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**STUDENT REPORTS OF PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL
MALTREATMENT IN SHOOOLS: AN UNDER EXPLORED ASPECT OF
STUDENT VICTIMIZATION IN SCHOOLS**

A Dissertation
Presented for the
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Degree
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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Anthony Whitted, my parents, Jean and Bob Davis, my sister Allyson Davis, and the rest of the family, for always believing in me, inspiring me and encouraging me to achieve my goals.

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Abstract

Purpose

This study examined the extent to which students reported that adults in a school setting had mistreated them. Specifically, this study provides findings on the students' perceptions of the extent to which they were the victims of physical maltreatment and psychological maltreatment during their school careers. The study investigated whether the types or frequency of maltreatment was related to demographic characteristics of the student (i.e., race and gender).

Methods

The sample ($N = 50$) was composed of students in alternative education schools in the southeastern U.S. during the 2004-2005 school year. Students reported the frequency and types of maltreatment involving adult educators they experienced. A revised version of the *Student Alienation and Trauma Survey (SATS)* was utilized. Students also described their worst school experience.

Results

Eighty-six percent of students ($n = 43$) reported at least one incident of physical maltreatment by an adult educator; 88 % ($n = 44$) reported at least one incident of psychological maltreatment. The most frequently reported types of maltreatment perpetrated by adult educators included the following: prohibited from using the bathroom, grabbed, pushed, yelled at, disciplined unfairly, and isolated from peers. Sixty-four percent ($n = 29$) of students reported that an adult was involved in their worst school experience. Of these students, 43% ($n = 19$) reported that the experience upset him/her "a lot". Students' descriptions included the following: being pushed into vending machines,

being told by a teacher that she dressed like a “whore”, being forced to urinate on himself because an educator refused to permit him to go to the bathroom, and being cussed at by a bus driver.

A multiple regression analyses indicated that gender and race combined accounted for 21% of the variance in physical maltreatment, adjusted R squared = .21, $F(2, 47) = 7.54, p < .01$. There was a significant effect of race on physical maltreatment, $B = -5.30, t(2, 47) = -3.86, p < .01$, two tailed. Controlling for gender, minority students reported experiencing more physical maltreatment than whites. Gender did not account for a significant amount of the variability, $B = -.77, t(2, 47) = -.45, p = .65$, two tailed.

Gender and race combined accounted for 11% of the variance in psychological maltreatment, adjusted R squared = .11, $F(2, 47) = 3.92, p = .03$. More specifically, race accounted for a significant amount of the variability in the psychological maltreatment score, $B = -5.58, t(2, 47) = -2.76, p = .01$, two tailed. Gender did not account for a significant amount of the variability, $B = 1.17, t(2, 47) = .47, p = .64$, two tailed.

Implications

Results from this study indicated that students experience a range of physical and psychological abuse at the hands of adult educators. The findings suggest that additional protections are needed in schools to prevent educators from misusing their positions of authority. Social workers should advocate for the inclusion of information about adult to student maltreatment in school violence prevention programs. Findings suggest that adult to student maltreatment in schools must be more thoroughly and systematically investigated in future research.

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Chapter One:

Purpose and Significance of the Study

Statement of the Problem

In order for children to learn, they must first feel safe and secure (Erikson, 1950). This is achieved in part, by having positive, nurturing relationships with adults and peers in the school setting (Erikson). Developmental theorists suggest a positive relationship with caregivers is a critical developmental need (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969; Erikson; Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975).

During a student's school career, a child spends numerous hours under the care and guidance of adult educators. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1995) reports, "The American institutions that have the greatest influence in shaping the life course of adolescents are primarily families and the schools..." The student's identity formation, competence, social and academic abilities, career paths and social relationships are all affected by their experiences with adults in the school (Alspaugh, 1998; Ashford, LeCroy, & Lortie, 2001; Black, 2002; Erickson, 1987; Jordan, Lara, & McPartland, 1994). Teachers are so influential in the lives of students that elementary students often use the phrase "teacher says" to cap a family argument (Nesbit & Philpott, 2002, p. 46). The power educators have is recognized by the state, as school personnel are given the same rights as parents (i.e., *en loco parentis*). With this right comes the opportunity to be a positive influence on a child's social-emotional development and school success or to cause harm (Vargas-Moll, 1991).

Teachers who express confidence in their students and praise students when they do well set the foundation for building positive relationships and learning experiences

(Willie, 2000). Willie suggests this type of positive regard enhances the students' motivation to do well and contributes to the development of a bond of loyalty between the teacher and the student. When students respect and have confidence in their teachers, they are more likely to do their best. In return, when teachers respect and have confidence in their students, they encourage and support the students' efforts. Schools that nurture and support students allow teaching and learning to flourish (Gadsden, Smith, & Jordan, 1996).

Unfortunately, for many children school is neither a place that fosters healthy social/emotional development nor is it an ideal place for learning (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995). In far too many schools, the adult-student relationship is characterized by indifference, fear, and intimidation (Hyman & Snook, 1999). For many students, adults are the perpetrators of physical and psychological maltreatment.

The most widely recognized type of adult-student physical maltreatment is sanctioned physical discipline, or corporal punishment. Corporal punishment most often involves spanking a child with a bare hand or a wooden board (a paddle; Hyman & Zelikoff, 1987). Estimates of the use of corporal punishment during the 1999-2000 school years indicated 42,038 students were subjected to corporal punishment in schools in the United States (2000 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Compliance Report, 2003). Other sources suggest this is a conservative estimate. For example, The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP, 2000) estimated the use of corporal punishment is much higher, reporting that corporal punishment is administered between 1 and 2 million times a year in schools in the United States. The practice of controlling children through the

threat and use of physical maltreatment is a legal practice in 23 states (National Coalition to Abolish Corporal Punishment in Schools (NCACPS), 2003).

While there is a substantial amount of research data which suggest the practice of corporal punishment is prevalent, other forms of maltreatment in schools have not been empirically studied (Hyman, Weiler et al., 1997). Of all types of maltreatment students experience in the school setting, adult-student psychological maltreatment is the least understood. Yet, the child abuse and neglect literature suggests psychological maltreatment (also referred to as “mental injury,” “emotional abuse,” “emotional neglect,” “psychological battering,” and “emotional maltreatment”) and its effects can be even more damaging than physical maltreatment (Briere & Runtz, 1988; Egeland, Sroufe, & Erickson, 1983; Garbarino, Guttman, & Seeley, 1986; Hart, Gelardo, & Brassard, 1986; Ney, 1987; Vissing, Straus, Gelles, & Harrop, 1991).

As Nesbit and Philpott (2002) pointedly state, “Sometimes learning difficulties originate from within the student, but often the problem results from a classroom atmosphere that induces fear and stifles initiative. A teacher cannot open the door to learning while destroying students' self-esteem,” (p. 46). When children become the target of physical and psychological maltreatment, a pattern of school failure and behavioral problems often follow. Students who feel ridiculed, mistreated, verbally or physically attacked or ignored by the school staff or their peers, can develop feelings of victimization and alienation, potentially resulting in various psychological manifestations (Halkias et al., 2003). Research shows aversive and punitive environments predictably promote antisocial behaviors, such as aggression, maltreatment, vandalism, and escape (Azrin, Hake, Holz, & Hutchinson, 1965;

Berkowitz, 1993; Gordon, 1989; Hyman, Snook et al., 2001; Halkias, et al.; Mayer, 1995).

In summary, positive relationships with adults and peers are a critical developmental need and are significant factors in a student's educational success (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995). In order to encourage and promote nurturing relationships within the school, educators need to be aware of the nature and extent of adult-to-student physical and psychological maltreatment. Few empirical studies have explored the types of maltreatment adults perpetrate against children or the extent to which psychological maltreatment occurs in school settings (National Research Council, 1993; Pokalo & Hyman, 1993; Sarno, 1992).

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which students reported adults in a school setting had mistreated them. Chapter Two discusses the importance of developing and maintaining positive relationships in the school. The importance of positive relationships with adults in the school setting will be explored in relation to developmental theory and empirical research. Next, this chapter will critically analyze the current literature on adult-child physical maltreatment and adult-child psychological maltreatment. Chapter Three addresses the methodology used in this study. Chapter Four discusses the data analysis and findings. Finally, Chapter Five presents a discussion of the findings, implications for practice and future research, and highlights the conclusions of the study.

Chapter Two:

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework and Review of the Literature

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Developmental theorists and empirical research has substantiated the importance of fostering positive relationships within the school. Child developmental theorists believe positive relationships with primary caregivers are a critical developmental need. Early relationships establish a foundation for later social skills and learning (High Scope, n.d.). Psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (1950) described child development as a progression through a series of stages, in which each involved a crisis that needed to be resolved successfully before later stages (crisis) could be successfully resolved. Erikson explained that children from infancy to preschool-age negotiate three major stages of social and emotional development--*trust versus mistrust*, *autonomy versus shame and doubt*, and *initiative versus guilt*. When children's experiences with adults lead to the development of trust, autonomy, and initiative rather than mistrust, shame and doubt, and guilt, children develop lasting feelings of hope, acceptance, willpower, and purpose. These positive feelings allow for the successful development of skills that allow children to flourish in later years. Other child development theorists describe similar developmental needs, all of which depend on positive relationships with primary caregivers.

Psychoanalyst John Bowlby (1969) and developmental psychologist, Ainsworth et al., (1978) discussed the importance of *bonding*--the process by which a child becomes emotionally attached to his or her significant caregivers. These theorists believed bonding, or attachment, affect key aspects of the child's personality, including the child's ability to develop skills such as empathy, sympathy, problem solving, playfulness, and

sociability. Mahler, Pine and Bergman (1975) suggest relationships with primary caregivers allows children to gain a sense of themselves as separate and distinct individuals--individuals who have capacities for trust, autonomy, initiative, empathy, and self-confidence provide the foundation for much of the socialization that occurs as the child grows to adulthood.

Comer (2001) describes how these early relationships set the foundation for later learning. Comer explains, during infancy children form a bond with their caregivers. In a healthy environment, infants learn how to communicate their needs to their caregivers. Eventually children begin to imitate, identify with, and internalize the attitudes and values of their caretakers and others around them. It is these early relationships that establish the path that allows children to develop physical, social, emotional, ethical, and cognitive skills (Bakeman & Brown, 1980; Eladaro, Bradley, & Caldwell, 1977; Escalona, 1987; Lyons-Ruth, Zoll, Connell, & Grunebaum, 1989; Maccoby & Martin, 1983, Pettit & Bates, 1989). Comer believes that schools have failed to meet the developmental needs of the children they serve. He emphasized that in order to help students from minority and lower income families, schools must create conditions that make good development and learning possible. This is accomplished by encouraging and maintaining positive social interactions between students and staff.

Student's early experiences with adult educators have a significant impact on their ability to function over time (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). In a study that documented the development of 179 children from kindergarten through eighth grade, Hamre and Pianta found one of the strongest predictors of the students' academic and social behavior was their relationship with their kindergarten teacher. The findings of this study indicated

students who had a negative relationship with their kindergarten teacher experienced both academic and behavioral problems in the lower elementary grades. In another study, Werner and Smith (1982) found that among the most frequently encountered positive role models in the lives of resilient children, outside of the family circle, was a favorite teacher. Furthermore, Noddings (1988) found caring relationship with a teacher gives youth the motivation for wanting to succeed.

