systemic racism have brought about impassioned cries to reallocate police funding to various social services programs (Jacobs et al., 2020). This has become the forefront of national discussion, as Americans have witnessed people of color such as Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Michael Brown, and a multitude of others be killed at the hands of police.

Criminalization of Noncriminal issues

In addition to arguments suggesting law enforcement is ill equipped to handle many societal issues, others have argued that the criminalization of those issues is not only an ineffective response to them, but an inappropriate response. Many issues such as mental health, homelessness, and child maltreatment have involved law enforcement responses, but have not been addressed or remedied. Those with mental illnesses have an extremely high recidivism rate, with roughly 53% of inmates with significant mental health diagnoses reoffending within one year of their original arrest, illustrating the lack of efficacy around law enforcement responses to the issue (Hirschtritt & Binder, 2017). Incarceration has also been found to exacerbate and worsen the mental health conditions for inmates (Harner & Riley, 2013). Law enforcement responses to issues of homelessness have also been found to be ineffective, as a majority of those experiencing homelessness report that during interactions with law enforcement officers they are primarily told to “move along” and are threatened with arrest or citation for using shelter in public areas, which does nothing to address or prevent the underlying causes of

homelessness (Robinson, 2019). In fact, incarceration has been found to increase one's risk of becoming homeless (Moschion & Johnson, 2019).

The criminalization of child maltreatment is no exception, as it has widespread effects that can last generations (Lippke, 2017). When a caregiver is arrested for child maltreatment, the arrest can cause a domino effect of negative consequences for the family unit—exacerbating the struggles the family is already experiencing (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999). The incarceration of a single parent has been shown to decrease the family's income, often resulting in the children in the home experiencing higher levels of poverty. This impact is also felt disproportionately by Black children (Raphael, 2011). Studies have also found that children whose parents experience incarceration are more likely to offend later on in life (Andersen, 2016; Murray et al., 2007). Moreover, parental incarceration is also associated with a decrease in school performance for children (Andersen, 2016). Many societal issues are also born out of matters related to poverty and limited access to resources such as substance abuse or mental health treatment, which critics argue are not solved by law enforcement involvement. For example, children in rural areas are more likely to be left home alone due to limited access to childcare or family centers, and data show that issues such as untreated mental health or substance abuse related problems are predictive of one's ability to properly supervise their children (Carter & Myers, 2008; Freisthler et al., 2020). Law enforcement involvement and subsequent incarceration has been shown to worsen these issues (Cooke, 2005; Huebner, 2005).

In sum, many advocates of the defund the police movement argue that the criminalization of chronic and pervasive societal issues such as homelessness, child maltreatment, or untreated mental health are not better addressed via punitive methods, but rather by rehabilitative or service-based ones. Even some police officers have recognized that criminalization is not always the best response. In some cases, they will opt not to lay charges in cases of child maltreatment, because they recognize that the issue may be better dealt with by social service agencies (Lindsey, 2011). It is also noteworthy to consider the structure of the courts in which the behavior is adjudicated. Criminal courts are inherently punitive, whereas family or specialty courts tend to focus on rehabilitation (Vreeland, 2000).

Reallocation as a Solution

Proposed solutions to the issue of ineffective, biased, and aggressive policing vary. Some critics argue for the complete abolishment of law enforcement, others argue for a reform in law enforcement, and others suggest transformation is what is needed. Those who argue for complete abolition of law enforcement suggest that the entity of law enforcement as it stands now cannot be reformed in any meaningful way as issues of oppression, violence, over policing of minorities, and punishment are woven into the fabric of its being (Cobbina-Dungy & Jones-Brown, 2021). Those who argue for police reform contend that complete abolition is unrealistic, and the implementation of more training and other reform programs can instead provide for a solution to the current issues policing is experiencing in the United States. Others have also argued for more formalized training of police officers to reduce biased police behaviors. However,

increased education and training for law enforcement officers has been shown to have mixed results, sometimes resulting in a greater frequency of police officers using formalized intervention such as arrest instead of more reasonable informal responses (Bolger et al., 2019). Those who back reform have also supported stricter accountability in police departments to weed out the “bad apples” and to decrease instances of unnecessary escalation or biased policing (Bloom & Labovich, 2020).

Advocates who call for transformation of law enforcement agencies have often supported reallocation of police funds to social services agencies, arguing that social services programs provide for a more effective response to societal issues, as they will decrease instances of brutality and allow for a rehabilitative rather than a punitive response. It has also been suggested that the field of social work should aim not to involve law enforcement in investigations at all, as doing so creates a “carceral social work” that further contributes to issues of social control and white supremacy. Instead, a redistribution of financial resources is suggested in order to reinvest in social welfare and revamp social programs that do not utilize the police (Jacobs et al., 2020).

In recent years, The Black Lives Matter movement has been a pioneer in advocating for reallocating funds from police departments to social services programs. Their calls for monetary reallocation have been encompassed in political chants and protests, as countless Americans have been heard yelling out in the streets “defund the police!” (Black Lives Matter, 2020). Critics have pointed out that while reallocation of law enforcement budgets may seem controversial, the issue becomes less provocative when actual law enforcement budgets are analyzed. Law enforcement budgets are often

comprised of millions of dollars, with more than \$348 billion dollars spent annually on law enforcement services in the US—resulting in an astounding \$995 million dollars spent per day (Defund the Police, 2021). And while reallocation of resources has not been particularly widespread, there have been some recent examples across the nation of various cities choosing to reallocate police resources from law enforcement agencies to other social programs. In 2020 alone, the Baltimore City Council approved a \$22.4 million dollar budget cut from their local law enforcement agency, the Portland City Council cut \$15 million from their police budget and reallocated \$5 million of the budget for a new program to address homelessness in the community, Philadelphia reallocated \$14 million of their police budget to social programs such as affordable housing, the city council in Hartford, Connecticut reallocated \$2 million of their police budget, and the city of Seattle cut 10% of their police budget (Kight & Kim, 2020). Additionally, there is some research suggesting increased funding to social programs may help address underlying societal issues such as homelessness, mental illness, and child abuse and neglect. Ports et al. (2018) found that increasing access to housing assistance may decrease local child abuse and neglect rates, although the authors acknowledged further research was needed. Curative interventions such as improving parent confidence levels, addressing parental mental health issues, and providing social and emotional support to parents have also been found to have a significant impact on improving child wellbeing (van der Put et al., 2018). Barth (2009) pointed out that many of the underlying issues that result in child maltreatment are matters that can be mitigated with access to services. Specifically, many of the underlying issues of child maltreatment relate to parental substance use, mental health, domestic violence in the home, or child behavior problems.

In the present study, the issue of reallocation of resources is examined in order to understand the degree to which social workers and law enforcement officers support or disagree with the philosophy of reallocating resources from law enforcement agencies to social services agencies, and to understand the nuances behind their thinking and rationales. While reallocation has frequently been called upon, there is no existing literature examining how law enforcement officers and social workers who have experience working jointly perceive the idea. Child maltreatment allows for a unique examination of perspectives, as social workers and law enforcement officers who work child maltreatment cases often have a unique understanding of the benefits and drawbacks each field may have in their responses and approaches to the issue, as the issue is already tackled collaboratively.

Theoretical Foundations

Heuristic Theory of Perception and Decision-making

While law enforcement and social worker decision-making and perception is often influenced by extralegal factors or factors that seem unrelated to child maltreatment cases, some have drawn attention to the fact that some conditions of the social work practice in fact encourage decision-making based on intuition, as there is often a lack of structure and guidance around decision-making in select areas (Wallander & Molander, 2014). And while decision and judgements based upon logic and deliberate choice have often been thought to be superior, Kruglanski and Gigerenzer (2011) argued that decisions based upon intuition or heuristics can be equally as useful and accurate.

Heuristic based decisions are decisions that are made based on rules of thumb or shortcuts. They are often intuitive choices or judgements that are made quickly, and often without overt recognition of the thought process behind them. While models of law enforcement and social worker decision-making are not plentiful, the recent development of the heuristic model of decision-making can be applied and used to explain the complexity and context with which social workers and law enforcement officers make decisions. As Taylor (2017) defines it, “heuristic models of decision-making are based on the principle that human beings—including professionals—may act rationally even if they do not weigh up all the factors according to the logic of an expected utility model” (p. 1046).

As Brighton and Gigerenzer (2015) state, the use of heuristics in the context of decision-making, broadly speaking, focuses on the idea that humans and animals often use “surprisingly simple strategies to make accurate inferences in uncertain environments.” Heuristic based decisions can be contrasted with deliberate, actuarial forms of decision-making that are often based on formal tools or statistical analysis. In contrast to heuristic based decisions, actuarial decisions are often analytical and carefully thought out (Taylor, 2017). As decision-making processes and professional judgment processes have been studied, researchers have discovered that many professionals rely on a combination of intuitive and actuarial decision-making processes, with social workers being no exception. While personal discretion has been found to be used by both social workers and law enforcement officers, analytical and logical decision-making processes are also utilized. In one study, social workers were found to be aware of the difference in

phenomena regarding their decision-making, with some explaining that the discretion to use intuitive or analytical judgements was not used arbitrarily, but was rather based on their experience, among other factors (Nyathi, 2018). Research has also shown that law enforcement officers assess cases differently based upon their level of experience and training in the area, suggesting not all decisions are based simply upon biases and knee jerk responses, but rather based upon familiarity and experience in the specified subject area (Robinson et al., 2018).

While there are indeed times in which law enforcement officers and social workers may use specific tools to guide their decision-making (such as reference to specific legal statutes, or risk assessment tools used to calculate relatively objective assessments of risk), law enforcement officers and social workers are often left to make quick decisions in the field based on experience and knowledge they have attained through previous encounters and through education. While working a domestic violence case, it would not be unreasonable for law enforcement officers and social workers to use prior experiences and knowledge gleaned from previous domestic violence cases to inform their thought process or decision-making in their current case. Implementing similar logic, the heuristic model of decision-making argues that quick decisions or choices that are not based primarily on objective assessment tools or methods should not automatically be discounted, as there is value to the process of intuitive reasoning. While the heuristic model does offer support for curiosity and decision-making based on intuition, the model is not without its critics. Some have argued that the process of intuitive thinking inherently relies upon the recognition of patterns in order to come to judgments, which leaves it susceptible to error (Whittaker, 2018). However, others have

argued that actuarial forms of decision-making can also be prone to error and have pointed out that in studies comparing heuristic based decision-making processes with actuarial ones, heuristic based decisions can be equally as accurate as actuarial ones (Kruglanski & Gigerenzer, 2011). Kruglanski and Gigerenzer (2011) suggest that both heuristic and actuarial decisions are formulated based upon knowledge gained from personal experience, social development, source rules (rules or guidelines that are taught), and socialization into a given culture. Through these various processes of learning and exposure, humans learn and become accustomed to making judgements and decisions that serve them day to day. Kruglanski and Gigerenzer (2011) also argue that most heuristic based decisions are learned first through actuarial and analytical means, pointing out that while we first learn how to read and write by following specific rules guiding us to do so, they eventually become automatic and intuitive processes that are completed, but no less accurately. In sum, heuristic models of decision-making suggest that judgements and choices should not automatically be faulted or discounted simply because they occur through a relatively automatic process. And in the fields of social work and law enforcement, automatic and quick decision-making is not only beneficial, but often required due to high workloads and the pace at which investigations occur. In the present study, the heuristic model of decision-making is employed as a theoretical foundation to explain variation and decision-making processes employed by respondents during the study.

Methods

The aim of this study was to explore what perceptions of behaviors were relevant to law enforcement officers and social workers in child maltreatment cases, specifically through the lens of recent discussion surrounding “defunding the police”. The data were collected using an online survey, a semi structured interview, and an online exit survey. Data were then analyzed using IBM SPSS 28.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study was that law enforcement officers and social workers would have varying opinions as to what was relevant in their decisions in child abuse and neglect cases, as research has demonstrated that law enforcement officers do not have uniform or consistent perceptions or behaviors related to their interpretation of investigations, especially related to elements of demeanor (Johnson, 2017), their own personal characteristics (El Sayed, 2020), or characteristics of the subjects in the case such as the race or gender of the perpetrator (Baiden et al., 2017; Mellor & Deering, 2010; Tasca et al., 2013). Additionally, social workers have also been found to have varying perceptions and behaviors related to what they find important in child maltreatment investigations (Christopherson, 1998; Stokes & Schmidt, 2012) and what action they believe will be most effective in a case (Nyathi, 2018).

Data and Sample

Three law enforcement agencies and one social services agency were contacted by the researchers to initiate recruitment, but no response was received. As a result, the

researchers switched to snowball sampling for recruitment. Law enforcement officers were recruited from three separate police departments located in a mid-sized Western City in the United States. Social workers were recruited via snowball sampling from one social services agency located in the same mid-sized Western City in the United States. A small, pilot sample was first conducted to determine if any changes to the study design were necessary and to ensure clarity. Minor language revisions were subsequently made to questions to allow for a greater degree of clarity and consistency for participants. For the pilot phase, three social workers and two law enforcement officers were recruited for participation. Nine additional social workers and 15 additional law enforcement officers were recruited for participation after changes were made to the survey and interview guide after examining pilot data. Law enforcement officers were oversampled to offset any attrition that occurred during the study.