Unfortunately a growing number of children are entering school without the beliefs, values, and attitudes that promote success in school (Comer, 1988). These children have not learned critical social skills such as negotiation and compromise (Comer). Lacking basic social and relational skills, these children have a difficult time meeting the social demands of the school environment. To compound the problem, these same students, who desperately need to have positive, supporting relationships with adults in the school setting, are less likely to receive the positive attention they so desperately need to be successful in school (Comer). In other words, the students who need the positive attention of a caring adult the most are least likely to receive it.

Relationships between adults and adolescents.

Relationships between adults and teens are severely tested during adolescence because students begin to spend more time with peers. They question and challenge adult authority (Ashford et al., 2001). While teachers are relatively well-connected with elementary-aged children, as children move into adolescence, teachers tend to have less close contact with them and fewer resources are available to promote healthy development of the teacher-student relationships (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994). For instance, unlike elementary schools, where a student spends most of the day in one

classroom with the same teacher and classmates, middle and high schools tend to be larger and more impersonal. Students tend to change classrooms and teachers throughout their school day. In addition, Stuhlman, Hamre, and Pianta (2002) found that adults who work with students in the later grades often view the transition to adolescence as a time when it is particularly difficult to foster close, supportive relationships with youth. They suggest middle and high school personnel often perceive students as being disengaged from the school's values and social climate. In response to the students' perceived disengagement, many schools have implemented highly controlling management and discipline policies (Stuhlman et al.). Such policies, most often increase misbehavior, decrease motivation, and destroy opportunities to develop positive relationships.

These adult perceptions can result in devastating consequences for adolescents since positive adult relationships are not only critical during early childhood, but are critical throughout adolescence (Scales, 1991). Adolescence, a developmental stage beginning with puberty and ending around age 21 or 22, is the phase when young people are faced with numerous stressors and decisions that can have lifelong consequences (Stuhlman et al., 2002). During adolescence, young people tend to be extremely self-conscious and their self-perceptions, self-esteem, and identity are highly influenced by both peers and adults (Ashford et al., 2001). Adolescence is a period of development in which the youth is struggling to define who they are and how they fit into society. A student's identity formation, competence, social and academic abilities, and career paths are all affected by their experiences with adults and peers in the school (Alspaugh, 1998; Ashford et al.; Black, 2002; Erickson, 1987; Jordan, Lara, & McPartland, 1994). Research indicates supportive teachers can contribute to a teen's capacity to overcome

personal vulnerabilities and environmental adversities (Rutter et al., 1979; Wang et al., 1994).

Relationships between adults and children of color.

Establishing secure trusting relationships with adults in school is an especially difficult for many poor and minority children (Ashford et al., 2001). This difficulty stems from the discrepancy between the White middle-class beliefs and values that predominate in the United States public school system and the children they serve from poor and minority children and their families (Metz, 1983; Brantlinger, 1995). It has been estimated that 83% of the elementary school teacher population is made up of White, middle-class females (Kunjufu, 2002). Minority students are faced the task of developing a positive identity as a member of a minority group. In the school setting, children of color must reconcile their lives from the standpoint of two different cultural systems - their own and the White majority (Ashford et al.). According to Spencer and Dornbush (1990) achieving success in school settings may be especially difficult for young people of color because they often perceive a negative image from the White majority. Furthermore, adolescents of color are often quite aware and sensitive to how others are evaluating their minority status (Ashford et al.).

Ogbu (1994) explained how racial stratification can adversely affect Black students' education. First, Blacks have developed a deep distrust for the public schools and for those who control them – middle-class White Americans. Second, many Blacks do not believe education will pay off for them in the same way it does for Whites, due to institutional racism in the labor market. Third, in order to be successful in the school environment, Blacks believe they have to forsake their culture and assimilate to the

dominant beliefs, values, and behaviors of Whites. In other words, to be successful in an academic setting, Blacks must reject their own culture and act like Whites. Ogbu suggested that for many Black students, the cost of attaining an education comes at far too great a cost. Instead of assimilating, many Blacks choose to reject the school culture (e.g., the curriculum and required behavior, and the use of Standard English). As a result, relationships between educators and Black students are adversely affected.

Teachers vastly underestimate the powerful impact their own attitudes and beliefs have on minority students' success (Kunjufu, 2002). Many teachers and administrators believe economically disadvantaged students and children of color cannot excel (Gay, 1990; Norton, 2000; Minuchin & Shapiro, 1983). The beliefs of the educators become a self-fulfilling prophecy. In response to these teachers' beliefs and attitudes, many poor and minority children eventually give up on themselves and become disengaged from school (Tauber, 1998).

The powerful impact that educators can have on minority students is illustrated in a famous study initiated by Rosenthal and Rubin (1968). These researchers found that teachers' expectations about children's academic success may become a self-fulfilling prophecy, even when the expectations are groundless. To demonstrate the powerful influence that educators can have on student achievement, Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) conducted a study in which the names of students who were chosen to excel given to teachers. The teachers were told that the students test scores indicated that they would excel during the school year. However, the names of the students were actually chosen at random.

In this study (Rosenthal & Jacobsen, 1968), students who were “chosen to excel” actually did perform better than their peers at the end of the school year. These students gained an average of 15 points on their IQ scores, while their classmates' IQ scores remained unchanged. The authors concluded these differences could only be attributed to teachers' expectations, attitudes, and behaviors. Particularly interesting was the fact that the Mexican-American children who were chosen to excel made the most significant gains.

Although teachers are reluctant to declare they cannot help students because of the students' race, social class or family circumstances, these studies provide evidence that teachers' attitudes, expectations, and behaviors have a powerful influence on student achievement regardless of individual characteristics or family background.

School districts where teachers have high expectations of poor and minority students also tend to get what they expect. A high poverty district in Brazosport, Texas (Norton, 2000) maintains that their students' scores on the state's accountability test are above the 90th percentile in every grade and socioeconomic group. Brazosport's district superintendent, Gerald Andersen, attributes the school's high-test scores to the expectations set for educators and students. This Texas district operates under the belief that, “...all children can learn. Excuses for low academic performance based on socioeconomic or racial differences are unacceptable” (Norton, p. 4).

In summary, while different developmental theorists use various terms to describe the importance of nurturing and supportive relationships with caregivers, all believe that positive relationships with caregivers is critical for healthy development and subsequently for students' success. There is empirical evidence that interpersonal

relationships in the school environment are an important factor in a student's school success (Alspaugh, 1998; Black, 2002; Erickson, 1987; Jordan et al., 1994). Children of color and children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds especially need to feel a sense of belonging and attachment to be successful in school (Metz, 1983). This is achieved, in part, through an on-going positive relationship with an adult in the school (Comer, 1988). School personnel who support, communicate, and have confidence in the students' abilities to do well are more likely to be successful. Conversely, when schools do not foster positive relationships, students often give up and become alienated from the school (Finn, 1993).

Review of the Literature

This review of the literature will examine studies of two forms of adult-student interactions that negatively impact the formation of trusting and respectful relationships between adults and students in schools: adult to student physical maltreatment and adult to student psychological maltreatment.

Adult to student physical maltreatment.

Corporal punishment accounts for the vast majority of reported adult to student maltreatment in schools. The term “corporal punishment” refers to sanctioned forms of discipline such as striking a student on buttocks with a bare hand or wooden paddle (Hyman & Zelikoff, 1987). In an educational setting, “corporal punishment” has generally been defined as the intentional infliction of pain in an effort to change a behavior (Straus & Mouradian, 1998). It is important to note that the term “corporal punishment” does not refer to the use of reasonable force and restraint to stop a disturbance threatening physical injury to others, to obtain possession of weapons or

other dangerous objects upon or with the control of the student, in self-defense or for the protection of persons or property (Hyman et al., 1997).

Adult to student physical maltreatment in schools extends beyond corporal punishment and includes unsanctioned forms of discipline including hitting, slapping, spanking, punching, kicking, pinching, shaking, shoving, choking, use of various objects (wooden paddles, belts, sticks, pins, or others), painful body postures (such as being placed in closed spaces), use of electric shock, use of excessive exercise drills, or prevention of urine or stool elimination (Bauer, Dubanoski, Yamanchi, & Honbo, 1990; Grossman, Rauh, & Rivara, 1995).

Prevalence of adult to student maltreatment in schools.

The practice of corporal punishment is still legal in 23 states and is widely used in many school systems (National Coalition to Abolish Corporal Punishment in Schools (NCACPS), 2003). Estimates of the use of corporal punishment during the 1999-2000 school years indicate 342,038 students were subjected to corporal punishment in schools in the United States (2000 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Compliance Report, 2003). Other sources suggest this is a conservative estimate. For example, The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP; 2000) estimates the use of corporal punishment is much higher. The AAP reported corporal punishment is administered between 1 and 2 million times a year in schools in the United States.

The use of corporal punishment appears to vary greatly from state to state and from school to school. For example, during the 1999-2000 school years, some individual schools in Tennessee reported up to 48 % of the student enrollment received corporal punishment (2000 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Compliance Report,

2003; E & S Survey). There also appears to be wide discrepancies based on race. Data from the E & S Survey also shows that minority students are corporally punished more often than White students (2000 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Compliance Report). Hyman et al., (1997) reports minority students are corporally punished four to five times more frequently than White students. Black students are hit at a rate that is more than twice their makeup in the population. Furthermore, Blacks comprise 17 % of students, but receive 39 % of the paddlings (2000 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Compliance Report). Unfortunately, there are few reported studies of unsanctioned adult to student maltreatment in schools.

Consequences of corporal punishment.

While some educators argue corporal punishment is an effective disciplinary tool that is necessary to maintain order in the school environment, the Society for Adolescent Medicine advises corporal punishment is an ineffective method of discipline and has major damaging effects on the physical and mental health of students who are subjected to this type of maltreatment (Garrison, 1987). There is no evidence that corporal punishment is a more effective discipline technique than other techniques that emphasize a more positive behavioral approach (Dubanoski, Inaba, & Gerkewicz, 1983; Frazier, 1990; Lynch, 1988; Moelis, 1988). Research shows that eliminating corporal punishment does not increase misbehavior (Farley, 1983). In fact, there is evidence that the use of corporal punishment could actually increase disruptive behavior in school settings (Farley; National Institute of Education, 1978).

Corporal punishment is associated with a number of physical injuries ranging from bruises, fractured bones, welts, hematomas, and even death (Hyman & Lally,

1982). It has been estimated that during the 1986-87 school year, a minimum of 10,000 to 20,000 American students needed medical treatment after becoming victims of corporal punishment in schools (Poole et al., 1991). Medical complications from corporal punishment have prevented children from returning to school for days, weeks, or even longer (Society for Adolescent Medicine, 1992).

Corporal punishment has also been associated with short and long-term psychological problems. Corporal punishment is degrading, contributes to feelings of helplessness and can lead to withdrawal or aggression (Sternberg et al., 1993; Straus, 1994). Adults who were hit as children are more likely to be depressed or violent themselves (Strassberg, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1994; Straus & Gelles, 1990; Straus & Kantor, 1992).

Children who were corporally punished to control antisocial behavior show more antisocial behavior over a long period of time, regardless of race and socioeconomic status, and regardless of whether the mother provides cognitive stimulation and emotional support (Gunnoe & Mariner, 1997; Kazdin, 1987; Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1989; Straus, Sugarman, & Giles-Sims, 1997). Children who were corporally punished are also more likely to be perpetrators of domestic assaults and hit their *own* children (Julian & McKenry, 1993; Straus, 1991; Straus, 1994; Straus & Gelles, 1990; Straus & Kantor, 1992; Widom, 1989; Wolfe, 1987).

There is evidence that teachers who use overly strict and punitive methods of discipline have more classroom management problems and generate more discipline referrals than teachers whose discipline methods are viewed as strict and fair (Farley, 1983). Findings based on case records indicate that educator maltreatment can cause

aggressive ideation toward educators and schools (Hyman & Snook, 1999; Snook, 2000). Corporal punishment may adversely also effect a student's school achievement (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000).

Children who are hit regularly perform poorly on school tasks compared to other children (Straus & Mathur, 1995; Straus & Paschall, 1998). In fact, schools that use corporal punishment, also tend to be more punitive in all discipline responses and have higher rates of suspensions (Farley, 1983; National Institute of Education, 1978). In addition, there is evidence that corporal punishment is one of the causes of vandalism of school property (Hyman & Wise, 1979). Corporal punishment provokes aggression against school personnel, peers and property (Hyman & Wise). Kalabaliki (1994) found that students develop a hostile image of their school and perceive a need to defend themselves, usually through destructive behavior, in school environments plagued with maltreatment.

In summary, corporal punishment has been associated with short and long-term psychological problems. This practice is detrimental to the learning environment and has been shown to increase acting-out behaviors in the school. Yet, corporal punishment is used in schools in almost half the states in this country.

Adult to student psychological maltreatment.

Adult to student psychological maltreatment (e.g., mental cruelty/injury, emotional maltreatment and neglect) has only recently begun to receive attention from researchers. Consequently, relatively little is known about the extent to which adult to

student psychological maltreatment occurs in school settings (National Research Council, 1993; Pokalo & Hyman, 1993; Sarno, 1992).

Hyman et al. (1997) suggest that educators have been reluctant to allow researchers into their schools to examine this problem. When schools have granted permission to conduct research in the school, they are faced with the additional problems. For example, researchers cannot simply observe this phenomenon because educators are likely to modify their behavior in the presence of others. In instances of clinical evaluation, researchers have found educators are quick to deny they have been involved in any wrongdoing. Furthermore, since psychological maltreatment is often used in combination with other types of maltreatment, such as physical maltreatment or sexual maltreatment, it is difficult to ascertain which type of maltreatment is associated with the resulting symptoms. As a result, much of the data collected includes multiple types of maltreatment and most of the research in this area is limited because it primarily consists of case studies and retrospective studies.

A number of terms have been used by researchers to describe psychological maltreatment in schools including the following: “mental cruelty” (Laury & Meerloo, 1967; Navaree, 1987), “mental injury” (Kavanagh, 1982), “emotional maltreatment” (Lourie & Stefano, 1978), “emotional neglect” (Junewicz 1983; Whiting 1976), “psychological battering,” (Garbarino et al., 1986), and “psychological maltreatment,” (Hart, Germain, & Brassard, 1983). Since psychological maltreatment has been defined in so many diverse ways, it is difficult to determine the prevalence of this specific type of maltreatment in schools or to compare and contrast research findings. To address this problem, the International Conference on Psychological Maltreatment of Children and

Youth led efforts to establish a universally accepted definition of psychological maltreatment (Hart et al.). This resulted in the following definition:

Psychological maltreatment of children and youth consists of actions of omission and commission which are judged on the basis of a combination of community standards and professional expertise to be psychologically damaging. Individuals commit such acts, singly or collectively, who by their characteristics (e.g. age, status, knowledge, organizational form) are in a position of differential power that renders a child vulnerable. Such actions damage the behavioral, cognitive, affective or physical functioning of the child. Examples of psychological maltreatment include acts of rejection, terrorizing, isolating, exploiting, and missocializing (p. 2).

Some researchers contend that since psychological maltreatment covers a wide range of human interactions and the concept is so encompassing, it is likely that almost all children experience maltreatment at some point during childhood, if not on a somewhat regular basis (Brassard, Germain & Hart, 1987). In fact, several researchers have concluded psychological maltreatment occurs more often than other types of maltreatment (Hyman et al., 1997). The National Center for the Study of Corporal Punishment and Alternatives estimates at least 50 to 60 % of all school children have suffered from at least one incident of maltreatment by an educator that was severe enough to result in the child exhibiting stress symptoms (Lambert, 1990; Vargas-Moll, 1991; Zelikoff, 1990). However, it must be noted this estimate is based on both physical and psychological maltreatment.

Researchers suggest that teachers commonly use psychological maltreatment in combination with other punitive disciplinary practices as a way of exerting control (Briggs & Hawkins, 1996; Hart, Gelardo, & Brassard, 1986). Nay (1987) suggests that verbal maltreatment may become an increasingly frequent form of controlling and disciplining children because of increased public controversy regarding corporal punishment.

There have been, however, few published research studies that address psychological maltreatment by educators. In fact, a search of the literature resulted in only two published studies: Krugman and Krugman in 1984 and Hyman in 1985.

Krugman and Krugman (1984) conducted a study that involved repetitive acts of psychological maltreatment inflicted upon a class of 3rd and 4th grade students by their teacher throughout the school year. This tenured, male teacher reportedly terrorized, rejected, degraded, corrupted and exploited students during the school year. The students in this case study were described as upper-middle class students. Students reportedly had no previous behavioral or emotional problems. However, within two weeks of beginning the school year, 17 of the 27 students in the class began to display symptoms including the following: a decreased functioning level in social relations outside of school, withdrawal behaviors, negative self-perceptions of school, depression, excessive worry about school performance, fear the teacher would harm other students, and physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches and nightmares. Student reports and observations by parents during visits to the school indicated psychological maltreatment including the following: verbal put downs, harassment, labels (e.g., “stupid,” “dummy”), inconsistent and erratic behavior, screams directed at students until they cried,

inappropriate threats to try to control the classroom, unrealistic academic goals for age/grade level, use of homework as punishment, fear-inducing techniques (e.g., tying string to a child's chair and pulling it out from under him), homework thrown at children, and physical punishment (pinching, slapping, shaking, and pulling ears). Initially, parents dismissed their children's behaviors and complaints, assuming that the child was simply having difficulty adjusting to the new school year. However, when the symptoms persisted, parents began to contact the school requesting their students be moved to another classroom or that the teacher be replaced. After numerous complaints and meetings with school officials, the teacher was transferred and a new teacher was brought in. Removal of the teacher led to the extinction of the symptoms in 15 of the 17 students. Although no control group was used a naturalist control occurred, since, the parents of the victimized children found children in other teachers' classes were not exhibiting the same symptoms. The major limitation of this case report is that it is a case study and important information was omitted from the article. Information about the data collection method, the completion rate and the methods of data processing and analysis was not included. However, this study is unique in that several students who were subjected to an “emotionally abusive” teacher could be studied and these students exhibited a number of symptoms. Since circumstances in which an entire classroom of students who have been victimized rarely comes to the attention of researchers, and for obvious ethical reasons cannot be replicated, this case report is an important contribution to the knowledge base of symptoms that occur when students are subjected to violent educators. However, these findings need to be interpreted with extreme caution. Case reports lack controls for both internal and external validity. Although the findings cannot be generalized to other

populations, according to Rubin and Babbie (2001) the findings can be used as a source of evidence to support a particular theory. They indicate that although findings from a case study is not an adequate test of a theory, the accumulation of consistent results in the replication process can serve as a useful test of the theory, in the same way replications of single subject or group experiment are utilized.

In another study, Hyman (1985) examined the effects of a 1st grade teacher who terrorized, degraded, and used physical confinement on ($N = 17$) students in his class. This type of treatment resulted in students exhibiting a number of symptoms such as the following: becoming dependent, becoming fearful of strangers, exhibiting withdrawal behaviors, sucking their thumbs, pulling their eyelash and hair, crying, exhibiting hyperactivity and anxious behaviors, becoming afraid of the dark, and experiencing insomnia, vomiting, nausea, headaches, stomachaches, enuresis and encopresis. Although this case report has similar limitations in regard to internal and external validity due to the nature of this type of study, the study has a number of strengths. The author reports the assessment procedure and included examination of available school records, individual family histories, descriptions of the traumatic events by both parents and the children, and a structured interview. A number of assessment instruments were employed. Although no data was collected from control groups (first grade students in other classes who were not exposed to the abusive educator) a natural control occurred during the school year. During the school year, the offending teacher left her teaching position for a three-month period due to medical reasons. During this time period, a majority of the children's symptoms subsided. The children's symptoms returned when the teacher returned three months later. Hyman's study is very similar in the strengths and

limitations as indicated in the previous study. For obvious ethical reasons, case studies such as these cannot be replicated, so the researcher must rely on events that occur outside the scientifically designed research study. Therefore, the researchers cannot make claims to internal or external validity. A strength of the study is that multiple children were exposed to the same classroom teacher. This lends some credibility to establish that the teacher was indeed the source of the resulting symptoms seen in the students, versus some other unidentified variable. However, since this was only a case study it is not appropriate to suggest a causal relationship. Another strength is the use of more than one method of data collection. These researchers used a number of questionnaires, and interviews. Rubin and Babbie (2001) suggest intensive qualitative interviews of the client and the client's significant others can help to identify what changes in the client's environment coincided with changes in the quantitative data on the target behavior.

In addition to these published articles, a number of doctoral dissertations have examined the nature and extent to which students are maltreated by educators in the school setting and the subsequent consequences to these experiences (Chau, 2002; Clarke, 1986; Lambert, 1990; Snook, 2000; Vargas-Moll, 1991; Zelikoff, 1990). The majority of these studies have been conducted by doctoral students studying at Temple University in Pennsylvania under the supervision of Dr. Irwin Hyman. Much of this research has been focused on the relationship between PTSD and maltreatment by educators (Clarke; Lambert; Hyman & Gasiwski, 1990; Hyman, Zelikoff, & Clarke, 1988; Vargas-Moll; Zeilikoff). The populations studied have included 6 through 12 grade students in special education and regular education programs (Chau), Hispanic students (Vargas-Moll), junior high school students (Lambert), high school students (Snook) and

adult educators (Zelikoff). With the exception of Clarke's 1986 study, which utilized interviews from subjects identified from media reports, these studies have primarily been descriptive studies in nature and relied on retrospective data collection. A number of these studies have used the "My Worst School Experience Scale," (MWSES) as the primary instrument to identify the nature and frequency of the experiences students report as being a traumatic experience (Chau; Lambert; Snook; Vargas-Moll). The MWSES has also been used to identify symptomatology that occurs as a result of these experiences, attention has been directed toward establishing that symptoms warrant a diagnosis of PTSD. Both Lambert and Zelikoff concluded in their studies that students report feelings of aggression or aggressive behaviors subsequent to traumatic school events.

While these published and unpublished studies are limited due to methodological limitations, they do suggest psychological maltreatment by educators is an area that warrants further research.

Consequences of adult-student psychological maltreatment.

Hyman and Perone (1988) suggest both physical and psychological maltreatment have the same effects and produce similar long-term consequences for students. In fact, most experts agree psychological maltreatment can be more destructive in its impact on the lives of young people than other types of maltreatment (Briere & Runtz, 1988; Egeland et al., 1983; Garbarino et al., 1986; Garbarino & Vondra, 1987; Hart et al., 1986; Ney, 1987; Vissing, Straus, Gelles, & Harrop, 1991).