Informed consent was collected from each participant prior to the commencement of the online survey, which was hosted on the Qualtrics platform online. The study was considered minimal risk by the institutional review board (IRB), as there were not any identifiable harms associated with participation in the study.

Data Collection

Participants were first asked to participate in an online survey requiring them to rate the relevancy of various factors related to child maltreatment cases. Participants then participated in a semi structured interview asking them to elaborate on responses provided in the internet survey and inquiring about their opinions on various factors related to child maltreatment. Participants were then asked to participate in an exit survey

that gathered demographic information upon completion of the initial survey and interview.

Survey Instrument.

The pilot internet survey disseminated to participants was hosted on the online survey platform, Qualtrics. Participants were first presented with an informed consent disclaimer along with a brief explanation of the study. After agreeing to participate in the study, participants were then presented with directions informing them to rank the relevancy of various forms of child maltreatment when making decisions as to whether child abuse or neglect occurred. Participants were given the following definition for the term “relevant”:

An issue that is deemed pertinent in deciding whether a specific instance of child abuse or neglect occurred.

Participants were then directed to answer the questions such that they correspond with real life decisions they make in the course of their duties as a police officer or social worker. After being presented with the informed consent and directions for how to proceed, participants were then instructed to begin the questionnaire portion of the survey.

The pilot survey consisted of a total of 104 questions that were broken down into the following eight child maltreatment/abuse relevancy categories: severity, vulnerability, demeanor, intoxication, frequency, morality, formal action as deterrence, and criminality. An additional measure at the end of the survey required participants to rank the 13

maltreatment types in order of severity, which was not analyzed for the purposes of this study. The final survey consisted of a total of 104 questions that were broken down into the same eight categories and a final category wherein participants had to rank types of maltreatment according to the participants perceived level of significance. Three additional questions existed at the end of the internet survey inquiring about the participant's occupation, first name, and last name to allow the researchers to match their responses with their semi-structured interview responses and exit survey responses provided later during the study. Upon completion of the internet survey, participants then moved to the semi-structured interview portion of the study. All identifying information was destroyed once the files were merged.

Survey Subsections.

Within each subsection of the survey (excluding the last rank order activity subsection), participants were presented with 13 scenarios of child maltreatment and asked to rank the relevancy of each child maltreatment/abuse category in relation to the specific maltreatment example provided. For example, in the "severity" category, participants were presented with 13 child maltreatment scenarios and were asked to rate the relevancy of each type of maltreatment according to its severity on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "1 – Completely irrelevant" to "5 – Extremely relevant". In the vulnerability category, participants were presented with 13 child maltreatment scenarios and were asked to rate the relevancy of each type of maltreatment according to the child's perceived vulnerability provided in each question on a 5-point Likert scale. This pattern

continued for each respective category. A visual representation of each survey subsection can be located in Appendix A, Tables A1 through A8.

For the vulnerability category, non-arbitrary ages for the maltreatment scenarios were selected based on literature illustrating vulnerability to specific types of maltreatment. Research by Schlotthauer et al. (2011) indicates children are at the greatest risk of injury between the ages of one and three when involved in vehicle accidents while their parent/caregiver is under the influence of alcohol. Children exposed to alcohol between ages one and five have been shown to suffer the greatest alcohol related problems (Foltran et al., 2011). Research on children ingesting marijuana has shown that children younger than five years of age suffer more physical symptoms such as drowsiness, lethargy, ataxia, and conjunctivitis (Cao et al., 2016). In one study related to child exposure to criminal activity, it was found that younger children tend to have the higher rates of maladjustment after being exposed to criminal activity, with the youngest child in the study being seven years old (Dallaire & Wilson, 2010). In regard to domestic violence, preschool aged children have been found to exhibit more symptom behaviors as a result of their exposure (Holt et al., 2008). However, Holt et al. (2008) also noted that each age bracket manifests harms differently depending on their unique exposure to domestic violence. Research by Parke and Clarke-Stewart (2002) found that infants without parents struggle to bond and have behavioral issues later on in life. Additionally, Young et al. (2020) found that children ages two to six who experienced parental incarceration (and thus were left without parents) had a higher likelihood of offending later on in life. Regarding the effects of physical and sexual abuse, research has shown that abuse occurring after age five may have the most harmful effects on children's

mental health (Adams et al., 2018). Studies by Riascos et al. (2008) and Schrot et al. (2017) have found that child ingestion of drugs can be detrimental from infancy to adolescence, with infants suffering an increased risk of death between ages 22 months and five years after ingestion of methadone, and adolescents showing significant brain damage after engaging in illicit drug use such as heroin.

Maltreatment Scenarios.

Maltreatment scenarios presented to participants consisted of 11 child neglect categories and two child abuse categories. The neglect scenarios presented to participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Maltreatment Scenarios

Neglect	Abuse
A parent/caregiver drove while under the influence with the child in the car.	The child was physically abused.
The child got into the parent/caregiver's alcohol.	The child was sexually abused.
The child consumed the parent/caregiver's marijuana.	
The child consumed the parent/caregiver's illegal street drugs (i.e., methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, illegally obtained prescription drugs).	
The child consumed the parent/caregiver's prescribed drugs (i.e., Percocet, Vicodin, Xanax).	
The parent/caregiver involved the child in criminal activity.	
The parent/caregiver had the child present for criminal activity.	
The parent/caregiver resides in a dirty home with the child.	
The child was found unsupervised.	
The child was exposed to domestic violence between the parent/caregivers.	
The child was abandoned.	

For each respective category, the maltreatment scenarios were slightly modified to draw attention to align with the category of questioning. For example, in the survey section related to severity, the first question was modified to state, “the parent/caregiver drove while under the influence with the child in the car and the child was harmed”. Alternatively, in the vulnerability survey section, the first question was modified to state, “A parent/caregiver drives while under the influence of alcohol with a 2-year-old child in the car” and in the demeanor section, the first question was modified to state, “the parent/caregiver drove while under the influence with the child in the car and is uncooperative with the investigation”, and so on. An example of maltreatment scenarios and respective modified language for each survey subsection section can be located in Appendix A, Tables A1 through A8.

For the last category in the survey, participants were required to rank the 13 types of child maltreatment in order of severity, with a ranking of “1” indicating the participant believed it was the most severe form of child maltreatment, and with a ranking of “13” indicating the participant believed it was the least severe form of child maltreatment. In this category, the survey forced participants to rank order each item and did not allow the participant to rank items equally, thus forcing differentiation between each maltreatment scenario.

At the conclusion of the survey, participants were then asked to select their occupation (law enforcement officer or social worker) and to list their names to allow the researchers to match their survey responses with their subsequent interview and exit

survey responses. Upon completion of the survey, participants were given the option to proceed directly into the interview portion with the researcher and to the exit survey portion, or to schedule their interview and exit survey portion for a later date. Most participants chose to complete the entirety of the study in one sitting.

Semi Structured Interviews.

Upon completion of the pilot survey, the researcher computed each participant's top three highest ranked categories based on their total score from the Likert ratings in preparation for the second question on the semi structured interview. For example, if a participant ranked each maltreatment scenario as "highly relevant" in the vulnerability category, a total score of 65 was computed (as each ranking for "highly relevant" on the Likert scale was computed as a 5). Alternatively, if a participant ranked each maltreatment scenario as "very relevant" in the severity category, a total score of 52 was computed (as each ranking for "very relevant" on the Likert scale was computed as a 4).

If the participant had several ties in terms of their highest ranked categories, then each participant was asked to elaborate on their top three highest ranked categories in addition to their tied categories during the semi structured interview. For example, if a participant rated most maltreatment scenarios as "highly relevant" in the severity, vulnerability, and demeanor categories, the participant was then asked to elaborate on why they believed they ranked those categories as highly relevant in question two of the semi structured interview. If the participant had tying scores for the vulnerability, frequency, demeanor, and criminality categories of maltreatment, the participant was then

asked to elaborate on all four categories in the first question of the semi structured interview.

Interviews were recorded to allow for transcription and subsequent coding for emerging themes. Each participant had previously been provided informed consent regarding the recorded interviews during their initial commencement of participation during the internet survey. Pseudonyms were assigned to participants to allow responses to remain anonymous.

Pilot participants were asked nine questions during the interviews. Six possible probes existed for the researcher to ask each participant in order to prompt them to elaborate further, if necessary. Participants were encouraged to elaborate on their responses and were directed to ask clarification from the researcher if they felt it was needed. All nine social workers who completed the final version internet survey also participated in the semi-structured interview portion of the study. Ten out of the 15 law enforcement officers who participated in the final internet survey also participated in the semi structured interview portion of the study. The pilot interview guide is located in Appendix B, Table B1.

Exit Survey¹.

After each interview, participants were then provided with an exit survey. The exit survey was provided via the online survey platform Qualtrics. Participants were given the option to complete the exit survey immediately after completion of the

¹ Exit survey data were obtained but not analyzed, as they were beyond the scope of the current study.

interview, or to complete the exit survey at their leisure. Most participants chose to complete the exit survey immediately upon completion of the interview.

The pilot exit survey consisted of a total of 11 questions gathering basic demographic information related to their years' experience, age, sex/gender, race, annual income, level of education, political affiliation, political ideology, and position. The last question asked for each participant's name to allow the researchers to match their exit survey responses with their initial survey responses and interviews. The exit survey can be located in Appendix C, Table C1.

Changes to Survey Design after Pilot Phase

After examining pilot data, some minor revisions were made to improve the quality of the data collection. A minor revision was made to the first section of the internet survey that provided participants with directions for how to proceed. This revision was made to provide clarity to participants, as the researchers determined that the first directions given were too narrow. Language changes can be found below:

Original directions: *In this survey you will first be presented with several scenarios that involve various types of child maltreatment. You will then be asked to rate several factors in terms of their relevancy when **making a decision as to whether or not child maltreatment occurred.***

Revised directions: *In this survey you will first be presented with several scenarios that involve various types of child maltreatment. You will then be asked to rate several factors in terms of their relevancy when **making decisions in an investigation of child maltreatment.***

Moreover, participants were provided the definition of “child” in addition to the definition of the word “relevant” after it was discovered in the pilot data that some participants were confused over who qualified as a child. Participants were given the following definition for the term “child”: *The term “child” may be defined as anyone under the age of 18 years old.* Minor language revisions were made to the questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews to elicit richer responses from participants, see Appendix B Table B2.

Finally, two additional questions inquiring about participant marital status and parental status were added to the exit survey. Display logic was also added into the exit survey design so that participants were first required to select their positions as a police officer or social worker, which prompted the survey to modify the subsequent exit survey questions such that they only pertained to that position. See table C2 in Appendix C for a comparison of original and revised exit survey questions. Pilot participants were asked to complete the new modified final exit survey after modifications were made to the pilot exit survey so that their survey responses could be used in future data analysis.

Data Analysis and Results

Survey Analysis

Descriptive Statistics

All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS 28. Pilot survey data and final survey data were combined for analysis, as questions between each phase remained consistent enough for the two data sets to be analyzed together. In total, results from 29 participants were analyzed. Of the 29 participants, 41.4% (n=12) were social workers and 58.8% (n=17) were law enforcement officers. Missing data were mean replaced.

Descriptive statistics were obtained for each survey subsection (i.e., severity, vulnerability, demeanor, intoxication, frequency, morality, formal action as deterrence, and criminality) inquiring about the 13 maltreatment scenarios (DUI, exposure to alcohol, exposure to marijuana, exposure to illegal drugs, exposure to prescribed drugs, involvement in criminal activity, exposure to criminal activity, environmental neglect, lack of supervision, exposure to domestic violence, abandonment, physical abuse, and sexual abuse) were obtained. Descriptive statistics are represented in Tables 2 through 9.

Table 2

Frequencies for Perceived Relevancy of Severity and Maltreatment Scenarios (N= 29)

Variable	Mean	SD
DUI	4.79	0.491
Exposure to Alcohol	4.10	0.976
Exposure to Marijuana	4.17	1.037
Exposure to Illegal Drugs	4.66	0.857
Exposure to Prescribed Drugs	4.31	0.930
Involvement in Criminal Activity	4.66	0.897
Exposure to Criminal Activity	4.38	0.775
Dirty Home	4.52	0.871
Lack of Supervision	4.45	0.736
Domestic Violence	4.52	0.911
Abandonment	4.59	0.907
Physical Abuse	4.00	1.069
Sexual Abuse	4.86	0.581

Table 3

Frequencies for Perceived Relevancy of Vulnerability and Maltreatment Scenarios (N= 29)

Variable	Mean	SD
DUI	4.59	0.780
Exposure to Alcohol	4.45	0.948
Exposure to Marijuana	4.52	0.949
Exposure to Illegal Drugs	4.76	0.830
Exposure to Prescribed Drugs	4.72	0.841
Involvement in Criminal Activity	4.72	0.649
Exposure to Criminal Activity	4.38	0.820
Dirty Home	4.48	0.871
Lack of Supervision	4.41	0.867
Domestic Violence	4.04	0.999
Abandonment	4.62	0.862
Physical Abuse	4.62	0.862
Sexual Abuse	4.79	0.675

Table 4

Frequencies for Perceived Relevancy of Demeanor and Maltreatment Scenarios (N= 29)

Variable	Mean	SD
DUI	3.86	1.093
Exposure to Alcohol	3.83	1.037
Exposure to Marijuana	3.90	1.081
Exposure to Illegal Drugs	3.93	1.223
Exposure to Prescribed Drugs	3.90	1.235
Involvement in Criminal Activity	4.10	1.047
Exposure to Criminal Activity	3.90	1.012
Dirty Home	3.83	1.167
Lack of Supervision	3.83	1.002
Domestic Violence	3.69	1.039
Abandonment	3.97	1.117
Physical Abuse	4.17	1.002
Sexual Abuse	4.28	1.251

Table 5

Frequencies for Perceived Relevancy of Intoxication and Maltreatment Scenarios (N= 29)

Variable	Mean	SD
DUI	4.55	0.736
Exposure to Alcohol	4.38	0.862
Exposure to Marijuana	4.45	0.783
Exposure to Illegal Drugs	4.69	0.660
Exposure to Prescribed Drugs	4.62	0.677
Involvement in Criminal Activity	4.31	0.967
Exposure to Criminal Activity	4.24	0.988
Dirty Home	4.00	1.134
Lack of Supervision	4.48	0.738
Domestic Violence	4.34	0.814
Abandonment	3.90	1.263
Physical Abuse	4.10	1.345
Sexual Abuse	3.97	1.569

Table 6

Frequencies for Perceived Relevancy of Frequency and Maltreatment Scenarios (N= 29)

Variable	Mean	SD
DUI	4.38	1.115
Exposure to Alcohol	4.59	0.682
Exposure to Marijuana	4.62	0.677
Exposure to Illegal Drugs	4.76	0.636
Exposure to Prescribed Drugs	4.76	0.511
Involvement in Criminal Activity	4.62	0.728
Exposure to Criminal Activity	4.55	0.870
Dirty Home	4.38	0.979
Lack of Supervision	4.66	0.670
Domestic Violence	4.55	0.827
Abandonment	4.62	0.820
Physical Abuse	4.79	0.620
Sexual Abuse	4.69	0.930

Table 7

Frequencies for Perceived Relevancy of Morality and Maltreatment Scenarios (N= 29)

Variable	Mean	SD
DUI	3.55	1.429
Exposure to Alcohol	3.28	1.251
Exposure to Marijuana	3.34	1.317
Exposure to Illegal Drugs	3.69	1.417
Exposure to Prescribed Drugs	3.52	1.455
Involvement in Criminal Activity	3.66	1.421
Exposure to Criminal Activity	3.52	1.379
Dirty Home	3.24	1.327
Lack of Supervision	3.45	1.325
Domestic Violence	3.59	1.376
Abandonment	3.72	1.461
Physical Abuse	3.72	1.486
Sexual Abuse	3.93	1.486

Table 8

Frequencies for Perceived Relevancy of Deterrence and Maltreatment Scenarios (N= 29)

Variable	Mean	SD
DUI	4.31	0.891
Exposure to Alcohol	3.86	0.915
Exposure to Marijuana	3.90	0.860
Exposure to Illegal Drugs	4.14	1.026
Exposure to Prescribed Drugs	4.17	0.848
Involvement in Criminal Activity	3.93	1.132
Exposure to Criminal Activity	3.79	1.146
Dirty Home	3.83	0.848
Lack of Supervision	3.93	0.884
Domestic Violence	3.86	0.990
Abandonment	3.76	1.215
Physical Abuse	4.21	0.940
Sexual Abuse	4.10	1.291

Table 9

Frequencies for Perceived Relevancy of Criminality and Maltreatment Scenarios (N= 29)

Variable	Mean	SD
DUI	4.79	0.491
Exposure to Alcohol	4.14	0.789
Exposure to Marijuana	4.14	0.833
Exposure to Illegal Drugs	4.62	0.677
Exposure to Prescribed Drugs	4.38	0.775
Involvement in Criminal Activity	4.62	0.677
Exposure to Criminal Activity	4.31	1.072
Dirty Home	4.10	0.976
Lack of Supervision	4.21	0.774
Domestic Violence	4.17	0.928
Abandonment	4.48	0.738
Physical Abuse	4.66	0.721
Sexual Abuse	4.69	0.712

Principal Component Analysis (PCA)

There was high multicollinearity between the items within the eight child maltreatment/abuse relevancy categories under study, so exploratory factor analyses, specifically Principal Component Analysis (PCA), were examined to determine if there were underlying latent constructs for the items within each of the eight child maltreatment/abuse relevancy categories. Each survey item within the eight categories were entered into PCAs. A fixed factor of one was selected for each PCA. The components of each resulting factor loaded above 0.426 and retained in each factor, which is consistent with “good” factor loading (Howard, 2016). Eigenvalues were all above 1 (see Table 10). A total of eight factors were obtained from the analysis, which correspond with the child maltreatment/abuse relevancy categories under study: severity factor, vulnerability factor, demeanor factor, intoxication factor, frequency factor, morality factor, deterrence factor, and criminality factor.

Table 10*Results from a Principal Component Analysis of Maltreatment Scenarios and Maltreatment Relevancy Factors*

PCA Item	Factor Loading							
	Severity	Vulnerability	Demeanor	Intoxication	Frequency	Morality	Deterrence	Criminality
DUI	0.513	0.426	0.806	0.867	0.723	0.892	0.812	0.740
Exposure to Alcohol	0.867	0.898	0.928	0.846	0.938	0.936	0.825	0.736
Exposure to Marijuana	0.891	0.908	0.945	0.923	0.940	0.942	0.875	0.736
Exposure to Illegal Drugs	0.902	0.956	0.963	0.850	0.935	0.960	0.866	0.903
Exposure to Prescribed Drugs	0.927	0.942	0.964	0.852	0.886	0.943	0.855	0.886
Involvement in Criminal Activity	0.874	0.866	0.899	0.784	0.885	0.969	0.925	0.699
Exposure to Criminal Activity	0.599	0.670	0.822	0.781	0.838	0.950	0.890	0.602
Dirty Home	0.890	0.819	0.737	0.786	0.832	0.919	0.873	0.743
Lack of Supervision	0.654	0.852	0.829	0.828	0.966	0.922	0.896	0.856
Domestic Violence	0.888	0.899	0.713	0.574	0.820	0.906	0.915	0.683
Abandonment	0.848	0.950	0.667	0.647	0.840	0.954	0.893	0.866
Physical Abuse	0.677	0.932	0.867	0.517	0.862	0.949	0.819	0.783
Sexual Abuse	0.880	0.692	0.828	0.685	0.563	0.882	0.537	0.761
Eigenvalue	8.568	9.268	9.393	7.78	9.493	11.318	9.394	7.778
Percent Variance Explained	65.908	71.290	72.022	59.849	73.024	87.06	72.258	59.833

Independent Samples T-Tests

Once the eight factors were obtained, independent samples t-tests were run to determine if any significant differences in factors existed between police officers and social workers. Although the convenience nature of the sampling technique violates the assumption for random sampling, the samples were independent. A t-statistic with significance at the .05 level was set in order to determine if the null hypothesis could be rejected.

Results from the t-tests indicated that there is no statistically significant difference between the perceptions of police officers and social workers in regard to the seven out of the eight factors examined: severity relevancy factor, vulnerability relevancy factor, demeanor relevancy factor, intoxication relevancy factor, frequency relevancy factor, deterrence relevancy factor, and criminality relevancy factor. However, perceptions of police officers and social workers were significantly different in regard to the morality relevancy factor. T-test statistics, p-values, and standard errors for each of the eight t-tests are located in Table 11.

Hypothesis: Law enforcement officers and social workers do not have different opinions as to what is relevant to their decision-making in child maltreatment cases.

A two tailed hypothesis was used for the study, as the design was exploratory in nature.

Table 11

Independent Samples T-Test Examining Relationship between Factors and Occupation (27 degrees of freedom)

Factor	t	Two-Sided p	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Severity factor	-1.186	0.246	-0.444	0.374
Vulnerability factor	-1.374	0.181	-0.510	0.371
Demeanor factor	0.215	0.831	0.082	0.384
Intoxication factor	0.619	0.541	0.236	0.381
Frequency factor	-1.033	0.311	-0.389	0.377
Morality factor	2.098	0.045	0.747	0.356
Deterrence factor	1.480	0.150	0.546	0.369
Criminality factor	0.607	0.549	0.231	0.381

Note. Values that are statistically significant are bolded.

Severity Factor.

The mean difference between the relevancy of the severity factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is -0.444. The t-test statistic was -1.186 with 27 degrees of freedom. The two-tailed critical value was 0.246, which was greater than the 0.05 p value cutoff selected. Thus, the difference between the relevancy of the severity factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is not statistically significant. There is no difference between perceived relevancy of severity between police officers and social workers in this sample.

Vulnerability Factor.

The mean difference between the relevancy of the vulnerability factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is -0.510. The t value is -1.374 with 27 degrees of freedom. The two-tailed critical value measured at 0.181, which was greater than the 0.05 p value cutoff selected. Thus, the difference between the relevancy of the vulnerability factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is not statistically

significant. There is no difference between the perceived relevancy of vulnerability between police officers and social workers in this sample.

Demeanor Factor.

The mean difference between the relevancy of the demeanor factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is 0.082. The t value is 0.215 with 27 degrees of freedom. The two-tailed critical value measured at 0.831, which was greater than the 0.05 p value cutoff selected. Thus, the difference between the relevancy of the demeanor factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is not statistically significant. There is no difference between perceived relevancy of demeanor between police officers and social workers in this sample.

Intoxication Factor.

The mean difference between the relevancy of the intoxication factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is 0.236. The t value is 0.619 with 27 degrees of freedom. The two-tailed critical value measured at 0.541, which was greater than the 0.05 p value cutoff selected. Thus, the difference between the relevancy of the intoxication factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is not statistically significant. There is no difference between perceived relevancy of intoxication between police officers and social workers in this sample.

Frequency Factor.

The mean difference between the relevancy of the frequency factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is -0.389. The t value is -1.033 with 27 degrees of freedom.

The two-tailed critical value measured at 0.311, which was greater than the 0.05 p value cutoff selected. Thus, the difference between the relevancy of the frequency factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is not statistically significant. There is no difference between perceived relevancy of frequency between police officers and social workers in this sample.

Morality Factor.

The mean difference between the morality factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is 0.747. The t value is 2.098 with 27 degrees of freedom. The two-tailed critical value measured at 0.045, which was less than the 0.05 p value cutoff selected. Thus, the difference between the relevancy of the morality factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is statistically significant. There is a significant difference between perceived relevancy of morality between police officers and social workers in this sample.

Deterrence Factor.

The mean difference between the relevancy of the deterrence factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is 0.546. The t value is 1.48 with 27 degrees of freedom. The two-tailed critical value measured at 0.15, which was greater than the 0.05 p value cutoff selected. Thus, the difference between the relevancy of the deterrence factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is not statistically significant. There is no difference between perceived relevancy of deterrence between police officers and social workers in this sample.

Criminality Factor.

The mean difference between the relevancy of the criminality factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is 0.231. The t value is 0.607 with 27 degrees of freedom. The two-tailed critical value measured at 0.549, which was greater than the 0.05 p value cutoff selected. Thus, the difference between the relevancy of the criminality factor for law enforcement officers and social workers is not statistically significant. There is no difference between perceived relevancy of criminality between police officers and social workers in this sample.

Results from the independent samples t-tests indicate that only one of the relevancy factors – morality – was significantly different between law enforcement officers and social workers. There was no difference between the perceived relevancy of severity, vulnerability, demeanor, intoxication, frequency, deterrence, and criminality between law enforcement officers and social workers. Although the differences are not statistically significant, the standard errors of the differences between the means of the factors indicate that law enforcement officers and social workers may have the differences in their ratings of the relevancy of demeanor, intoxication, frequency, deterrence, and criminality as seen in table 12. Future research should replicate this exploratory study with larger samples to better assess the potential for differences in perceptions between police officers and social workers about child maltreatment.

Table 12

Group Statistics for Independent Samples T-test: Analysis of Factors by Occupation

Factor	Occupation	N	M	SD	Std. Error Mean
Severity	Police Officer	17	-0.18	1.24	0.30
	Social Worker	12	0.26	0.44	0.13
Vulnerability	Police Officer	17	-0.21	1.26	0.31
	Social Worker	12	0.30	0.27	0.08
Demeanor	Police Officer	17	0.03	1.02	0.25
	Social Worker	12	-0.05	1.01	0.29
Intoxication	Police Officer	17	0.10	0.83	0.20
	Social Worker	12	-0.14	1.23	0.35
Frequency	Police Officer	17	-0.16	1.22	0.30
	Social Worker	12	0.23	0.52	0.15
Morality	Police Officer	17	0.31	0.78	0.19
	Social Worker	12	-0.44	1.14	0.33
Deterrence	Police Officer	17	0.23	0.85	0.21
	Social Worker	12	-0.32	1.14	0.33
Criminality	Police Officer	17	0.10	0.92	0.22
	Social Worker	12	-0.14	1.13	0.33

Note. Higher mean values are bolded.

Semi-Structured Interview Analysis

Interviews were analyzed and coded independently for emerging themes between three coders. Thematic analysis was performed inductively. Responses that were repeated were coded and grouped together to create themes and sub themes. This process was repeated as emerging themes and sub themes were refined. It must be noted that some participants fluctuated between themes, initially identifying one theme at the beginning of their response and then changing to a separate theme. For the purposes of coding, the first initial theme identified by participants during their response was retained.