Researchers have found that adults who were the victims of both physical and emotional maltreatment during childhood reported psychological maltreatment was the most damaging in the long term (Briggs, 1995; Briggs & Hawkins, 1996). O'Hagan

(1993) believes it is the emotional and psychological trauma associated with physical maltreatment that has the most detrimental impact on the development of the child.

Hyman and Zelikoff (1987) suggest psychological factors are the core of all abuse and the effects of psychological trauma may be severe and long-term. Psychological maltreatment can be a traumatic event that may alienate the student and lead to social, emotional and behavioral problems on the part of the child (Hyman & Snook, 1999).

The problems associated with psychological maltreatment range from lags in emotional and intellectual development, to behavioral, social, emotional and academic problems, to attempted suicide (Hyman et al., 1997; Hyman, 1990, Hyman, Zelikoff & Clarke, 1988; Lambert, 1990; Vargas-Moll, 1991; Wald, 1961; Zelikoff, 1990). Hyman and Perone (1988) believe there is strong evidence that adult to student maltreatment may result in students developing symptoms of Post Traumatic stress disorder.

The legal case of *McGinnis v. Cochran* is one example of the devastating and long-term consequences that can result when children are subjected to psychological-maltreatment. *McGinnis v. Cochran* involved an 11-year-old New Mexican boy, Billy, who misbehaved in his chorus class. The teacher required every student in the class to write "I will kill Billy" one hundred times. The following school day, the teacher instructed the students to throw their papers at Billy. Billy was then told to pick up all the papers and throw them in the wastepaper basket. After this event, students verbally and physically attacked Billy. Billy required psychotherapy to deal with the trauma that resulted from this incident (Hyman & Snook, 1999).

In summary, research literature suggests that students may experience a wide range of physical and psychological maltreatment in school setting. There have been few

empirical studies that have examined the nature or extent to which physical and psychological maltreatment occurs in school settings. Studies that have examined maltreatment in school settings have been limited to dissertation studies and retrospective case studies. In a review of the literature, there were no studies identified that examined the nature or extent to which students at risk experience both physical and psychological maltreatment in alternative education school settings. This study examined types of physical and psychological maltreatment that students attending alternative education programs reported experiencing during their school careers.

Chapter Three:

Methodology

This chapter describes and explains the purpose of the study, research questions, and the research design and variables used in this study. It also describes the sampling, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the extent to which students reported that adults in a school setting had mistreated them. Specifically, this study provides findings on the students' perceptions of the extent to which they were the victims of physical maltreatment and psychological maltreatment during their school careers. The study investigated whether the types or frequency of maltreatment was related to demographic characteristics of the student (i.e., race and gender).

A qualitative question was included in the survey (see Appendix A for a copy of the Survey Questionnaire) to develop an in depth understanding of students' experiences in relation to each student's reported "Worst School Experience," (*WSE*) (Hyman and Snook, 2002). This qualitative question allowed the students to explain, in their own words, the events that surrounded their *WSE* and provided an opportunity for students to express how they were impacted by this event. The findings from the qualitative section also provided information about the role (e.g., administrator, teacher, bus driver, and coach) of the adult perpetrators who were identified as being involved in the student's *WSE*.

Definition of Research Terms

The terms “*adult*” and “*educator*” are used interchangeably in this study. These terms are conceptually defined as any individual over the age of 18 who is employed by the school district (e.g., principal, vice principal, bus driver, and teacher), who by their characteristics (e.g. age, status, knowledge, and organizational form) are in a position of differential power that renders a child vulnerable.

Two types of maltreatment were addressed in this study: physical maltreatment and psychological maltreatment.

- *Physical maltreatment* was conceptually defined as an act of corporal punishment, unsanctioned disciplinary procedures and actions that clearly fall outside the realm of disciplinary practices (i.e., actions of uncontrolled anger such as punching a student).
- *Psychological maltreatment* was conceptually defined as actions of omission and commission that are potentially damaging to the behavioral, cognitive, affective, or physical functioning of the child. Examples include the use of sarcasm, ridicule, humiliation, belittling, as well as actions that communicate a low quantity of human interaction whose quality communicates a lack of interest, caring and affection for students, and finally, limited opportunities for students to develop adequate skills and feelings of self worth (Brassard et al., 1987; Hyman, 1987; Hyman, 1990; Hyman & Snook, 1999; Hyman & Perone, 1988).
- The students’ “*Worst School Experience*” (*WSE*) is conceptually defined as students’ written responses to the qualitative section on the survey that indicated that students were to write about their worst school experience.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

- 1 – Do students report experiencing physical maltreatment in school settings in which an educator is identified as being the perpetrator?
- 2 – Do students report experiencing psychological maltreatment in school settings in which an educator is identified as being the perpetrator?
- 3 – Is there a relationship between the students' gender and the extent to which students reported experiencing maltreatment in which an educator is identified as being the perpetrator, holding constant the students' race?
- 4 – Is there a relationship between the students' race and the extent to which students reported experiencing maltreatment in which an educator is identified as being the perpetrator, holding constant the students' gender?
- 5 – To what extent do students identify an adult as the perpetrator of their *WSE*? What do students report as being their *WSE*? How do students report they felt immediately after their *WSE*? What was the role of the adult (i.e., teacher, principal, bus driver, etc.,) involved the students' *WSE*?

Research Design

Survey research was used in this study. This study was primarily qualitative in nature. However, one quantitative question was included in effort to allow the students to describe, in their own words, how their "Worst School Experience" affected them. This study attempted to gain an understanding of school maltreatment through the eyes of the students by focusing on the students' perceptions of their own experiences of maltreatment at the hands of adults during their school careers. Therefore, the student's

report of their negative experiences included their recollection of events beginning in Kindergarten up to the time of the administration of the survey. The students' responses included events that occurred in regular education, special education, alternative, public and private schools. It did not attempt to discern where (e.g. alternative education setting, public school, private school, elementary school, and middle school) the maltreatment incident(s) occurred; only that the maltreatment occurred in a school setting. Furthermore, the study focused on the student's perception of the nature and extent of their own experiences with maltreatment in the school. No attempt to confirm the accuracy of each student's recollection of the nature or extent or of the student's victimization in the school setting was made.

Sampling.

A convenience sample was used in this study. The sample consisted of students who were attending alternative middle and high schools in a school district in the southeastern United States during the 2004-05 school year.

Data collection.

Several days prior to the administration of the survey, the researcher went into each of the middle school classrooms and explained the purpose of the study to the students. At this time, parental consent forms (see Appendix B) were distributed to the students in the middle school programs to take home and be signed by their parent/legal guardian. The researcher requested that all parental consent forms be returned within a three-day period. The researcher visited all of the middle school sites for three consecutive days to collect data.

The researcher was not able to access the high school classrooms due to a lapse in communication between the researcher and the school administrators. A later date was arranged in which the researcher was permitted to introduce and administer the questionnaire to the high school students. Due to time constraints, the researcher was not able to be at the school on three consecutive days. The researcher introduced the study on a Thursday and returned to the school the following Friday to collect data. The combination of time constraints and miscommunication resulted in the participation of high school students ($n = 12$) being significantly smaller than expected.

All students who had returned their parental consent form and given their own assent were asked to participate in the study. Student assent was obtained at the time the survey was administered. Prior to beginning the survey, the researcher explained the rationale for the study and emphasized that participation was voluntary; the student may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. Verbal and written (see Appendix C) assent was obtained from each student whose parent gave permission for his/her child to participate in the study prior to the administration of the questionnaire. Students who were 18 years or older were asked to sign their own consent form (see Appendix D).

Students met with the researcher in small groups (approximately 6 students) to complete the survey. The researcher attempted to provide the students with both verbal and written instructions. Initially, the researcher planned to read aloud each item on the checklist to the students; however, the students would not comply with requests to answer each question as it was being read. Instead, the students opted to read and respond to the questions independently. Students were also asked to independently write a short paragraph about their *WSE* and complete five subsequent questions related to their *WSE*.

After the students completed the survey, the surveys were placed in an envelope at the back of the classroom and each student was given a small thank you gift (e.g., a soda, stickers, and a pencil) for their participation.

It is important to note that the gifts were given to the student regardless of whether their parents granted permission. Rewards were based solely on whether the parents signed and returned the form, regardless of whether they granted permission for their son or daughter's participation.

Measurement.

The survey instrument (see Appendix A) consisted of three parts: demographic items, a 47-item Likert-type scale questionnaire, and an open-ended question section. The instrument was a revised version of an instrument developed by Irwin Hyman and colleagues at NCSCPAS, *The Student Alienation and Trauma Survey (SATS)*. The *SATS* evolved from previous research instruments aimed at addressing the nature and extent to which students experience physical and psychological maltreatment in the school setting and resulting symptomology sustained from the maltreatment.

A number of revisions were made to the original instrument. The original survey consisted of 56 questions aimed at identifying the types of victimizations that school children experience. This survey was modified to make the survey more appropriate to the abilities of the student who participated in this research. Questions on the survey were re-worded to be easier to understand, the font size was enlarged, and some questions were omitted. These revisions were based on the recommendations of the principal of the target school who suggested that the students at the alternative program would have difficulty understanding the survey, even if it were read to them.

There were also several double-barreled questions that were modified and divided into two questions. For instance, one question stated, “An adult pulled my hair or ear.” This question was divided into two separate questions, (“An adult pulled my ear” and “An adult pulled my hair”). Questions were omitted from the survey if they inquired about sexual maltreatment due to the sensitive nature of those questions. It was anticipated that questions of this nature would significantly delay the IRB approval process, thus these items were omitted from the revised survey.

On the original instrument, students were asked to report whether each type of maltreatment was presently occurring. These questions were omitted from the survey in an effort to prevent specific adult educators from being identified.

The structure of the items on the questionnaire was also changed. Each item on the original survey asked students to indicate whether a peer or an adult was the perpetrator of the maltreatment. For example, item one stated, “I was punched.” The student would then indicate using a Likert-type scale how often (“did not happen” to “still happening”). Then, the student would indicate by filling in the appropriate box whether the perpetrator was an adult or a peer. This format allowed the student to indicate that the perpetrator was a peer, an adult, or both. Yet, this type of inquiry did not allow a way for the researcher to determine whether the frequency indicated was related to incidents involving a peer or an adult when both items were marked. In effort to make the data analysis more clear, each of these items was separated on the instrument. For example, one item stated, “An adult punched me,” followed a set of boxes that allow the student to indicate the frequency. The following question then stated, “Another student punched me” and asked the student to indicate the frequency.

For the purposes of this study, only questions related to determining the nature and extent to which students experienced physical and psychological maltreatment were asked. Questions that addressed how the student responded to school maltreatment were omitted because this study was not concerned with the symptomology resulting from adult to student school maltreatment.

Section I of the survey included demographic items regarding the student's grade, age, and race. Section II of the survey contained 47 items, rated on a Likert-type scale that asked the students to indicate the extent to which they had experienced specific types of maltreatment in a school setting. For example, one-item stated, "An adult slapped me." Students were asked to indicate the extent in which they experienced that event by indicating on of the following: "did not happen," "happened one time," "happened 2-3 times," or "happened more than five times." The 47 items pertained to different types of negative events that may happen to students in the school community, which were identified through extensive research of students' school experiences. Each question focused on a specific form of physical or psychological maltreatment perpetrated by adults or by peers.