Initially, the three coders coded each group of interviews independently in an attempt to reach a kappa reliability score of 80% in the codes, as once that rate is reached one coder may code the remaining interviews as a strong level of agreement has been

reached (McHugh, 2012). However, an inter-rater reliability rate of 80% was not reached after nearly half of the interviews were coded. As a result, the coders came together to code the remaining interviews together and satisfy any discrepancies in coding until 100% agreement was reached among coders. Interviews that were coded during the first round of independent coding were also revisited to satisfy any discrepancies in coding to reach 100% agreement among coders. Pilot data and final interview data were coded together for emerging themes. In total, 12 social workers and 12 law enforcement officers were selected for participation in the interview portion of the study after completion of the initial survey, as thematic discovery can occur after completion of 12 interviews (Guest et al., 2006). However, for purposes of performing frequency analyses of the data, only final interview data were examined due to differences in the language and formatting of the semi-structured interviews between pilot interviews and final interviews. For the purposes of this thesis, only two questions and two prompts were analyzed out of the total nine questions and three prompts included in the semi-structured interviews. Descriptive analysis for the questions and corresponding themes can be seen in Table 13

Table 13*Frequencies of Themes Identified Among Participants*

Question	Theme	Social Worker		Law enforcement	
		n	%	n	%
Q1. What factors do you feel are important when conducting an investigation of child maltreatment?	Theme 1: Circumstances of maltreatment	8	88.89%	9	90.00%
	Theme 2: Family conditions	4	44.45%	8	80.00%
	Theme 3: Details of scene	5	55.56%	7	70.00%
3a. Are there ever situations in which a law enforcement response to child maltreatment is unwarranted/inappropriate? How? Can you provide an example?	Theme 1: Yes, or it depends	8	88.89%	3	30.00%
	Theme 1a: Sometimes law enforcement response is not preferable	6	66.67%	3	30.00%
	Theme 1b: Law enforcement lacks expertise, training, or resources to address issue	2	22.22%	1	10.00%
	Theme 1c: It depends on if a criminal act, element, and/or severity is present	4	44.44%	2	20.00%
	Theme 1d: Depends on safety factors/potential for escalation on scene	4	44.44%	0	0.00%
	Theme 2: No	1	11.11%	5	50.00%
Q5a. Are there ever situations in which a social worker response to child maltreatment is unwarranted/inappropriate? How? Can you provide an example?	Theme 2a: It never hurts to have law enforcement on scene to assist	0	0.00%	5	50.00%
	Theme 1: Yes, or it depends	6	66.67%	0	0.00%
	Theme 1a: False reports	3	33.33%	0	0.00%
	Theme 2: No	3	33.33%	9	90.00%
	Theme 2a: Social workers are not always needed	2	22.22%	3	30.00%
Q9. Elaborate on whether or not you believe re-allocating police funds to social services would be useful to the community.	Theme 2b: It never hurts to have a social worker on scene to assist	1	11.11%	5	50.00%
	Theme 1: Reallocation is useful	3	33.33%	4	40.00%
	Theme 1a: Social workers are better equipped to handle some issues as opposed to law enforcement	2	22.22%	2	20.00%
	Theme 1b: Reallocation for joint response and/or collaboration can be helpful	2	22.22%	4	40.00%
	Theme 2: Reallocation is not useful	6	66.67%	6	60.00%
	Theme 2a: Reallocation causes more problems for law enforcement	1	11.11%	6	60.00%
	Theme 2b: Law enforcement is better equipped to handle some issues	1	11.11%	2	20.00%
	Theme 2c: There should be an increase funding for both law enforcement and social services agencies	4	44.44%	4	40.00%

Important Factors During an Investigation

Eight (88.89%) of the social workers and nine (90%) of the law enforcement officers articulated in the semi structured interviews that some of the most important factors relating to their investigation of child maltreatment related to the exact circumstances of the maltreatment at hand. Circumstances of maltreatment were defined for purposes of coding as the frequency and/or severity of the maltreatment, whether the family had prior law enforcement or child protective services (CPS) history, whether harm was done to the child, and whether the allegations of maltreatment were founded. As social worker Ms. Hill² stated, “God...the child’s age, vulnerability. Um, the situation at hand that brought us to be involved. You know? Was there one situation, is there an ongoing situation? Like a dirty home? Or was it like, a DUI, parent arrested?”

For law enforcement officers, family conditions such as poverty status, ability to provide for basic needs, family dynamics, caregiver responsibility, and the condition of the home or home environment also appeared to be more important in comparison to social workers, with 80% of law enforcement officers identifying family conditions as being important to their investigation, in comparison with 44.45% of social workers. As law enforcement officer Mr. King stated:

Um, I think the biggest thing is the situation. Obviously, the child’s condition is number one, and then to follow that is, what was the parent or caregiver or whoever was watching the child, what act were they doing to put the child in danger? But, what the child—child’s condition is, in my opinion is number one.

² All of the names used in this thesis are pseudonyms obtained using a name generator (Name Census, 2022). All identifying information has been removed from the data, making them completely anonymous.

Law Enforcement Response to Child Maltreatment

Most social workers (88.89%) expressed that a law enforcement response to child maltreatment can be unwarranted in some circumstances, while only 30% of law enforcement officers expressed agreement with the statement. Similarly, six (66.67%) social workers expressed that a law enforcement response to child maltreatment is sometimes not preferable as it can be an abuse of power or escalate the situation unnecessarily, with only three (30%) law enforcement officers expressing agreement with that sentiment. Some social workers also expressed that involving law enforcement officers in a response could ruin client rapport or be an unnecessary response. As some social workers explained:

If there's a situation where we—showing up with a bunch of police officers is going to impact your investigation, and there's really no safety concerns, may not be needed. Um, you know—I've found that like, if you want to show up and talk to like, say, a DV victim. Um, a domestic violence victim—uh, you know, a lot of times as long as the perpetrator is not in the home or they're in jail, that's the perfect time to go talk to them. And you don't necessarily—wouldn't need to – a bunch of officers to come with you. Um, and there's many other scenarios where that is also the case—where it could just create actually more issues. (Mr. Lane, social worker)

Um, I've had it to where it's been a negative environment for the clients. You know, basically where they're in their face. And it's like wow, dude, you need to chill out. Um, because you're not making this any better. You know, we're here to fix this, not to make people feel stupid. (Ms. Cook, social worker)

In contrast, many law enforcement officers (50%) instead felt that having law enforcement on scene was not always necessary, but would not negatively impact the investigative process. As one officer explained:

So, I never think it's wrong to have us there. Uh, it's just better to know—to have experience and training so that we can work as a team as to know when it's time to—for law enforcement to step back. And let—and let you guys have the reins if you're making that positive change. (Mr. Reed, law enforcement officer)

Social Worker Response to Child Maltreatment

In contrast to many of the social worker opinions, none of the law enforcement officers interviewed felt that involving a social worker in a child maltreatment investigation could ever be inappropriate or unwarranted, with half of the officers expressing that while it is not always necessary to have a social worker present, involving them would not hurt the investigation. As law enforcement officer Mr. Ward stated, “Um, in my opinion, no. Because there’s—it’s always better to have um, too much response than too little. So, um, I would say it—it would not hurt.” However, 66.67% of social workers articulated that there are indeed circumstances in which a social worker response to child maltreatment may be unwarranted, with many referencing cases in which maltreatment is unfounded or false reports are made. As social worker Ms. Gray explained:

Or, um, you know—there like um, things get misinterpreted. And, like, I don’t know. Mom grabbed the kid, the kid’s autistic, he’s having some issues, and she grabs him, and everybody’s like “oh my god! She’s shaking him up!” And he’s like, a little guy. And you get there and you’re like—I see their interaction. You know? Things like that where things get misinterpreted, I think that you know—um, family gets involved, and their idea of what’s happening in the household gets blown up, and so yeah—we get called out, and it’s DefCon10, and we’re out there and it’s like...why are we here.

Reallocation of Resources from Law Enforcement to Social Services

When asked about reallocation of resources from law enforcement agencies to social services agencies, most social workers (66.67%) and law enforcement officers (60%) expressed that reallocation of resources is not a useful method. Many social workers (44.44%) expressed support for increasing funding to both social services

agencies and law enforcement agencies in lieu of reallocation. As social worker Ms. Bell stated:

I think that social work and police both need more funding. I think that we need more programs to rehabilitate offenders, to work more closely and more in depth with offenders. Um, so I feel like between law enforcement and social work, we need more programs in general. But I don't think um—I feel like police are so limited. Law enforcement are so limited, I don't feel like we can take from there. I feel like we just need more overall (participant laughs).

Most law enforcement officers (60%) argued that reallocation would cause more issues for law enforcement agencies, such as a decrease in their training budget or a diminished ability to fight crime. As law enforcement officer Mr. Webb stated: “Um, we're extremely short as it is and we could use all the training that we could get, uh, that those funds come from. Um, so I think that would actually kind of backfire.”

Other law enforcement officers (20%) also felt that law enforcement agencies are better equipped to handle certain issues, such as dangerous calls. However, several law enforcement officers (40%) and social workers (44.44%) referenced the benefit of increasing funding to both law enforcement and social services agencies in order to better serve the community, with many recognizing that law enforcement officers are not equipped to handle all situations and collaboration between the fields can be useful. As social worker Ms. Shaw explained, “If we could reallocate funding to like, work as a team, and support one another, that would be the greatest thing we could ever do.” Some officers also expressed agreement with that sentiment. As law enforcement officer Mr. King stated, “I think more funds to social work and/or maybe more funds to law enforcement to have social workers directly working within the law enforcement agency would be um, the better—the better way”.

Other officers highlighted the fact that collaboration or increased funding for social services agencies could, in the long run, reduce the number of calls for services that law enforcement agencies receive. Law enforcement officer Mr. Hunt explained his vision for future collaboration, explaining:

But I've had this exact conversation with [the chiefs of police]. And I've asked them all—look, if I took a million dollars from each of you. And I said it's going to social work. BUT—you no longer have to send your officers to emotionally disturbed persons, or homelessness, would you do it? And every one of them: “absolutely! Where do I sign? When do I do this?” Even when you talk to the police officers, they're like “yeah”. And that's the thing, right? They—the individuals who are saying defund—that's not what they're saying. They're saying reallocate. And it's—it's—just poor semantics across the board. If they would say it that way, and say hey—we're going to take from the budget, but this is what you *don't* have to do, every cop in America would be like, “I'm on board. No more homelessness calls? No more crazy person in the middle of the street naked? Yeah! Oh, I'm good, I don't have to go to those? Absolutely! Unless they need me. Oh yeah, absolutely.” People would absolutely do that... I think the—the right answer is officer, social worker, you're partnered up. That's how we do it. And some days the social worker just sits in the car and goes “man, this is a really boring day”. And the cop is sweating—she's taken 14 reports, right? And then there's other days where the cop's like “Whoo! This is a great day!” and the social worker's like “my god! I've got a lot of work today!” So, it's a give and take. And if that's—if that's how we reimagine policing to say THAT, then I think you get a lot farther than what you're getting right now.

Discussion

Decades of research have been directed at analyzing factors that influence police decision-making in the field (Baiden et al., 2017; Gelman et al., 2007; Heinonen & Ellonen, 2016; Hepburn, 1978; Waaland & Keeley, 1985), but less research has been dedicated to examining what factors influence social worker decision-making in the field. Specifically surrounding discussions of defund the police movements, it is imperative to

understand how certain occupations currently approach issues of decision-making and what theoretical perspective they take on when they do so. However, little is known about how police officers and social workers perceive things similarly or differently. Despite this, many have assumed that social workers are better equipped to handle specific societal issues such as homelessness, mental health, or service driven societal needs as there appears to be an underlying assumption that social workers perceive matters differently than law enforcement officers, and that their approach is more beneficial. However, in order for this assumption to be made, there should be an empirical foundation for doing so.

Quantitative Data

Results from the independent samples t-tests indicate that law enforcement officers and social workers do not have significantly different views as to their perceived relevancy of severity, vulnerability, demeanor, intoxication, frequency, deterrence, and criminality during child maltreatment investigations (See Appendix A tables A1 through A8 for items within these factors). However, law enforcement officers and social workers had significantly different perceptions as to the relevancy of morality during child maltreatment investigations. Specifically, law enforcement officers rated morality as being more relevant in investigations of child maltreatment in comparison to social workers.

These results suggest that during the course of their duties, decisions made in the field are impacted by the degree to which a law enforcement officer views actions such as

driving while under the influence with a child in the car, allowing a child to consume alcohol or marijuana, or exposing a child to domestic violence as moral or immoral. This finding is consistent with decades of prior research that has shown that various extralegal factors influence police decision-making in the field (Edwards et al., 2019; Gelman et al., 2007; Johnson, 2017; Lundman, 1994; Schleiden et al., 2020; Waaland & Keeley, 1985).

While this is not to say that social workers do not view morality as being relevant in child maltreatment investigations, it is important to note that a difference in perspectives between law enforcement and social worker populations exists. This is especially relevant within the context of defund the police movements. The findings encourage further analysis in areas of police education and training, as it remains unclear if formalized education or training can mitigate the difference in the perceived relevancy of morality between law enforcement officers and social workers. Formalized education has been shown to influence police perception and behavior regarding other factors. For example, Rydberg and Terril (2010) found officers with a 4-year degree were significantly less likely to use force, and other research has found that officers with a 4 year degree were consistently rated as higher performers in comparison to their counterparts (Smith & Aamodt, 1997). Specialized training for law enforcement officers has also been shown to influence decision-making in the field (Robinson et al., 2018). As it stands, social workers are currently required to receive formalized higher education in the form of a college degree, in addition to other requirements such as licensure (National Association of Social Workers, 2020), while 81.5% of police departments in America do not require a college degree to obtain employment (Center for Public Policy, 2020). Further exploratory analysis is warranted to determine why the difference in perceived

relevancy exists, which could possibly occur through in-depth interviews and subsequent thematic analysis.

The differences in the means between the severity, vulnerability, demeanor, intoxication, frequency, deterrence, and criminality factors, although not statistically significant, may still provide valuable insight into the decision-making processes for law enforcement officers and social workers, and to future areas of research that are needed. Based on the means between occupations and factors, it appears law enforcement officers had a tendency to view factors such as demeanor, intoxication, deterrence, and criminality as being more relevant to their decision-making in child maltreatment investigations as opposed to social workers, as seen in table 14. These findings are consistent with prior research that has found that law enforcement officers view demeanor (Johnson, 2017; Lundman, 1994; Waaland & Keeley, 1985) and substance use (Tasca et al., 2013) of the perpetrator as important to their investigation. In the context of the child maltreatment scenarios, it appears law enforcement officers focused more on characteristics of the parent or caregiver, as opposed to characteristics of the child. For example, officers tended to view the demeanor of the parent or caregiver as being more important than social workers, viewed the level of intoxication of the parent or caregiver as more important, and assigned a higher level of relevancy to the degree to which a parent or caregiver's abusive or neglectful behavior could be deterred by arrest. In contrast, the means between occupations and factors indicated that social workers had a tendency to view factors such as severity, vulnerability, and frequency as being more relevant to their decision-making. It appears that factors directly related to the harm to the

child—namely, the severity of the harm to the child, the child’s vulnerability to the neglect or abuse, and the frequency with which the child was being exposed to the maltreatment were rated as being more relevant by social workers. A study examining the degree to which social workers and law enforcement officers view characteristics of the child versus characteristics of the caregiver as being more important to their decision-making processes in child maltreatment investigations is warranted. Results from the thematic analysis also provided detail regarding some differences between social worker and law enforcement decision-making.

Table 14

Independent samples T-test Examining Relationship between Factors and Occupation by Means and Mean Differences (27 degrees of freedom)

Occupation	Factor	Mean	Mean Difference
Police Officer	Morality	0.31	0.747
	Deterrence	0.23	0.546
	Criminality	0.23	0.231
	Intoxication	0.10	0.236
	Demeanor	0.03	0.082
Social Worker	Vulnerability	0.30	-0.510
	Severity	0.26	-0.444
	Frequency	0.23	-0.389

Note. Values that are statistically significant are bolded.

Qualitative Data

The thematic analysis of the semi structured interviews revealed some differences between law enforcement and social worker perceptions for child maltreatment cases. Broadly, both law enforcement officers and social workers viewed the direct circumstances of maltreatment as being important to their investigation. This is a logical

finding, as the direct allegations of maltreatment or the harm to the child during child maltreatment investigations are relevant both to their procedural processes and to their decision-making regarding what actions are necessary to rectify the issue.

Most of the social workers interviewed expressed that there are circumstances in which a law enforcement response to child maltreatment can be unwarranted or inappropriate, drawing on personal experience of escalation in the field and a perceived lack of training or skill for law enforcement officers to handle some complex issues. This finding is consistent with findings of prior research highlighting the negative impact of police intervention which can at times exacerbate already existing barriers for the individual or family (Hagan & Dinovitzer, 1999; Harner & Riley, 2013; Hirschtritt & Binder, 2017; Robinson, 2019; Thompson & Kahn, 2016), and with research advocating for more service driven interventions (Barth, 2009; Jacobs et al., 2020; Ports et al., 2018). The findings also appear consistent with findings from the survey responses, as social workers appeared to focus less on the personal characteristics of the caregiver (such as their demeanor and intoxication levels) and more on what is needed to assess the safety of the child. In many responses, social workers explained that escalating a parent or having an ineffective approach to complex issues such as mental health or domestic violence may impede their ability to build rapport with the family, and thus complete a thorough assessment regarding the safety of the child. In contrast, many of the law enforcement officers focused on the demeanor of the caregiver and how they believe it could impact their investigation.

None of the law enforcement officers interviewed expressed an opinion that a social worker's response to child maltreatment can be unwarranted or inappropriate. Social workers, on the other hand, did indicate that a social worker's response to child maltreatment can indeed be unwarranted or inappropriate, especially in cases of false reports (such as custody battles between parents, or reports that were blatantly untrue). This finding appears consistent with the heuristic model of decision-making, as social workers are more likely to recall a wider array of responses from their day-to-day job and responses that may have been uncalled for, whereas those circumstances may not readily come to mind for law enforcement officers as they do not respond to every single call social workers receive (Cross et al., 2005).

Results from this study suggest that assumptions about differences in decision-making processes between law enforcement officers and social workers should not be made without further analysis. Descriptive statistics analyzed during the current study suggest that social workers and law enforcement officers do not have uniform opinions as to the benefit or negative impact of reallocation of resources. Most law enforcement officers and social workers expressed disagreement with reallocation of police funds to social services agencies, citing issues such as increased problems for law enforcement in responding to crime, and decreased funding for training. However, nearly half of law enforcement officers and social workers discussed the perceived benefit of collaboration between social services and law enforcement agencies, with some envisioning a transformation of law enforcement responses to always include collaboration with social workers. This finding may suggest that alternatives to defund the police movements

should be considered, such as increased funding for both agencies, or an implementation of a standard collaborative framework for how social services and law enforcement agencies should work together. A similar call has been made from prior researchers such as Patterson & Swan (2019).

If social workers and law enforcement officers do indeed engage in similar decision-making processes and weigh factors such as severity, vulnerability, demeanor, intoxication, frequency, deterrence, and criminality with relatively the same weight, calls to defund the police may not be the answer advocates desire. Alternatives such as increasing education for law enforcement officers or increasing opportunities for collaboration may provide more beneficial outcomes, especially when focused on training to highlight personal perception and biases in the field. Additionally, categorical assumptions about law enforcement opinions towards defund the police movements should not be made, as results from this study illustrated that many law enforcement officers appreciated the benefit of reallocation of resources and joint collaboration between the field of social work and police work.

Directions for Future Research

The results from this study suggest that future research in the area is needed. Specifically, a replication of the current study with a larger pool of participants should occur in order to determine if the results are consistent with the findings from this study. A replication study in the context of the courts may also be of particular use to judges, prosecutors, public defenders, or stakeholders to obtain a greater understanding regarding

what factors are relevant to those populations when handling cases of child maltreatment. Should a replication study occur, participants should be sampled from various locations across the United States to determine if any differences exist in the results dependent upon geographical location, and to ensure the sample is more representative of the overall population.

Regarding the child abuse and neglect maltreatment relevancy factors analyzed during the present study, future research should aim to determine if the same factors are present in responses provided by social worker and law enforcement participants when analyzing what factors influence decision-making in child maltreatment cases. A replication of the current study using a vignette design instead of Likert style survey design may provide for a unique lens with which to analyze maltreatment relevancy factors, as it is possible that the detail provided in vignette responses may elicit richer data from respondents. A similar study design has been used by Stokes & Schmidt (2012) in their analysis of child protection decision-making. An analysis of how survey responses compare to responses provided during the semi-structured interviews may also be of interest to future researchers, as the data from the present study were not statistically analyzed to determine if participants provided consistent answers between their survey responses and their responses during the interviews. Such an analysis could provide insight into how unconscious decision-making in child maltreatment cases (via an internet survey) may differ from analytical decision-making processes that are often articulated in in depth interviews with participants. A future comparison of exit survey data with the initial survey data may also provide insight into whether or not law

enforcement and social worker perceptions of morality are influenced by their personal characteristics such age, education level, or political affiliation.

The results from the study clearly illustrate that future research regarding police and social worker perceptions of reallocation of resources are needed. Agreement between law enforcement officers and social workers regarding reallocation of resources from police departments to social services agencies may suggest that there is strength behind social movements like defund the police. An exploratory thematic analysis between social workers and law enforcement officers may be useful to further explore the topic and determine what factors influence their opinions regarding reallocation of resources between departments. Additionally, it may be of use to future researchers—or to the broad social movement of defund the police—to establish a standard definition for the meaning of reallocation, as participants during the study often viewed reallocation differently and thus had varying perceptions as to the benefit or drawbacks of reallocation of police funds to social services agencies.

Limitations

Several design limitations existed within the study. Because of challenges associated with the ongoing sars-cov-2 pandemic, participants had the option to complete the study via Zoom video call instead of in-person. Formats for data collection varied during the study based upon participant comfort level with in-person data collection, which may have impacted the richness of response provided by participants. During the data collection portion for the semi-structured interviews, some difference in questioning

occurred due to the interview structure allowing for variation in prompting among participants, which may have resulted in inconsistencies in responses provided by participants. Some participants may have also felt fatigued and dedicated less effort to responses provided later during the survey or during the semi-structured interviews due to the study length. However, this did not seem to be a common occurrence among participants. Because of the nature of the current study, data analyses were limited to descriptive statistics and a factor analysis, and the t-test conducted to examine differences between law enforcement officers and social workers was limited in statistical power. Future research should further explore relationships among variables using regression analysis. Additionally, many research participants were aware of the researcher's role as a Child Protective Services caseworker and may have modified their responses to match what they believed was desired of them, illustrating a potential Hawthorne effect. However, the researcher's role may also have provided some participants a level of familiarity or comfort during the study, possibly allowing or encouraging participants to be candid in their responses or to use less formal language. It may also be noted that the researcher's role allowed for greater success in recruitment of participants during study. Issues of population validation were also present, as it cannot be guaranteed that the sample of participants in the study were representative of the overall population of social workers and law enforcement officers in the United States.

Conclusion

Recent social movements, such as defund the police, call for reallocation of resources from police departments to other social services agencies with the idea that

social workers are better equipped to handle complex issues such as mental health and homelessness. And while there is a tendency to believe that social workers are better equipped to handle many societal issues, there should be data to support that assertion before broad changes are made to how policing and services are implemented across the country. In order to determine who is best equipped to handle various societal issues, there must first be a concrete understanding regarding how societal issues are perceived by those who are already tasked to address them. After all, it would not be helpful to reallocate funds from a group that has “failed” to address a certain problem, only for the funds to be directed to another group who also fails to address the issue at hand.

The aim of the present study was to explore what perceptions of behaviors were relevant to law enforcement officers and social workers in child maltreatment cases, specifically through the lens of recent discussion surrounding defunding the police. Results indicate that there is no significant difference between the perceived relevancy of severity, vulnerability, demeanor, intoxication, frequency, deterrence and criminality among law enforcement officers and social workers. However, there is a significant difference between the perceived relevancy of morality in child maltreatment investigations between law enforcement officers and social workers.

Further, thematic analysis of interviews with social workers and law enforcement officers revealed several repeating themes. Law enforcement officers did not feel that a social worker’s response to child maltreatment could be unwarranted or inappropriate, while many social workers expressed that a law enforcement response to child maltreatment can indeed be unwarranted or inappropriate in certain circumstances. The

results also indicated that law enforcement officers and social workers had varying opinions as to the benefit or negative impact of the reallocation of resources from police departments to social services agencies. Both law enforcement officers and social workers expressed support for collaboration between departments, with many participants envisioning a transformation of law enforcement responses to always include collaboration with social workers.

The results from the study suggest that policy makers may want to afford further consideration to collaborative responses between law enforcement and social services agencies to tackle societal issues such as child maltreatment, homelessness, or mental health. Additionally, policy makers may want to allot greater funding to research studying the impact of education on decision-making processes, as it is possible that education may be a mitigating factor to reduce bias in decision-making for social workers and law enforcement officers alike, especially pertaining to extralegal factors such as the perceived relevancy of the morality of actions by the perpetrator. Should future studies find benefit behind collaborative responses between law enforcement and social services agencies, policymakers should consider developing a national standard framework for how collaboration should occur to reduce variation and inconsistencies in practice.