Forty-seven item questionnaire sub-sections.

The first 26 items asked student about their experience involving various types of physical maltreatment during their school careers. Thirteen of these items asked the student to indicate whether they experienced specific events in which the adult was the perpetrator. Thirteen similar items ask the student to respond to items in which the perpetrator was a peer.

The next set of items (items 27 to 47) addressed psychological maltreatment. In this section, nine items asked the student to indicate whether they experienced specific events in which the adult was a perpetrator. Nine similar items asked the student to respond to items in which the perpetrator was a peer. Three questions asked the student to report the number of times they had received an unfair suspension, an expulsion, or corporal punishment.

Reliability of physical and psychological maltreatment subscales.

Coefficient alpha was used to determine the reliability of the physical maltreatment subscale and the psychological subscale. The reliability coefficient for the physical maltreatment subscale was .77. The reliability coefficient for the psychological subscale was .86.

Section III of the survey consisted of an open-ended question that asked students to describe their *WSE*. Students were then asked to respond to a several questions gathering more specific information about the student's *WSE*. These questions asked the student to identify, demographically, the person involved (i.e., peer, teacher, principal, assistant principal, coach, bus driver, lunchroom supervisors, or other, as well as the person's gender and race) in the incident. Students were also asked to provide information about their age and grade level at the time of the incident.

The final question on this section of the survey asked students to indicate how they felt following the incident by identifying one of the following: 1) "It did not really bother me," 2) "It bothered me a little," or 3) "It bothered me a lot."

Section IV of the survey asked students to provide additional demographic information. Students were asked whether they participate in free or reduced school lunch

(“yes” or “no”). This section of the survey also asked students several questions about the educational attainment of their parents. For instance, one question asked students to respond (“yes,” “no,” or “unsure”) to the following question - “Did your mom graduate from high school?” Three questions asked students to report the number of times the student has been subjected to specific types of disciplinary practices (i.e., unfair expulsion, unfair in-school suspension, unfair corporal punishment).

Coding scheme.

To determine the race of the student, the students were asked the following question: “Are You” and were provided the following categories: “White,” “Black,” and “Other.” For the purpose of this analysis, the categories “Black” and “Other” were collapsed into one category “Minority.” Race was coded as follows: 0 for White and 1 for Black and Other. Gender was coded as “0” for female and “1” for male.

For each item on the checklist, each student was asked to report the number of times he or she recalled experiencing specific types of maltreatment. For instance, students were asked to indicate how many times “An adult yelled at me.” The student's response was coded as follows: 0 for “did not happen,” 1 for “one time,” 2 for “two to three times,” 3 for “more than 4 times.”

Analytic Procedures

All quantitative data was entered and analyzed with SPSS (version 13). Although this survey asked students to report on their experiences in which the perpetrator was an *adult educator* and in which the perpetrator was a *peer*, only data related to incidents that involved an adult as the perpetrator were addressed in this study. The analysis of the data was limited to adults in order to maintain the focus of the dissertation study on the types

of maltreatment that students report in which an adult educator was involved. Data regarding episodes of maltreatment in which the perpetrator was a peer will be addressed in a post-dissertation analysis.

Sample demographics.

First the data were analyzed to describe the sample, using measures of central tendency and dispersion. Information about the distribution of the sample participants' gender, race, age, and grade level will be presented later in both in a table and in narrative format.

Analysis of 47-item Likert scale questions.

In regard to the 47 items that address the nature and extent to which students experienced maltreatment, data was analyzed at two levels: the individual item level and at the level of subscale scores. At the individual item level, frequency distribution analysis was calculated for responses for each of the 47 items.

In regard to the subscale scores, the means and standard deviations for physical maltreatment scores and psychological maltreatment scores were presented, discussed and analyzed in relation to the student's gender (male or female) and race (White and Minority). The physical subscale score was determined by computing the mean score for the total number of items on the instrument that served as indicators for physical maltreatment (13 items). The subscale score for the psychological subscale was determined by computing the mean scores for the total number of items that served as indicators of psychological maltreatment (12 items). An OLS regression was used to examine possible differences in physical and psychological maltreatment subscale scores between various demographic groups (i.e., gender and race).

Narrative description of the student's *WSE*.

The students' narrative description of their *WSE* was used to enrich the quantitative data collected (see Appendix E). This section of the survey allowed each student to explain, in his or her own words, how the event was perceived and the impact of the event.

The students' qualitative responses were content analyzed to determine whether students identified incidents involving physical or psychological maltreatment as their “*WSE*.” “Content analysis is a way of transforming qualitative material into quantitative data” (Rubbin & Babbie, 2001, p. 439). Rubbin and Babbie stated that content analysis consists of coding and tabulating the occurrences of certain forms of content being analyzed. In this study, the respondents' narrative description of their *WSE* was coded and tabulated to determine the category(s) of maltreatment (physical maltreatment or psychological maltreatment). These categories were operationally defined as any incident that reflected the descriptive items for each category (physical maltreatment or psychological) on the questionnaire. For instance, if the respondent described an incident in which he or she was pushed against a wall by an educator, the incident was coded as physical maltreatment, since one of the items on the scale on stated, “An adult pushed me.” If the specific type of maltreatment was not specifically addressed by an item on the scale, the researcher used her best judgment to determine what type of maltreatment the respondent was describing and code it appropriately. Some responses reflected more than one category of maltreatment. In cases where the respondent described an incident in which more than one type of maltreatment occurred, a response was recorded for each type of maltreatment that was identified. For example, one student’s response described

both physical maltreatment and psychological maltreatment; therefore a tally was marked for one incident of physical maltreatment and one incident of psychological maltreatment.

In addition, the students' responses were used to identify incidents that did not reflect any of the types of physical or psychological maltreatment that were specifically addressed on the survey. For example, one student indicated that sexual advances of her teacher were her *WSE*. These types of incidents that did not fit into any of the specific types of physical or psychological maltreatment were discussed in the study.

In an effort to control for researcher biases, Rubin & Babbie (2001) suggest that researcher have multiple coders to classify the responses. Therefore, in addition to the researcher coding each of the responses, a master's level outcome evaluation specialist assisted in the classification of the responses.

The descriptive data about the role (e.g., principal, teacher, and coach) of the adult perpetrator involved in the students' report of their *WSE* were presented. These finding will be presented later in a table.

Finally, frequency distributions were used to analyze respondents' answers regarding how they felt immediately following the incident based on the following choices: 1) "It did not bother me"; 2) "It bothered me a little,"; or 3) "It bothered me a lot." These responses were analyzed for frequency distributions.

Missing data.

Missing quantitative data was handled using Mean Substitution. In regard to the qualitative data, if a student failed to respond to the narrative portion of the survey (or if the coders cannot determine at least one subcategory of maltreatment), but completed the

six subsequent questions that related to the qualitative question, the student's responses to the six quantitative questions were included in the results. Since the sample size was limited, any responses that indicated the characteristics were determined to be important regardless of the type of maltreatment.

Chapter Four:

Data Analysis and Findings

All data were entered in SPSS 13.0. Univariate analyses provided descriptive statistics of all variables; multivariate analysis was used to compute and examine the relationships among variables. Content analysis was used to describe descriptive statistics of the qualitative portion of the study.

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The sampling frame for this study was the entire student population ($N = 142$) at three alternative education sites. The sample consisted of middle and high school alternative education students who were attending alternative schools in a school district in the Southeastern United States.

The majority of the students were attending the alternative programs for having multiple school suspensions for disciplinary infractions. Disciplinary infractions included, but were not limited to referrals for “cussing” at a teacher, refusing to follow rules, insubordination, and/or being disruptive in class. In order to be referred to the alternative program, the student must have been suspended for a minimum of 11 school days. Other students were referred to the alternative program for violating zero tolerance policies such as bringing weapons or illegal drugs to school. Additionally, some students attended the program due to testing referrals for social or emotional problems that interfered with their ability to be successfully maintained in a regular education environment. It is important to note that in the present study only students who were referred to the alternative program for behavioral problems were included in the study. Both regular education and special education students were included in the study.

At the time the study was administered, there were 142 students attending school at the three alternative education programs who were referred to those schools for discipline/behavioral problems. The population was disproportionately male (82%, $N = 116$). Additionally, over half of the student population was Caucasian (61%, $N = 87$). The students ranged from grade 5th through 12th.

The response rate was 35% ($N = 142$). A total of 50 usable questionnaires were returned and analyzed. All the students who returned their parental consent forms and gave their assent were included in the study. Among the 50 respondents, ages ranged from 11 years to 18 years with a mean age of 14.0 years. The students' grades levels ranged from 5th grade through grade 12. Most of the students indicated that they received free or reduced school lunch ($n = 43$, 91.5%). Four students (8.5%) did not receive free or reduced school lunch (see Table 1). Similar to the population, the vast majority of the sample were male (80%, $n = 40$), 20% ($n = 10$) were female. (see Table 1.)

As seen in Table 2, half of the students (50%, $n = 25$) were White, 44% were Black ($n = 22$) and 6 % of the students ($n = 3$) identified their race as Other. Five of the White students (10.0%) were female and 20 of the White students (40.0%) were male. Of the 22 Black students, four students (8.0%) were female and 18 (36.0%) were male. Of the students who identified their race as Other ($n = 3$), one student (2.0%) was female and two (4.0%) were male.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Variable	<i>N</i>	%	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range
Age (in years)			14.02	1.61	11-18
11	2	4.0			
12	4	8.0			
13	15	30.0			
14	14	28.0			
15	6	12.0			
16	6	12.0			
17	3	6.0			
18					
Gender					
Male	40	80.0			
Female	10	20.0			
Race					
White	25	50.0			
Minority	22	44.0			
Other	3	6.0			
Grade					
5	1	2.0			
6	1	2.0			
7	11	22.0			
8	25	50.0			
9	2	4.0			
10	7	14.0			
12	3	6.0			
Free or Reduced Lunch					
Yes	43	91.5			
No	4	8.5			

Table 2: Race and Gender of Students

	Female		Male		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
White	5	10.0	20	40.0	25	50.0
Black	4	8.0	18	36.0	22	44.0
Other	1	2.0	2	4.0	3	6.0
Total	10	20.0	40	80.0	50	100.0

Types and Frequency of Physical and Psychological Maltreatment

Physical maltreatment.

Do students report experiencing physical maltreatment in school settings in which an educator is identified as being the perpetrator? To address this question, a Likert-type scale was used and subscale scores were calculated for each type of physical maltreatment addressed on the survey. Thirteen items were concerned with physical maltreatment (items 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, and 25). Eighty-six percent of the students ($n = 43$) reported experiencing at least one incident in which an adult educator had physically mistreated him or her.

As seen on Table 3, students' reports of the different types of physical maltreatment experienced ranged from being restricted from the bathroom to being punched and tied up by an adult educator. The most commonly reported type of physical maltreatment was bathroom restrictions. Seventy percent of the students ($n = 35$) indicated that at some point in their school career, an adult educator had not allowed him or her to use the bathroom. Of these students, 19 (38%) reported this had happened four or more times. The second most frequently reported type of physical maltreatment was being grabbed by an adult educator. Thirty eight percent of the students ($n = 19$) indicated that they had been "grabbed very hard" by an adult educator. Of these students, four (8%) reported that this had occurred four or more times. The third most common type of physical maltreatment experience involved being pushed by an adult educator. Twenty eight percent of the students ($n = 14$) reported that he or she had been pushed by an adult educator. Eight percent of the students ($n = 4$) reported they had experienced this type of maltreatment four or more times.

Table 3: Frequency of Types of Physical Maltreatment Reported by Students

Physical Maltreatment Subscale Items	Happened 1 time		Happened 2-3 times		Happened 4 or more times		Total per item	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
An adult slapped me	5	10.0	3	6.0	2	4.0	10	20.0
An adult punched me	4	8.0	2	4.0	2	4.0	8	32.0
An adult pushed me	7	14.0	3	6.0	4	8.0	14	28.0
An adult grabbed me very hard	9	8.0	6	12.0	4	8.0	19	38.0
An adult hit me with an object (a book, ruler, backpack, etc.)	3	6.0	1	2.0	5	10.0	9	18.0
An adult tied me up	1	2.0	1	2.0	0	0.0	2	4.0
An adult threw something at me (a book, eraser, a pent, etc.)	4	8.0	3	6.0	5	10.0	12	24.0
An adult shook me	9	18.0	2	4.0	2	4.0	13	26.0
An adult pulled my hair	2	4.0	0	0.0	3	6.0	5	10.0
An adult locked me in a locker, closet or a small room	1	2.0	0	0.0	1	2.0	2	4.0
An adult pulled my ear	7	14.0	3	6.0	0	0.0	10	20.0
An adult did not let me to go to the bathroom	5	10.0	11	22.0	19	38.0	35	70.0
An adult allowed others to hit me	8	16.0	1	2.0	2	4.0	11	22.0

Psychological maltreatment.

Do students report experiencing psychological maltreatment in school settings in which an educator is identified as being the perpetrator? To address this question a Likert-type scale was used and subscale scores were calculated for each type of psychological maltreatment addressed on the survey. Twelve items were concerned with psychological maltreatment (items 27, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 45, 46, and 47). Eighty-eight percent of the students ($n = 44$) reported experiencing at least one incident in which he or she had been psychologically mistreated by an adult educator. Indicators of psychological maltreatment ranged from being picked last, to being teased or made fun of by an adult educator.

As seen in Table 4, the most commonly reported types of psychological maltreatment involved being yelled at by an adult educator, being unfairly disciplined, and being isolated from peers. Sixty-six percent of the students ($n = 33$) reported that an adult had yelled at him or her. Of these students, 36%, ($n = 18$) reported being yelled at four or more times. The majority of the students ($n = 33$, 66%) reported that they had received an out of school suspension for something that they thought was unfair. Of these students, 36% ($n = 18$) reported that this had happened four or more times. Finally, 64% of the students ($n = 32$) indicated he or she had been made to stay alone, away from their peers. Of these students, 18% ($n = 18$) reported this had happened four or more times.

Table 4: Frequency of Types of Psychological Maltreatment Reported by Students

Psychological Maltreatment Subscale Items	Happened 1 time		Happened 2-3 times		Happened 4 or more times		Total per item	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
An adult picked me last	9	18.0	6	12.0	7	14.0	22	44.0
An adult would not help me when I asked for help	4	8.0	9	18.0	12	24.0	25	50.0
An adult did not allow me to be part of special activities (art, gym, recess, etc.)	8	16.0	6	12.0	11	22.0	25	50.0
An adult made me stay alone, away from everyone else	12	24.0	11	22.0	9	18.0	32	64.0
An adult ignored me	7	14.0	8	16.0	13	26.0	28	56.0
An adult yelled at me	6	12.0	9	18.0	18	36.0	33	66.0
An adult called me mean names, made fun of me or teased me in a hurtful way	6	12.0	7	14.0	4	8.0	17	34.0
An adult said mean things about my family	7	14.0	5	10.0	5	10.0	17	34.0
An adult made fun of me because of my race or the color of my skin	5	10.0	3	6.0	2	4.0	10	20.0
Did you ever get an out of school suspension for something you thought was unfair	3	6.0	12	24.0	18	36.0	33	66.0
Were you ever expelled for something you thought was unfair?	13	26.0	7	14.0	7	14.0	27	54.0
Were you ever paddled or physically discipline for something you thought was unfair?	6	12.0	2	4.0	6	12.0	14	28.0

Differences in reports of maltreatment based on gender and race.

Is there a relationship between the students' gender and the extent to which students reported experiencing maltreatment in which an educator is identified as being the perpetrator, holding constant the students' race?

Is there a relationship between the students' race and the extent to which students reported experiencing maltreatment in which an educator is identified as being the perpetrator, holding constant the students' gender?

The GLM Multivariate procedure was used to determine the relationship of race and gender on adult to student maltreatment. The effect of race controlling for gender was statistically significant, Wilks' Lambda = .75, $F(3, 46) = 7.66, p < .01$. The effect of gender controlling for race was not statistically significant, Wilks' Lambda = .98, $F(3, 46) = .43, p = .66$. Table 5 contains the means and standard deviations on the dependent variable for the two groups.

Two multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine the effect of race on maltreatment scores when controlling for gender. As shown in Table 6, gender and race combined accounted for 21% of the variance in physical maltreatment, adjusted R squared = .21, $F(2, 47) = 7.54, p < .01$. More specifically, the results indicated that there is a significant effect of race on physical maltreatment, $B = -5.30, t(2, 47) = -3.86, p < .01$, two tailed. The results showed after controlling for gender, white students reported experiencing more physical maltreatment than minority students. Gender did not account for a significant amount of the variability, $B = -.77, t(2, 47) = -.57, p = .65$, two tailed.

In regard to psychological maltreatment, gender and race combined accounted for 11% of the variance in psychological maltreatment, adjusted R squared = .11,

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Physical and Psychological Maltreatment

Variables	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Physical Maltreatment	50	.00	22.00	5.75	5.46
Psychological Maltreatment	50	.00	27.00	10.36	7.56

Table 6: Linear Regression for Students' Race and Gender

	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> Square	Adjusted <i>R</i> Square	<i>B</i>	Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Physical Maltreatment	.49	.24	.21				
Race				-5.30	-.49	-3.86	.00
Gender				-.77	-.06	-.45	.65
Psychological Maltreatment	.38	.14	.11				
Race				-5.58	-.37	-2.76	.01
Gender				1.17	.06	.47	.64

$F(2, 47) = 3.92, p = .03$. More specifically, race accounted for a significant amount of the variability in the psychological maltreatment score, $B = -5.58, t(2, 47) = -2.76, p < .01$, two tailed. Gender did not account for a significant amount of the variability, $B = 1.17, t(2, 47) = .47, p = .64$, two tailed.

In summary, the findings suggest that there is a relationship between the students' race and adult to student physical and psychological maltreatment when controlling for gender. However there is not a significant relationship between the students' gender and adult to student physical and psychological maltreatment when race is controlled for.

Students' Reports of Their Worst School Experience (WSE) Involving an Adult Educator

Demographics of children and their WSE.

Forty five students (90%) of the students responded to the narrative question on the survey that asked students to describe their worst school experience. As seen in Table 7, the students' responses indicated that almost twice as many students reported that an adult was involved in their WSE ($n = 29, 64.4\%$) compared to students who reported that a peer was involved in their WSE ($n = 16, 35.6\%$). Of the nine female students who responded to this question on the survey, 77.8% ($n = 7$) reported that an adult was involved in her WSE. Of the 36 male students who responded to this question, 61.1% ($n = 22$) reported that an adult was involved his WSE.

The reported age at the time of the incident ranged from three years old to 15 years old, with the majority of the students (79%, $n = 23$) being between the ages of 11 and 14 years old. The majority of the students (75%, $n = 21$) indicated that their WSE occurred during the middle school grades (6th, 7th and 8th). Eighteen percent of the

Table 7: WSE and Student Demographic Characteristics

	An adult was involved in WSE		An adult was not involved in WSE		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Female	7	77.8	2	22.2	9	100.0
Male	22	61.1	14	38.9	36	100.0
Total	29	64.4	16	35.6	45	100.0
White	16	66.7	8	33.3	24	100.0
Black	11	61.1	7	38.9	18	100.0
Other	2	66.7	1	33.3	3	100.0
Total	29	64.4	16	35.6	45	100.0

students ($n = 5$) indicated that their *WSE* occurred in the later elementary grades (3rd, 4th and 5th). Two students (7%) reported that their *WSE* occurred during high school.

What did students report as being their *WSE*?

Content analysis was used to determine what category of maltreatment was described (i.e., physical maltreatment or psychological maltreatment) for student responses that indicated an adult was involved in his or her *WSE*. Seven students indicated that their *WSE* involved physical maltreatment. These incidents include being restricted from the bathroom ($n = 3$), hit ($n = 1$), pushed ($n = 1$), paddled ($n = 1$) and inappropriately touched by an adult in the school ($n = 1$).

A narrative response written by a female student indicated that the survey did not encompass all acts of physical abuse that students experience in a school setting. As noted earlier, actions that involved sexual abuse were omitted from the survey. However, one student indicated that her *WSE* involved sexual abuse at the hands of an adult educator. This fourteen year old reported that her *WSE* involved a teacher when she was in the sixth grade. The student wrote, “I got in trouble for what another teacher did to me. They touched me inappropriately and I thought it was my fault...”

Several students reported that their *WSE* involved being hit or pushed by an adult educator. One of these students reported that a sanctioned and still widely accepted form of punishment, corporal punishment was his *WSE*. Another student attributed his being suspended to an incident in which he was struck by an educator. This 13 year old boy wrote, “I got suspended from school because the teacher hit me...” Another student

described an incident in which he had been pushed by an adult at school. This 8th grade student wrote, “An adult (teacher) pushed me into the snack machine.”

As reported earlier in this study, withholding of bathroom “privileges” seemed to be a common experience among the students attending the alternative school. Students’ responses on the qualitative section indicated that this can be a traumatic experience for some students. In fact, three students reported that their *WSE* involved not being allowed to go to the bathroom. A 14-year-old student reported that his *WSE* occurred when he was in the third grade. He wrote, “My teacher wouldn’t let me go the bathroom and I used it on myself.”

Psychological maltreatment.

Three students described an incident in which he or she had experienced psychological maltreatment. One student described being yelled at, one student reported that she was “cussed” at by her bus driver, and one student was called a name. This student wrote, “This teacher said that I was dressed like a hoe...she imbarised (embarrassed) me in front of my whole class...” Another student reported feeling rejected in the 4th and 5th grades. This 12-year-old student wrote, “when I was in 4-5 grades, everybody acted like I did not exist.”

Several students ($n = 11$) whose *WSE* involved an adult educator wrote that they felt they had been unfairly disciplined. For example, one student described an incident in which he felt that his actions were justified. This 9th grade student wrote, “My *WSE* was in xxxxxx county schools and everybody including the teachers were racist and I got in a fight cause a White boy called me a nigger and I sprung on him and they didn’t even

suspend him but they gave me 10 day for that fight that I got into with him even know his words is was caused the hole (whole) situation.”

Eight students cited incidents in which they were suspended or expelled from school as being their *WSE*. For example, an 8th grade male student described the incident as follows, “My worst experience was getting suspended by getting suspended for 73 days over something studid (stupid).”

One of the student’s responses indicated that witnessing an action that an adult educator did to a peer was his *WSE*. This student wrote, “I saw a teacher cut a boys hair when he was sleeping.”

Missing data.