References

- Abrams, D. E. (2013). A Primer on Criminal Child Abuse and Neglect Law. *Juvenile & family court journal*, 64(3), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jfcj.12006>
- Adams, J., Mrug, S., & Knight, D. C. (2018). Characteristics of child physical and sexual abuse as predictors of psychopathology. *Child abuse & neglect*, 86, 167-177.
- Alexander, M., & West, C. (2012). *The new Jim Crow: mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness* (Revised.). New Press.
- Andersen, L. H. (2016). How Children's Educational Outcomes and Criminality Vary by Duration and Frequency of Paternal Incarceration. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 665(1), 149-170.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716216632782>
- Arata, C. M., Langhinrichsen-Rohling, J., Bowers, D., & O'Farrill-Swails, L. (2005). Single versus Multi-Type Maltreatment: An Examination of the Long-Term Effects of Child Abuse. *Journal of aggression, maltreatment & trauma*, 11(4), 29-52. https://doi.org/10.1300/J146v11n04_02
- Baiden, P., Fallon, B., den Dunnen, W., & Black, T. (2017). Police Charging Decisions in Child Maltreatment Investigations: Findings from the 2008 Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect. *Journal of public child welfare*, 11(2), 211-230. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15548732.2016.1263267>
- Berthelot, E., & Morrow, W. (2020, June). UNR criminal justice professors identify 3 priorities in policing reform. Reno Gazette Journal.
<https://www.rgj.com/story/opinion/voices/2020/06/23/police-reform-post-floyd-era-berthelot-morrow/3233362001/>

- Bentley, T., & Widom, C. S. (2009). A 30-year Follow-up of the Effects of Child Abuse and Neglect on Obesity in Adulthood. *Obesity (Silver Spring, Md.)*, 17(10), 1900-1905. <https://doi.org/10.1038/oby.2009.160>
- Black Lives Matter. (2020). Retrieved 23 November 2020, from <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>
- Bloom, R. M., & Labovich, N. (2020). The Challenge of Deterring Bad Police Behavior: Implementing Reforms that Hold Police Accountable. *Case Western Reserve Law Review*, Forthcoming.
- Bolger, P. C., Kremser, J., & Walker, H. (2019). Detention or diversion? The influence of training and education on school police officer discretion. *Policing: an international journal of police strategies & management*, 42(2), 255-269. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM-01-2018-0007>
- Brighton, H., & Gigerenzer, G. (2015). The bias bias. *Journal of business research*, 68(8), 1772-1784. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.01.061>
- Brown, M., & Schept, J. (2017). New abolition, criminology and a critical carceral studies. *Punishment & society*, 19(4), 440-462. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1462474516666281>
- Cao, D., Srisuma, S., Bronstein, A. C., & Hoyte, C. O. (2016). Characterization of edible marijuana product exposures reported to United States poison centers. *Clinical toxicology (Philadelphia, Pa.)*, 54(9), 840-846. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15563650.2016.1209761>

- Carter, V. B., & Myers, M. (2008). Examination of Substantiated Lack of Supervision and Its Impact On Out-of-Home Placement: A National Sample. *Journal of public child welfare*, 2(1), 51-70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15548730802237320>
- Center for Public Policy, 2020. *Policing Around The Nation: Education, Philosophy, And Practice*. [online] Police Foundation. Available at:
<https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/PF-Report-Policing-Around-the-Nation_10-2017_Final.pdf> [Accessed 27 February 2022].
- Christopherson, R. J. (1998). Social Work Students' Perceptions of Child Abuse: An International Comparison and Postmodern Interpretation of its Findings. *The British journal of social work*, 28(1), 57-72.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordjournals.bjsw.a011318>
- Cobbina-Dungy, J. E., & Jones-Brown, D. (2021). Too much policing: Why calls are made to defund the police. *Punishment & society*, 146247452110456.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/14624745211045652>
- Cooke, C. L. (2005). Going Home: Formerly Incarcerated African American Men Return to Families and Communities. *Journal of family nursing*, 11(4), 388-404.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1074840705281753>
- Cross, T. P., Chuang, E., Helton, J. J., & Lux, E. A. (2015). Criminal Investigations in Child Protective Services Cases: An Empirical Analysis. *Child maltreatment*, 20(2), 104-114. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559514562605>
- Cross, T. P., Finkelhor, D., & Ormrod, R. (2005). Police Involvement in Child Protective Services Investigations: Literature Review and Secondary Data Analysis. *Child maltreatment*, 10(3), 224-244. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559505274506>

- Dallaire, D. H., & Wilson, L. C. (2010). The relation of exposure to parental criminal activity, arrest, and sentencing to children's maladjustment. *Journal of child and family studies, 19*(4), 404-418.
- Defund The Police. (2021). It's Time for a Change. <https://defundthepolice.org/>
- Drake, B., & Jonson-Reid, M. (2011). NIS interpretations: Race and the National Incidence Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect. *Children and youth services review, 33*(1), 16-20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.08.006>
- Edwards, F., Lee, H., & Esposito, M. (2019). Risk of being killed by police use of force in the United States by age, race–ethnicity, and sex. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences - PNAS, 116*(34), 16793-16798.
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1821204116>
- El Sayed, S. A., DeShay, R. A., Davis, J. B., Knox, K. N., & Kerley, K. R. (2020). A Blue Step Forward: An Exploratory Study of Law Enforcement Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence in the Southern United States. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 886260520966675-886260520966675*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520966675>
- Finkelhor, D., Vanderminden, J., Turner, H., Hamby, S., & Shattuck, A. (2014). Child maltreatment rates assessed in a national household survey of caregivers and youth. *Child abuse & neglect, 38*(9), 1421-1435.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2014.05.005>
- Foltran, F., Gregori, D., Franchin, L., Verduci, E., & Giovannini, M. (2011). Effect of alcohol consumption in prenatal life, childhood, and adolescence on child

- development. *Nutrition reviews*, 69(11), 642-659. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1753-4887.2011.00417>
- Font, S. A., & Maguire-Jack, K. (2020). The Scope, Nature, and Causes of Child Abuse and Neglect. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 692(1), 26-49. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716220969642>
- Freisthler, B., Wolf, J. P., Hodge, A. I., & Cao, Y. (2020). Alcohol Use and Harm to Children by Parents and Other Adults. *Child maltreatment*, 25(3), 277-288. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559519878514>
- Garwood, S. K. M. D., Gerassi, L. M. S. W., Jonson-Reid, M. P. D., Plax, K. M. D., & Drake, B. P. D. (2015). More Than Poverty: The Effect of Child Abuse and Neglect on Teen Pregnancy Risk. *Journal of adolescent health*, 57(2), 164-168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2015.05.004>
- Geller, A., & Fagan, J. (2010). Pot as Pretext: Marijuana, Race, and the New Disorder in New York City Street Policing. *Journal of empirical legal studies*, 7(4), 591-633. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1740-1461.2010.01190.x>
- Gelman, A., Fagan, J., & Kiss, A. (2007). An Analysis of the New York City Police Department's "Stop-and-Frisk" Policy in the Context of Claims of Racial Bias. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 102(479), 813-823. <https://doi.org/10.1198/016214506000001040>
- Gourdine, R. M. (2019). We Treat Everybody the Same: Race Equity in Child Welfare. *Social work in public health*, 34(1), 75-85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19371918.2018.1562400>

- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How Many Interviews Are Enough?: An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability. *Field methods*, 18(1), 59-82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1525822X05279903>
- Hagan, J., & Dinovitzer, R. (1999). Collateral Consequences of Imprisonment for Children, Communities, and Prisoners. *Crime and justice (Chicago, Ill.)*, 26, 121-162. <https://doi.org/10.1086/449296>
- Harner, H. M., & Riley, S. (2013). The Impact of Incarceration on Women's Mental Health: Responses From Women in a Maximum-Security Prison. *Qualitative health research*, 23(1), 26-42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732312461452>
- Heinonen, A., & Ellonen, N. (2016). 'Crime or not?' - police officers' perceptions of disciplinary violence, its criminalisation and its investigation. *Policing & society*, 26(5), 503-521. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2014.989151>
- Hepburn, J. R. (1978). Race and the Decision to Arrest: An Analysis of Warrants Issued. *The journal of research in crime and delinquency*, 15(1), 54-73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002242787801500106>
- Herrenkohl, T. I., & Jung, H. (2016). Effects of child abuse, adolescent violence, peer approval and pro-violence attitudes on intimate partner violence in adulthood. *Criminal behaviour and mental health*, 26(4), 304-314. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cbm.2014>
- Hildyard, K. L., & Wolfe, D. A. (2002). Child neglect: developmental issues and outcomes. *Child abuse & neglect*, 26(6), 679-695. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0145-2134\(02\)00341-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0145-2134(02)00341-1)

- Hirschtritt, M. E., & Binder, R. L. (2017). Interrupting the Mental Illness–Incarceration–Recidivism Cycle. *JAMA : the journal of the American Medical Association*, 317(7), 695-696. <https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2016.20992>
- Holt, S., Buckley, H., & Whelan, S. (2008). The impact of exposure to domestic violence on children and young people: A review of the literature. *Child abuse & neglect*, 32(8), 797-810. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2008.02.004>
- Howard, M. C. (2016). A Review of Exploratory Factor Analysis Decisions and Overview of Current Practices: What We Are Doing and How Can We Improve? *International journal of human-computer interaction*, 32(1), 51-62. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2015.1087664>
- Huebner, B. M. (2005). The Effect of Incarceration on Marriage and Work Over the Life Course. *Justice quarterly*, 22(3), 281-303. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07418820500089141>
- Humm, S. R. (1991). Criminalizing poor parenting skills as a means to contain violence by and against children. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, 139(4), 1123-1161.
- Jacobs, L. A., Kim, M. E., Whitfield, D. L., Gartner, R. E., Panichelli, M., Kattari, S. K., Mountz, S. E. (2020). Defund the Police: Moving Towards an Anti-Carceral Social Work. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10428232.2020.1852865>

- Johnson, R. R. (2017). Suspect Demeanor and Arrest: a Triggered Displacement of Aggression Explanation. *American journal of criminal justice*, 42(1), 170-187.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12103-016-9352-8>
- Kelley-Baker, T., & Romano, E. (2016). An Examination of the Effectiveness of Child Endangerment Laws in Preventing Child Fatalities in Alcohol-Involved Motor Vehicle Crashes. *Journal of studies on alcohol and drugs*, 77(5), 828-833.
<https://doi.org/10.15288/jsad.2016.77.828>
- Kramer, R., & Remster, B. (2018). Stop, Frisk, and Assault? Racial Disparities in Police Use of Force During Investigatory Stops. *Law & society review*, 52(4), 960-993.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/lasr.12366>
- Kruglanski, A. W., & Gigerenzer, G. (2011). Intuitive and Deliberate Judgments Are Based on Common Principles. *Psychological review*, 118(1), 97-109.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0020762>
- Lauritzen, C., Vis, S. A., & Fossum, S. (2018). Factors that determine decision-making in child protection investigations: A review of the literature. *Child & family social work*, 23(4), 743-756. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12446>
- Lindsey, V. W. (2011). *Child Abuse Investigations: How CPS and Law Enforcement Engage in Collaboration* (Publication Number Dissertation/Thesis) ProQuest Dissertations Publishing].
http://unr.summon.serialssolutions.com/2.0.0/link/0/eLvHCXMwrV07T8MwELaqsiAGQICAAvIfSEn8iBMkhFBp6VBeAhaWyq9AB1zaUvXvc3HjKnRgQvKQU5bEuXz3fWfdHUKUtONoDRMySUAX6FhYE6dE25xnWgH1KHimNGHK1yqTuzfy1GeDBroPpTHV5w4o6aHbjHWZNT_PMp--

[4PzqaxKVY6TK49YwU0NWsxbMJeOA0BsJBL7S6W_r7Ggp5oNNBXD7IDM
T4gwIUCK0KorVLDjX5DdSEQViHrbaBKeee6m7ZH5XJVTr_V3_L_X2kFbN
7VD-
13UsG4PPfeyPhazWcW15p1gBNf4P54gTuPz1g6gwdygbtlzZP2iUi4fgcIwyOH
O3UX3Eevve5Lpx9VwxmiDyCRPFiauEJmdcEVqCARcwu2Bf5kaFoUieFEM2I
Yy4VJZZoYSa02RisLkrOAuEkPUNONnT1EWMpMMZMzCYup3OYqLnJNqb
ZEG5XSI9QKOzWs_rDZcLVNx3_ebaHNZRa4XCeo-
T2d21OgEW565p3hBzEDyEM](#)

Lippke, R. L. (2017). Punishment Drift: The Spread of Penal Harm and What We Should Do About It. *Criminal law and philosophy*, 11(4), 645-659.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11572-016-9392-7>

Lundman, R. J. (1994). DEMEANOR OR CRIME? THE MIDWEST CITY POLICE-CITIZEN ENCOUNTERS STUDY. *Criminology (Beverly Hills)*, 32(4), 631-656.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1994.tb01168.x>

McElveen, J., & Cramer, D. (2003). Undoing Racism in Social Work Practice. *Race, gender & class (Towson, Md.)*, 10(2), 41-57.