Of the 29 students whose demographic responses indicted that an adult was involved in their *WSE*, six students’ narrative responses were not included due to the student’s responses being illegible, incomplete or not describing an incident that would be considered physical or psychological maltreatment (i.e. taking a test) in which an adult was identified as being the perpetrator. For example, one student’s narrative response was not included because it was not legible. It is important to note that although these student’s responses were not able to be included in the content analysis portion of the survey described above, these students clearly indicated that an adult was involved in their *WSE* in the subsequent questions that asked students to supply demographic information about their *WSE*, therefore, the responses were included the following analysis.

Demographic characteristics of adults identified as being perpetrators of WSE.

What was the role of the adult (i.e., teacher, principal, bus driver, etc.,) involved the students' WSE?

Of the 29 students who indicated an adult was involved in his or her WSE, the majority of the students (41.4%, $n = 12$) identified the role of the adult involved in their WSE as being a "Teacher." Several students reported that their WSE involved an adult in an administrative role (20.7%, $n = 6$). Other adult roles which were identified include the following: a "Substitute Teacher" (10.3%, $n = 3$), a "Teacher's Aide" (6.9%, $n = 2$), and a "Bus Driver," (3.4%, $n = 1$). Three students (10.7%) identified more than one adult role (e.g., Bus Driver, Principal, and Vice and two students (6.9%) indicated "Other." Principal).

Student's feelings about their WSE.

How did students report they felt immediately after their WSE?

Students were asked to report how they felt after their WSE. Students were presented with the following statement, " Please fill in the box next to the sentence that best tells how you felt right after it happened," and were given the following options: 1) It did not really bother me, 2) It upset me a little, and 3) It upset me a lot. Half of the students (50%, $n = 14$) reported that the experience upset him/her "a lot," five students (18%) reported that the experience upset him/her "a little," and nine students (32%) said that the experience "did not really bother me." One student did not respond to this item on the survey.

Limitations of the Study

While the study presents a number of interesting findings and questions for future research there are a number of methodological flaws in the study. This study used a convenience sample which presents a number of limitations. First, it is important to note that the students who participated in this study constitute a unique population of school children. Consequently, the results cannot be generalized to other students outside the schools where the study was conducted.

The students in this study who were attending the alternative schools have not been able to be successfully maintained in a regular education setting. Therefore, it is likely that these students have experienced more incidents in which they have had a negative interaction with adults in the school settings compared to students who have been successful in a regular classroom environment.

The majority of the students who attend these alternative education programs were behind academically compared to their peers. This concern was supported by the students written responses to the narrative question on the questionnaire. Based on the students' narrative responses on the questionnaire, the students' writing skills indicated that the majority of the students' reading skills were well below grade level. It is possible that some students were not capable (and unwilling to ask for assistance) of reading the questions on the survey, so the responses may have been randomly selected by some students and not at all an accurate reflection of the frequency or types of maltreatment that they had experienced.

Additionally, for some students, the questionnaire may have been too lengthy, as students appeared to rush to complete the questionnaire. This may have resulted in

inaccurate responses, missing data, and brief responses to the narrative section of the survey.

The sample size and the response rate were relatively small. The return rate of the parental consent forms for this particular study was 35.2% ($n = 50$). This raises questions about the 64.8% ($n = 90$) of the students who did not return their parental consent forms. For example, it is possible that students who recalled specific incidents in which they experienced maltreatment were more likely to want to “tell their story” and therefore, put forth more effort to return their parental consent form. It is also possible that students who experienced more maltreatment have higher absentee rates, and were not present when the parental consent forms were distributed or were not present when the questionnaire was administered.

Boys and lower income family were over represented in this sample. Due to the overrepresentation of boys, it is possible that significant relationships based on gender were not detected due to the small number of girls ($n = 10$, 20%) who participated in the study. In addition, the majority of the students ($n = 43$, 91.5%) were from lower income families. Statistical tests could not be performed to determine the effect of income on maltreatment scores due to the small number of students who were from higher income families.

In addition, the majority of the students were in the middle school grades and it was noted that the majority of the students reported that their *WSE* occurred in the middle school grades. However, it was unclear whether this finding was due to students’ tendency to report events that had recently occurred or whether there are developmental or environmental experiences that account for the high number of students who reported

that their *WSE* occurred during their middle school years. A higher response rate from the high school students would have helped to answer this question.

The biases and distortions that are present with any self-report instrument complicate the interpretation of these results. This study was based on the students' self report and, therefore, based on the students' interpretation of the events. There was no attempt made to substantiate the accuracy of the student's account of the events described in the narrative section or indicated on the scales. Motivational aspects in the student's responses and the accuracy of the responses are unknown. Since the reporting of types and frequency of educator maltreatment was primarily retrospective in nature, memory and time are mediating factors over which the researcher had no control.

Finally, the school principal cautioned that some of the students' responses may have been influenced by their recent interactions with school staff. For example, a student who had been discipline recently may report a significantly higher rate and variety of types of physical and psychological maltreatment than actually occurred due to being angry at the school staff. It is also important to note that the instrument used in the study was not standardized. Therefore, the validity of the instrument is unknown.

In summary, while the study adds to the literature and provides important information about the nature and extent to which students in an alternative school setting have experienced physical and psychological maltreatment, this study needs to be interpreted with caution.

Chapter Five:

Discussion and Implications

This study examined the extent to which students who were attending alternative education programs reported experiencing various types of physical and psychological maltreatment. Relationships between students' gender and race were examined in relation to students' reports of physical and psychological maltreatment by an adult at school. Additionally, students' narrative description of their *Worst School Experience* (WSE) involving adult educators was examined. A summary of the results and a comparison between this study and previous research is discussed. Following this is a discussion of the implications for practice, policy, and research.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from this study suggest that both physical and psychological maltreatment by adults in educational settings is a serious issue in schools. Yet, surprisingly, few research studies have explored the extent to which adult educators are engaging in the maltreatment of students under their care or the various types of maltreatment adults are engaging in. This study suggests that students who attend alternative education programs have been subjected to a wide range of physical and psychological maltreatment at the hands of educators. Students' descriptions included being: pushed into vending machines, being told by a teacher that she dressed like a "whore", being forced to urinate on himself because an educator refused to permit him to go to the bathroom, and being cussed at by a bus driver.

An analysis of the 50 students attending an alternative education setting revealed that the majority of the students who completed the survey indicated that they had

experienced at least one type of maltreatment in which an educator was identified as being the perpetrator. Specifically, 86% of the students ($n = 43$) reported experiencing at least one incident in which he or she had been physically mistreated by an adult educator. Further, 88% of the students ($n = 44$) reported experiencing at least one incident in which he or she had been psychologically mistreated by an adult educator. Students reported experiencing a wide range of different types of physical and psychological maltreatment. Students reported being pushed, grabbed, shook, yelled at, teased, and ignored by adult educators. Students reported being tied up, locked in a closet, and being subjected to teasing and racial remarks in school settings.

The prevalence of psychological and physical maltreatment is corroborated by previous studies. Findings from three studies (Lambert, 1990; Vargas-Moll, 1991; and Zelikoff, 1990) indicated that over half of the students (i.e., 74%, 78%, and 60% respectively) sampled reported experiencing maltreatment involving an educator. Recent studies that have examined both physical and psychological maltreatment of school children have been conducted by doctoral students studying at Temple University in Pennsylvania under the supervision of Dr. Irwin Hyman. The primary focus of these studies has been to examine the relationship between PTSD and maltreatment by educators (Clarke, 1986; Lambert; Hyman & Gasiwski, 1990; Hyman et al., 1988; Vargas-Moll, 1991; Zeilikoff, 1990). The populations studied have included 6th through 12th grade students in special education and regular education programs (Chau, 2002), Hispanic students (Vargas-Moll, 1991), junior high school students (Lambert, 1990), high school students (Snook, 2000) and adult educators (Zelikoff, 1990). Due to the unique

population in this study, comparisons between this study and previous research need to be made with extreme caution.

The percentage of students in this study who reported experiencing maltreatment was higher than other studies. However, this was not a surprising finding, since this group of children was unique due to the fact that they were all attending an alternative education program due to behavioral problems that led to referrals to these alternative programs. The school staff at these schools reported that this population of students has extreme difficulty following rules and often report feeling that they have been unfairly treated by school staff. It is also possible that children who participated in this study were significantly different from children attending regular education programs in other ways. For example, many of the historical and demographic characteristics of these children are unknown (e.g., abuse, history, substance abuse, and family dynamics). The identification of specific demographic characteristics may be important factors to consider when assessing the vulnerability of specific populations of students in future studies.

In this study, the majority of the students were from lower income families. In fact, 95% of the students ($n = 43$) reported receiving free or reduced school lunch. Due to the small number of children in the sample who reported that they did not qualify for free or reduced school lunch, planned tests to examine the relationship between social economic status and maltreatment were not addressed. It is possible that income may have had a significant effect on the physical and psychological maltreatment scores. Studies that have investigated physical maltreatment (corporal punishment) have found schools with the highest use of corporal punishment tend to have the poorest student

populations, the largest class sizes, and the most severe disciplinary practices (Farley, 1983; Russell, 1988). It is also possible that the high percentage of children reporting maltreatment may be due to the location of the alternative schools, the Southeastern United States. Research that has examined physical maltreatment has found that schools with the highest rates of corporal punishment tend to be in the South and Southeast (Farley, 1983; Russell, 1988).

In this study, white students reported experiencing significantly more physical maltreatment and psychological maltreatment than minority students. The regression analyses indicated that gender and race combined accounted for 21% of the variance in physical maltreatment, adjusted R squared = .21, $F(2, 47) = 7.54$, $p < .01$. After controlling for gender, white students reported experiencing more physical maltreatment than minority students. Gender did not account for a significant amount of the variability, $B = -.77$, $t(2, 47) = -.57$, $p = .65$, two tailed.

Similar findings were found in regard to psychological maltreatment. The regression showed that gender and race combined accounted for 11% of the variance in psychological maltreatment, adjusted R squared = .11, $F(2, 47) = 3.92$, $p = .03$. Race accounted for a significant amount of the variability in the psychological maltreatment score, $B = -5.58$, $t(2, 47) = -2.76$, $p < .01$, two tailed and gender did not account for a significant amount of the variability, $B = 1.17$, $t(2, 47) = .47$, $p = .64$, two tailed.

In examining the effect of race and gender on maltreatment, it is important to note that only a small percentage of the variability was related to race. However, a surprising finding was noted in this study: White students reported experiencing more physical and psychological maltreatment than minority students. Previous research in this area has

suggested minority students from lower income families are more likely to experience physical maltreatment (i.e., corporal punishment), then non-minority students (Farley, 1983; 2000 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Compliance Report, 2003). The higher maltreatment scores reported by White students may be due to discriminatory practices in the schools' referral process. It may be that White students' misbehaviors are dealt with differently compared to Black students' misbehaviors. For example, perhaps school staff utilize other disciplinary strategies prior to sending White students to alternative programs, where as Black students misbehaviors are less tolerated and referrals are made more quickly for fewer behavioral infractions compared to Whites. This could potentially suggest that Whites experience a greater number of negative interactions with adult educators prior to being referred to alternative programs, which could account for the higher frequency of physical and psychological maltreatment reported. It is also plausible that the higher maltreatment scores reported by White students were more strongly related to income than race. However, as stated previously, these analyses were could not be completed due to the small number of students who were not from higher income families.