McHugh, M. L. (2012). Interrater reliability: the kappa statistic. *Biochemia medica*,

22(3), 276-282. <https://doi.org/10.11613/BM.2012.031>

Meares, T. L. (2014). The Law and Social Science of Stop and Frisk. *Annual review of*

law and social science, 10(1), 335-352. [https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-102612-134043)

[lawsocsci-102612-134043](https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-102612-134043)

Mellor, D., & Deering, R. (2010). Professional response and attitudes toward female-perpetrated child sexual abuse: a study of psychologists, psychiatrists,

probationary psychologists and child protection workers. *Psychology, crime & law*, 16(5), 415-438. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10683160902776850>

Moschion, J., & Johnson, G. (2019). Homelessness and Incarceration: A Reciprocal Relationship? *Journal of quantitative criminology*, 35(4), 855-887. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10940-019-09407-y>

Murray, J., Janson, C.-G., & Farrington, D. P. (2007). Crime in Adult Offspring of Prisoners: A Cross-National Comparison of Two Longitudinal Samples. *Criminal justice and behavior*, 34(1), 133-149. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854806289549>

Name Census. (2022). *What are the 5,000 most common last names in the U.S.?* NameCensus.com. Retrieved February 20, 2022 from <http://namecensus.com/last-names/>

National Association of Social Workers. (2020). *Social Work Federal Requirements*. <https://www.socialworkers.org/Advocacy/Policy-Issues/Social-Work-Federal-Requirements.aspx>

Nyathi, N. (2016). *Factors that are key influences to effective interprofessional collaborative child protection decision-making and practice: social workers' perceptions*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Nyathi, N. (2018). Child protection decision-making: social workers' perceptions. *Journal of social work practice*, 32(2), 189-203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650533.2018.1448768>

O'Leary, P., Easton, S. D., & Gould, N. (2017). The Effect of Child Sexual Abuse on Men: Toward a Male Sensitive Measure. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 32(3), 423-445. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260515586362>

- Parke, R., & Clarke-Stewart, K. A. (2002, January). Effects of parental incarceration on young children. In *National Policy Conference. From Prison to Home: The Effect of Incarceration and Reentry on Children, Families, and Communities*.
- Patterson, G. T., & Swan, P. G. (2019). Police social work and social service collaboration strategies one hundred years after Vollmer: A systematic review. *Policing: an international journal of police strategies & management*, 42(5), 863-886. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM-06-2019-0097>
- Raphael, S. (2011). Incarceration and Prisoner Reentry in the United States. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 635(1), 192-215. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716210393321>
- Riascos, R., Kumfa, P., Rojas, R., Cuellar, H., & Descartes, F. (2008). Fatal methadone intoxication in a child. *Emergency radiology*, 15(1), 67-70. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10140-007-0627-8>
- Robichaud, M.-J., Pullen Sansfaçon, A., & Poirier, M.-A. (2020). Decision-making at substantiation in cases involving racialized families: Child protection workers' perceptions of influential factors. *Children and youth services review*, 110, 104794. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.104794>
- Robinson, A. L., Pinchevsky, G. M., & Guthrie, J. A. (2018). A small constellation: risk factors informing police perceptions of domestic abuse. *Policing & society*, 28(2), 189-204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2016.1151881>
- Robinson, T. (2019). No Right to Rest: Police Enforcement Patterns and Quality of Life Consequences of the Criminalization of Homelessness. *Urban affairs review*

(*Thousand Oaks, Calif.*), 55(1), 41-73.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087417690833>

Ross, C. T. (2015). A Multi-Level Bayesian Analysis of Racial Bias in Police Shootings at the County-Level in the United States, 2011-2014. *PloS one*, 10(11), e0141854-e0141854. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0141854>

Rydberg, J., & Terrill, W. (2010). The Effect of Higher Education on Police Behavior. *Police quarterly*, 13(1), 92-120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098611109357325>

Schleiden, C., Soloski, K. L., Milstead, K., & Rhynehart, A. (2020). Racial Disparities in Arrests: A Race Specific Model Explaining Arrest Rates Across Black and White Young Adults. *Child & adolescent social work journal*, 37(1), 1-14.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-019-00618-7>

Schlotthauer, A. E., Guse, C. E., Brixey, S., Corden, T. E., Hargarten, S. W., & Layde, P. M. (2011). Motor vehicle crashes associated with alcohol: child passenger injury and restraint use. *American journal of preventive medicine*, 40(3), 320-323.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2010.11.005>

Semanchin Jones, A. (2014). Implementation of differential response: A racial equity analysis. *Child abuse & neglect*, 39, 73-85.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2014.04.013>

Shrot, S., Poretti, A., Tucker, E. W., Soares, B. P., & Huisman, T. A. G. M. (2017). Acute brain injury following illicit drug abuse in adolescent and young adult patients: spectrum of neuroimaging findings. *The neuroradiology journal*, 30(2),

144-150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1971400917691994>

- Smith, S. M., & Aamodt, M. G. (1997). The relationship between education, experience, and police performance. *Journal of police and criminal psychology*, 12(2), 7-14.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02806696>
- Stokes, J., & Schmidt, G. (2012). Child Protection Decision-making: A Factorial Analysis Using Case Vignettes. *Social work (New York)*, 57(1), 83-90.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/swr007>
- Stoltenborgh, M., Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J., & van Ijzendoorn, M. H. (2013). The neglect of child neglect: a meta-analytic review of the prevalence of neglect. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 48(3), 345-355.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-012-0549-y>
- Tasca, M., Rodriguez, N., Spohn, C., & Koss, M. P. (2013). Police Decision-making in Sexual Assault Cases: Predictors of Suspect Identification and Arrest. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 28(6), 1157-1177.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260512468233>
- Taylor, B. J. (2017). Heuristics in Professional Judgement: A Psycho-Social Rationality Model. *The British journal of social work*, 47(4), 1043-1060.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcw084>
- Thompson, M., & Kahn, K. B. (2016). Mental health, race, and police contact: intersections of risk and trust in the police. *Policing : an international journal of police strategies & management*, 39(4), 807-819.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM-02-2016-0015>
- Tonmyr, L., & Gonzalez, A. (2015). Correlates of joint child protection and police child sexual abuse investigations: results from the Canadian Incidence Study of

- Reported Child Abuse and Neglect-2008. *Health promotion and chronic disease prevention in Canada*, 35(8-9), 130-137. <https://doi.org/10.24095/hpcdp.35.8/9.03>
- van der Put, C. E., Assink, M., Gubbels, J., & Boekhout van Solinge, N. F. (2018). Identifying effective components of child maltreatment interventions: A meta-analysis. *Clinical child and family psychology review*, 21(2), 171-202. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10567-017-0250-5>
- Vreeland, A. B. (2000). The criminalization of child welfare in New York City: sparing the child or spoiling the family? *The Fordham urban law journal*, 27(3), 1053.
- Waaland, P., & Keeley, S. (1985). Police Decision-making in Wife Abuse: The Impact of Legal and Extralegal Factors. *Law and human behavior*, 9(4), 355-366. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01044476>
- Wallander, L., & Molander, A. (2014). Disentangling Professional Discretion: A Conceptual and Methodological Approach. *Professions and professionalism*, 4(3). <https://doi.org/10.7577/pp.808>
- Whittaker, A. (2018). How Do Child-Protection Practitioners Make Decisions in Real-Life Situations? Lessons from the Psychology of Decision-making. *The British journal of social work*, 48(7), 1967-1984. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx145>
- Willis, C. L., & Wells, R. H. (1988). The police and child abuse: An analysis of police decisions to report illegal behavior. *Criminology*, 26(4), 695-716. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1988.tb00860>.
- Young, B., Collier, N. L., Siennick, S. E., & Mears, D. P. (2020). Incarceration and the life course: Age-graded effects of the first parental incarceration experience.

Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology, 6, 256-279.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40865-020-00143-7>

Young, J. C., & Widom, C. S. (2014). Long-term effects of child abuse and neglect on emotion processing in adulthood. *Child abuse & neglect*, 38(8), 1369-1381.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2014.03.008>

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

Table A1

Severity Survey Subsection: Question Content

Prompt
Focusing on the severity of the following circumstances, how relevant are the following factors when investigating child maltreatment?
Question Content
Q1. The parent/caregiver drove while under the influence with a child in the car and the child was harmed.
Q2. The child got into the parent/caregiver's alcohol and had to seek medical attention.
Q3. The child consumed the parent/caregiver's marijuana and had to seek medical attention.
Q4. The child consumed the parent/caregiver's illegal street drug (i.e., methamphetamines, heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, illegally obtained prescription drugs) and had to seek medical attention.
Q5. The child consumed the parent/caregiver's prescribed drug (i.e., Percocet, Vicodin, Xanax) and had to seek medical attention.
Q6. The parent/caregiver involved the child in criminal activity (i.e., having the child assist in drug dealing).
Q7. The parent/caregiver had the child present for criminal activity (i.e., having the child present during drug dealing).
Q8. The parent/caregiver's home is visibly filthy and unsanitary (i.e., there are feces in the home, no clear walkway, rotting food, etc.)
Q9. The child was found wandering unsupervised on a busy highway.
Q10. The child intervened in domestic violence between the parents/caregivers and was harmed.
Q11. The child was abandoned without any supplies (i.e., the parent/caregivers left the child without any supplies, clothing, or items the child needed).
Q12. The child sustained a belt mark as a result of being struck with a belt by the parent/caregiver.
Q13. The child was molested by the parent/caregiver.

Table A2*Vulnerability Survey Subsection: Question Content*

Prompt
Focusing vulnerability, how relevant are the following factors when investigating child maltreatment? For the purposes of this study, vulnerability may be defined as the risk of harm/abuse/maltreatment to the child based on their age or developmental status.
Question Content
Q1. The parent/caregiver drove while under the influence of alcohol with a 2-year-old child in the car.
Q2. A 3-year-old child consumes the parent/caregiver's alcohol.
Q3. A 4-year-old child consumes the parent/caregiver's marijuana.
Q4. A 2-year-old consumes the parent/caregiver's illegal street drug (ie., methamphetamines, heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, illegally obtained prescription drugs).
Q5. A 2-year-old consumes the parent/caregiver's prescribed drugs (i.e., Percocet, Vicodin, Xanax).
Q6. The parent/caregiver involves their 6-year-old child in criminal activity.
Q7. The parent/caregiver has their 6-year-old child present for criminal activity.
Q8. The home is filthy, and a 2-year-old child resides in the residence.
Q9. The parent/caregiver does not properly supervise their 3-year-old child.
Q10. The parent/caregivers engage in domestic violence in the presence of their 4-year-old child.
Q11. A child has been abandoned by their parents/caregivers.
Q12. A parent/caregiver physically abused a 6-year-old child.
Q13. A parent/caregiver sexually abused a 6-year-old child.

Table A3*Demeanor Survey Subsection: Question Content*

Prompt
Focusing on the parent/caregiver's demeanor, how relevant are the following factors when investigating child maltreatment? For the purposes of this study, demeanor may be defined as the parent/caregiver's observable conduct, behavior, and/or attitude during the investigation.
Question Content
Q1. The parent/caregiver drove while under the influence with the child in the car and is uncooperative with the investigation.
Q2. The child consumed alcohol and the parent/caregiver is uncooperative with the investigation.
Q3. The child consumed marijuana and the parent/caregiver is uncooperative with the investigation.
Q4. The child consumed illegal street drugs (i.e., methamphetamines, heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, illegally obtained prescription drugs) and the parent/caregiver is uncooperative with the investigation.
Q5. The child consumed prescribed drugs (i.e., Percocet, Vicodin, Xanax) and the parent/caregiver is uncooperative with the investigation.
Q6. The parent/caregiver had the child involved in criminal activity and is uncooperative with the investigation.
Q7. The parent/caregiver had the child present for criminal activity and is uncooperative with the investigation.
Q8. The parent/caregiver has a filthy home and is uncooperative with the investigation.
Q9. The parent/caregiver did not properly supervise their child and is uncooperative with the investigation.
Q10. There is domestic violence occurring in the home and the parent/caregivers are uncooperative with the investigation.
Q11. The parent/caregiver abandoned the child and is uncooperative with the investigation.
Q12. The parent/caregiver physically abused the child and is uncooperative with the investigation.
Q13. The parent/caregiver sexually abused the child and is uncooperative with the investigation.

Table A4*Intoxication Survey Subsection: Question Content*

Prompt
<p>Focusing on levels of intoxication of the parent/caregiver, how relevant are the following factors when investigating child maltreatment?</p> <p>For the purposes of this study, intoxication may be defined as the degree to which a caregiver is intoxicated on drugs or alcohol based on professional judgement in the field.</p>
Question Content
<p>Q1. The parent/caregiver is caught driving while under the influence with the child in the car.</p> <p>Q2. The child consumes alcohol while the parent/caregiver is intoxicated.</p> <p>Q3. The child consumes marijuana while the parent/caregiver is intoxicated.</p> <p>Q4. The child consumes the parent/caregiver's illegal street drugs (i.e., methamphetamines, heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, illegally obtained prescription drugs) while the parent/caregiver is intoxicated.</p> <p>Q5. The child consumes the parent/caregiver's prescribed drugs (i.e., Percocet, Vicodin, Xanax) while the parent/caregiver is intoxicated.</p> <p>Q6. The parent/caregiver has the child involved in criminal activity while they are intoxicated.</p> <p>Q7. The parent/caregiver had the child present for criminal activity while they are intoxicated.</p> <p>Q8. The home is filthy and the parent/caregiver is intoxicated.</p> <p>Q9. The parent/caregiver fails to properly supervise the child while intoxicated.</p> <p>Q10. There is domestic violence occurring in the home and the parent/caregivers are intoxicated.</p> <p>Q11. The parent/caregiver abandoned the child while intoxicated.</p> <p>Q12. The parent/caregiver physically abused the child while intoxicated.</p> <p>Q13. The parent/caregiver sexually abused the child while intoxicated.</p>

Table A5*Frequency Survey Subsection: Question Content*

Prompt
<p>Focusing on the frequency of the following circumstances, how relevant are the following factors when investigating child maltreatment?</p> <p>For the purposes of this study, frequency may be defined as the rate at which harm/abuse/maltreatment occurs or is repeated over a particular period of time.</p>
Question Content
<p>Q1. In the past 6 months, the parent/caregiver has been pulled over for driving under the influence with their child more than once.</p> <p>Q2. In the past 6 months, the child has consumed alcohol while in the parent/caregiver's care more than once.</p> <p>Q3. In the past 6 months, the child has consumed marijuana while in the parent/caregiver's care more than once.</p> <p>Q4. In the past 6 months, the child consumed the parent/caregiver's illegal street drugs (i.e., methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, illegally obtained prescription drugs) more than once.</p> <p>Q5. In the past 6 months, the child has consumed the parent/caregiver's prescribed drugs (i.e., Percocet, Vicodin, Xanax) more than once.</p> <p>Q6. In the past 6 months, the parent/caregiver involved the child in criminal activity more than once.</p> <p>Q7. In the past 6 months, the parent/caregiver had the child present for criminal activity more than once.</p> <p>Q8. In the past 6 months, the parent/caregiver's home has been observed to be filthy more than once.</p> <p>Q9. In the past 6 months, the parent/caregiver failed to properly supervise their child more than once.</p> <p>Q10. In the past 6 months, domestic violence in the presence of the child has occurred more than once.</p> <p>Q11. In the past 6 months, the parents/caregivers abandoned the child more than once.</p> <p>Q12. In the past 6 months, the parent/caregiver has physically abused the child more than once.</p> <p>Q13. In the past 6 months, the parent/caregiver has sexually abused the child more than once.</p>

Table A6*Morality Survey Subsection: Question Content*

Prompt
<p>Focusing on the morality of the following circumstances, how relevant are the following factors when investigating child maltreatment?</p> <p>For the purposes of this study, morality may be defined as the extent to which an action is right or wrong.</p>
Question Content
<p>Q1. The parent/caregiver drove while under the influence with the child in the car.</p> <p>Q2. The child consumes the parent/caregiver's alcohol.</p> <p>Q3. The child consumes the parent/caregiver's marijuana.</p> <p>Q4. The child consumes the parent/caregiver's illegal street drugs (i.e., methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, illegally obtained prescription drugs).</p> <p>Q5. The child consumes the parent/caregiver's prescribed drugs (i.e., Percocet, Vicodin, Xanax) more than once.</p> <p>Q6. The parent/caregiver involved the child in criminal activity.</p> <p>Q7. The parent/caregiver has the child present for criminal activity.</p> <p>Q8. The parent/caregiver's home is filthy.</p> <p>Q9. The parent/caregiver failed to properly supervise their child.</p> <p>Q10. There is domestic violence occurring in the presence of the child.</p> <p>Q11. The parents/caregiver abandoned the child.</p> <p>Q12. The parent/caregiver physically abused the child.</p> <p>Q13. The parent/caregiver sexually abused the child.</p>

Table A7*Formal Action as Deterrence Survey Subsection: Question Content*

Prompt
<p>Focusing on formal action as a deterrent, how relevant are the following factors when investigating child maltreatment?</p> <p>For the purposes of this study, formal action may be defined as an action such as an arrest of the parent/caregiver or a safety plan which is determined to prevent the behavior from occurring again, or is determined to teach the parent/caregiver a lesson.</p>
Question Content
<p>Q1. The parent/caregiver drove while under the influence with the child in the car, and you believe formal intervention will deter the parent/caregiver from driving under the influence with the child again.</p> <p>Q2. The child consumed the parent/caregiver's alcohol, and you believe formal intervention will deter the parent/caregiver from allowing the child to get into their alcohol again.</p> <p>Q3. The child consumed the parent/caregiver's marijuana, and you believe formal intervention will deter the parent/caregiver from allowing the child to get into their marijuana again.</p> <p>Q4. The child consumed the parent/caregiver's illegal street drugs (i.e., methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, illegally obtained prescription drugs), and you believe formal intervention will deter the parent/caregiver from allowing the child to get into their illegal street drugs again.</p> <p>Q5. The child consumed the parent/caregiver's prescribed drugs (i.e., Percocet, Vicodin, Xanax), and you believe formal intervention will deter the parent/caregiver from allowing the child to get into their prescribed drugs again.</p> <p>Q6. The parent/caregiver had the child involved in criminal activity, and you believe formal intervention will deter the parent/caregiver from doing so again.</p> <p>Q7. The parent/caregiver had the child present for criminal activity, and you believe formal intervention will deter the parent/caregiver from doing so again.</p> <p>Q8. The parent/caregiver's home is filthy, and you believe formal intervention will deter the parent/caregiver from allowing the home condition to become filthy again.</p> <p>Q9. The parent/caregiver failed to properly supervise their child, and you believe formal intervention will prevent the parent/caregiver from doing so again.</p> <p>Q10. There is domestic violence occurring in the presence of the child, and you believe formal intervention will deter the parents/caregivers from engaging in domestic violence again.</p> <p>Q11. The parents/caregiver abandoned the child, and you believe formal intervention will deter the parent/caregiver from abandoning the child again.</p> <p>Q12. The parent/caregiver physically abused the child, and you believe formal intervention will prevent the parent/caregiver from doing so again.</p> <p>Q13. The parent/caregiver sexually abused the child, and you believe formal intervention will prevent the parent/caregiver from doing so again.</p>

Table A8*Criminality Survey Subsection: Question Content*

Prompt
<p>Focusing on the criminality of the following circumstances, how relevant are the following factors when investigating child maltreatment?</p> <p>For the purposes of this study, criminality may be defined as a behavior or action that is contrary or forbidden by criminal law.</p>
Question Content
<p>Q1. The parent/caregiver drove while intoxicated with the child.</p> <p>Q2. The child consumed the parent/caregiver's alcohol.</p> <p>Q3. The child consumed the parent/caregiver's marijuana.</p> <p>Q4. The child consumed the parent/caregiver's illegal street drugs (i.e., methamphetamine, heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, illegally obtained prescription drugs).</p> <p>Q5. The child consumed the parent/caregiver's prescribed drugs (i.e., Percocet, Vicodin, Xanax) more than once.</p> <p>Q6. The parent/caregiver has the child involved in criminal activity.</p> <p>Q7. The parent/caregiver has the child present for criminal activity.</p> <p>Q8. The parent/caregiver's home is filthy.</p> <p>Q9. The parent/caregiver fails to properly supervise the child.</p> <p>Q10. There is domestic violence in the home in the presence of the child.</p> <p>Q11. The parent/caregiver abandoned the child.</p> <p>Q12. The parent/caregiver physically abused the child.</p> <p>Q13. The parent/caregiver sexually abused the child.</p>

APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW INSTRUMENTS

Table B1

Semi Structured Interview Questions - Pilot Phase

Questions	Probe
Q1. What do you feel is important in determining whether child abuse or neglect occurred?	
Q2. Your top-rated categories were X, Y, and Z. Why did you rate those factors as most important in determining whether child maltreatment occurred?	Does caregiver role matter (i.e., does it matter if the maltreatment was perpetrated by a biological parent, a different primary caregiver, or someone who does not routinely care for the child?)
Q3. Are there ever situations in which a law enforcement response to child maltreatment is unwarranted/inappropriate?	How? Can you provide me with an example?
Q4. Do you believe a law enforcement response may be more appropriate in certain circumstances of child maltreatment?	What circumstances may lead you to believe that a law enforcement response may be more appropriate?
Q5. Do you believe arrest deters child maltreatment?	How? Why? Please elaborate as to why you do/do not believe arrest deters maltreatment.
Q6. Are there ever situations in which a social work response to child maltreatment is unwarranted/inappropriate?	How? Can you provide me with an example?
Q7. Do you believe a social work response may be more appropriate in certain circumstances of child maltreatment?	What circumstances may lead you to believe that a social worker response may be more appropriate?
Q8. Explain why demeanor is/is not relevant in determining whether child maltreatment occurred	
Q9. Elaborate on whether or not you believe re-allocating police funds to social services would be useful to the community	

Table B2*Difference in Semi-Structured Interview Questions: Phase 1 and Phase 2*

Phase 1 Interview Questions		Phase 2 Interview Questions	
Question	Probe	Question	Probe
Q1. What do you feel is important in determining whether child abuse or neglect occurred?		Q1. What factors do you feel are important when conducting an investigation of child maltreatment? *	
Q2. Your top-rated categories were X, Y, and Z. Why did you rate those factors as most important in determining whether child maltreatment occurred?	Does caregiver role matter (i.e., does it matter if the maltreatment was perpetrated by a biological parent, a different primary caregiver, or someone who does not routinely care for the child?)	Q2. Your top-rated categories were X, Y, and Z. Why did you rate those factors as most relevant when making decisions in an investigation of child maltreatment? *	Does caregiver role matter (i.e., does it matter if the maltreatment was perpetrated by a biological parent, a different primary caregiver, or someone who does not routinely care for the child?)
Q3. Are there ever situations in which a law enforcement response to child maltreatment is unwarranted/inappropriate?	How? Can you provide me with an example?	Q3. Is it always necessary for law enforcement to be present in cases of child maltreatment? *	Are there ever situations in which a law enforcement response to child maltreatment is unwarranted/inappropriate? How? Can you provide an example? *
Q4. Do you believe a law enforcement response may be more appropriate in certain circumstances of child maltreatment?	What circumstances may lead you to believe that a law enforcement response may be more appropriate?	Q4. Are there ever situations in which a law enforcement response to child maltreatment may be more preferable than a social worker response to child maltreatment? *	What circumstances may lead you to believe that a law enforcement response may be more appropriate? *
Q5. Do you believe arrest deters child maltreatment?	How? Why? Please elaborate as to why you do/do not believe arrest deters maltreatment.	Q5. Is it always necessary for social workers to be present in cases of child maltreatment? *	Are there ever situations in which a social worker response to child maltreatment is unwarranted/inappropriate? How? Can you provide an example? *
Q6. Are there ever situations in which a social work response to child maltreatment is unwarranted/inappropriate?	How? Can you provide me with an example?	Q6. Are there ever situations in which a social worker response to child maltreatment may be more preferable than a law enforcement response to child maltreatment? *	What circumstances may lead you to believe that a social worker response may be more appropriate? *
Q7. Do you believe a social work response may be more appropriate in certain circumstances of child maltreatment?	What circumstances may lead you to believe that a social worker response may be more appropriate?	Q7. Do you believe arrest deters child maltreatment?	How? Why? Please elaborate as to why you do/do not believe arrest deters maltreatment.
Q8. Explain why demeanor is or is not relevant to your decision making in child maltreatment cases.		Q8. Explain why demeanor is or is not relevant to your decision making in child maltreatment cases.	
Q9. Elaborate on whether or not you believe re-allocating police funds to social services would be useful to the community.		Q9. Elaborate on whether or not you believe re-allocating police funds to social services would be useful to the community.	

Note. Questions that had language revisions from the pilot phase to the final phase are marked with an asterisk.

APPENDIX C: EXIT SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

Table C2

Exit Survey Questions: Phase 1 and Phase 2

Phase 1		Phase 2	
Questions	Response Options	Questions	Response Options
How many years have you been employed as an officer/social worker?	Fill in	What is your position?	Caseworker/Social Worker
How old are you?	Fill in		Law Enforcement Officer
	Male		Fill in: Sergeant, Patrol Officer, Lieutenant, Detective, etc.
What is your sex/gender?	Female	What is your title?	Fill in: Assessment Caseworker, Permanency Caseworker, Supervisor, etc.
	Other, fill in	How many years have you been employed as an officer/caseworker?	Fill in
	Black/African American	How old are you?	Fill in
What is your race?	American Indian or Alaska Native	What is your sex/gender?	Male
	Asian		Female
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander		Other, fill in
	Other, fill in		White
	\$0 - \$25,999	What is your race?	Black/African American
What is your annual income?	\$26,000 - \$50, 999		American Indian or Alaska Native
	\$51,000 - \$75,999		Asian
	\$76,000 - \$100,999		Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
	\$101,000 - \$125,999		Other, fill in
	\$126, 000 - \$150, 999		\$0 - \$25,999
	\$150, 000 +		\$26,000 - \$50, 999
What is your highest level of education?	High School Diploma	What is your annual income?	\$51,000 - \$75,999
	Associate's Degree		\$76,000 - \$100,999
	Bachelor's Degree		\$101,000 - \$125,999
	Graduate Degree		\$126, 000 - \$150, 999
			\$150, 000 +

Phase 1		Phase 2	
Questions	Response Options	Questions	Response Options
What is your political affiliation?	Independent Libertarian Green Party Republican Democrat N/A (non-partisan)	What is your highest level of education?	High School Diploma Associate's Degree Bachelor's Degree Graduate Degree Never Married or Single
What is your political ideology?	Liberal Centrist Conservative Moderate Conservative N/A (non-partisan)	What is your marital status?	Married Divorced/Separated Widowed I am a parent. I am not a parent.
What is your first name?	Fill in	Are you a parent?	Independent Libertarian Green Party Republican Democrat N/A (non-partisan)
What is your last name?	Fill in	What is your political affiliation?	Liberal Centrist Conservative Moderate Conservative N/A (non-partisan)
What is your position?	Police Officer Caseworker	What is your political ideology?	Fill in Fill in Fill in