Another surprising finding was the large number of students who reported that an adult was involved in their *WSE*. In this study, students were asked to describe their *WSE* and identify the role (e.g., peer, teacher, principal, or bus driver) of the person involved in their *WSE*. The majority of students ($n = 29$, 64.4%) in the present study reported that an educator, not a peer, was involved in their *WSE*. Of these students, 14 (50%) reported that the experience upset him/her "a lot." Researchers have suggested that maltreatment by adults is more devastating than maltreatment perpetrated by peers due to the power

differential. When children are mistreated by adults in authority, they are most often left with little or no ability to defend themselves (Hyman & Perone, 1988).

The narrative portion of this study suggested that students experienced a wide range of maltreatment at the hands of educators. Students describe being pushed into vending machines, sexually abused, and hit with objects. One child described an incident in which he was forced to urinate on himself because an educator refused to permit him to go to the bathroom. The students indicated that adults who were involved in their *WSE* were not limited to teachers, but also involved principals, vice principal, bus drivers, and teacher's aids.

Practice Implications

The misuse of authority depicted in the students' narrative responses suggests that additional protections need to be put in place to prevent educators from misusing their position of authority. Social workers can use their skills and expertise to help combat physical and psychological maltreatment in educational settings.

Hart, Gelardo, and Brassard (1986) state, "...there is mounting evidence that that psychological maltreatment per se is associated with the developmental of the severest forms of behavior disorders and developmental delays in children. These developments and findings indicated that psychological maltreatment, as well as child maltreatment in general, is a serious mental health threat that should be brought to the forefront of efforts in policy development, research, prevention and intervention" (p. 164). School social workers have an ethical obligation to advocate for vulnerable populations (NASW, 1999). School children are among the most vulnerable populations in our society. In fact, school children are the only remaining Americans who may be legally beaten (Hentoff,

1979). This practice is illegal in all prisons, mental health institutions, foster care homes, and most day-care centers. Yet, the courts have continued to rule that public school teachers and administrators are privileged by common law to inflict corporal punishment that is “reasonably necessary” for the education and discipline for children (Ingraham v. Wright in 1977). This ruling has been used in the defense of educators who have beaten, punched, kicked, and bruised children (Hyman, 1990).

Social workers can lead efforts to eliminate all type of violence from schools and implement prevention efforts within the school setting. The first step is to bring awareness to the issue. Specifically, they can provide in-service trainings for educators that address the implications of physical maltreatment and psychologically damaging disciplinary practices. Social workers can work with school administrators to implement school wide anti-violence campaigns that include information about adult to student maltreatment.

Social workers can provide leadership and training about the importance of meeting the developmental needs of school children. Their expertise can enable them to help educators to promote healthy social and emotional development and reduce destructive practices by teaching fair and developmentally appropriate disciplinary practices.

Social workers can work with parents, victims, and the perpetrators to help identify and clarify problems and provide assistance in correcting problems early on, before problems get out of hand. School social workers can provide consultation to classroom teachers who are struggling with classroom management or a specific child’s acting out behaviors.

In addition, social workers can advocate for children who are experiencing maltreatment and develop grievance procedures for students who feel that they have been mistreated. Social workers who work in educational settings can be involved in efforts to improve human relations, both teacher to student and student to student, and to help students effectively communicate their concern and assert their rights when they feel that they are being mistreated. Social workers can be active participants in meetings between school staff, parents, and children. Social workers can serve as mediators and advocates when problems arise. For example, Social workers can help the child to present their version of the story. Social workers can help educate parents about their children's rights in regard to disciplinary procedures and appeal processes.

Social workers can also help schools to develop policies that clearly state that maltreatment of any form will not be tolerated. School administrators can be encouraged to take steps to ensure that educators are held accountable for their actions. In developing new policies, it is critical that social workers efforts are fully supported by school administrators. Social workers can work closely with administrators and enlist the help of teachers, parents, and students in developing specific policies that address school bullying (Rigby, 1995).

A written policy that is distributed to everyone in the school community can send a clear message that incidents of physical and psychological maltreatment will be taken seriously and action will be taken in response to them (Lumsden, 2002). The policy should include clear definitions of both physical and psychological maltreatment, with examples, and include a reporting procedure that encourages the reporting of maltreatment (Ribgy, 1995). A confidential reporting system may encourage students to

report if they are victimized or have witnessed maltreatment (The Parent Teacher Association of Connecticut, Inc., 2000). School officials should also encourage parents to become involved in advocating on behalf of their children if they suspect their child has been mistreated. The policy should also specifically describe how the school will address incidents of physical and psychological maltreatment.

Research implications.

Although the topic of school violence has in some areas come to the forefront of mental health and educational initiatives (e.g., peer on peer bullying and violent acts that students perpetrate against educators), little attention has been given to the devastating effects that adults can have when they physically or psychologically mistreat the children in their care. It appears that the mounting evidence related to the serious mental health threat has not generated much change in the school policies or disciplinary practices in schools in the 21st century. Yet, the few studies that have addressed this topic suggest this problem is vastly underreported and unacknowledged.

First and foremost, researchers must bring greater awareness to the issues. More studies need to be conducted to establish that prevalence, the types, and the impact of both physical and psychological maltreatment in which adults are the perpetrators. Additional retrospective studies (despite the limitations of this methodology) will help to clarify the frequency and intensity of unnecessary and damaging forms of maltreatment that students experience in educational setting (Hyman & Perone, 1988). The present study could be replicated by using a random sample, a larger sample size, and including more female and minority students (e.g., Hispanic and Asian students). The study could also be conducted in a regular education setting.

Methodological concerns related to biases and memory lapses could be addressed by conducting studies of children's experience in their current grade level. To increase the validity of the studies, studies could also be conducted in which both students and their parents are asked to report the types and the frequency of which the student experienced various forms of maltreatment. A nationally representative sample would significantly increase the generalizability of the study's findings. A nationally representative sample would also allow demographic comparisons based on the geographic location of the school, the class size, and the socio-economic factors. For instance, previous research regarding the use of physical discipline indicated that the highest use of corporal punishment tended to have the poorest student populations, the largest class sizes, and tended to be in the South and Southeast (Farley, 1983; Russell, 1988). Future studies could be done to investigate whether other types of maltreatment follow similar patterns.

Studies could be designed aimed at determining whether there is a link between physical and psychological maltreatment and the social/emotional development and the academic success of students. Longitudinal research studies could be designed to explore relationship between adult to student maltreatment and behavioral problems, and to explore relationships between adult-to-student maltreatment and disciplinary referrals, suspensions, academic performance, truancy rates, and drop-out rates.

In the present study, the survey asked students to report on their experiences in which the perpetrator was an *adult educator* and in which the perpetrator was a *peer*. Since, this study only investigated incident in which an *adult educator* was the perpetrator, additional analysis would allow the researcher to investigate whether there

was significant relationships between adult to student maltreatment and peer on peer maltreatment. For example, this data could be used to investigate whether students who reported experiencing physical maltreatment in which an adult educator was involved also experienced similar types and frequencies of maltreatment in which a peer was involved. This analysis would help to expand understanding of a wider range of maltreatment within the school setting.

Due to the sensitive nature of this topic, efforts must be made to gain the cooperation of school administrators. First, barriers to collaborative relationships with schools must be overcome by educating school administrators of the potential benefits of research studies. Researchers must be willing to go beyond the assessment process and be willing to provide school administrators with feedback and resources to assist the school in addressing problems that are identified through research efforts. For example, researcher can help to identify and implement intervention programs if assessments indicated that maltreatment by educators is a problem within the school setting. Efforts aimed at developing interventions could be used to identify programs and components of prevention and interventions program that are specifically aimed at decreasing adult-to-student physical and psychological maltreatment.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

Student Survey

We would like to learn more about your experiences at school. Many people have had at least one bad thing happen to them in school that involved an adult(s) or student(s). On this survey an adult could be a principal, vice principal, teacher, coach, bus driver, lunchroom supervisor or any other adult that works in the school.

If at anytime you become upset, please talk to the person who gave you this form.

Please indicate your answer by making dark, heavy marks in boxes for each item. If you want to change an answer, erase your mark completely. Then fill in the box that shows your new answer.

Are you: ☐ a girl ☐ a boy

What is your age? ☐ 11 ☐ 12 ☐ 13 ☐ 14 ☐ 15 ☐ 16 ☐ 17 ☐ 18 ☐ 19

Are you: ☐ White ☐ Black ☐ Other

What is your grade? ☐ 5th ☐ 6th ☐ 7th ☐ 8th ☐ 9th ☐ 10th ☐ 11th ☐ 12th ☐ >12th

Please indicate how strongly you agree with the following statements by making dark, heavy marks in boxes next to your answer. If you want to change an answer, erase your mark completely. Then fill in the box that shows your new answer.

I expect to graduate from high school.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

I expect to graduate from college.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree

Please indicate how often you experienced the following events while at school. Mark your answer by filling in the box next to one of the following responses: 1) Did not happen 2) Happened 1 time 3) Happened 2- 3 times or 4) Happened 4 or more times. Use dark, heavy marks to fill in the box next to your answer. If you want to change an answer, erase your mark completely. Then fill in the box that shows your new answer.

	Did not happen	Happened 1 time	Happened 2- 3 times	Happened 4 or more times
1. An adult slapped me	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Another student slapped me	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. An adult punched me	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Another student punched me	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. An adult pushed or shoved me	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. Another student pushed or shoved me	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. An adult grabbed me very hard	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Another student grabbed me very hard	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. An adult hit me with an object (a ruler, paddle, a strap, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Another student hit me with an object (a book, ruler, backpack, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. An adult tied me up	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Another student tied me up	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. An adult threw something at me (a book, eraser, a pen, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Another student threw something at me (a book, eraser, a pen, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. An adult shook me	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Another student shook me	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. An adult pulled my hair	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. Another student pulled my hair	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. An adult locked me in a locker, closet or small room	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. Another student locked me in a locker, closet or small room	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. An adult pulled my ear	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. Another student pulled my ear	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. An adult did not let me to go to the bathroom	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. Another student did not let me to go to the bathroom	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. An adult allowed other students to hit me	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. Another student allowed other students to hit me	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. An adult picked me last	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. Another student picked me last	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. An adult would not help me when I asked for help	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. Another student would not help me when I asked for help	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. An adult did not allow me to be part of special activities (art, gym, recess, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please indicate how often you experienced the following events while at school. Mark your answer by filling in the box next to one of the following responses: 1) Did not happen 2) Happened 1 time 3) Happened 2- 3 times or 4) Happened 4 or more times. Use dark, heavy marks to fill in the box next to your answer. If you want to change an answer, erase your mark completely. Then fill in the box that shows your new answer.

	Did not happen	Happened 1 time	Happened 2- 3 times	Happened 4 or more times
32. Another student did not allow me to be part of special subjects or activities (art, gym, recess, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐
33. An adult made me stay alone, away from everybody	☐	☐	☐	☐
34. Another student made me stay alone, away from everybody	☐	☐	☐	☐
35. An adult ignored me	☐	☐	☐	☐
36. Another student ignored me	☐	☐	☐	☐
37. An adult yelled at me	☐	☐	☐	☐
38. Another student yelled at me	☐	☐	☐	☐
39. An adult called me mean names, made fun of me, or teased me in a hurtful way	☐	☐	☐	☐
40. Another student called me mean names, made fun of me, or teased me in a hurtful way	☐	☐	☐	☐
41. An adult said mean things about my family	☐	☐	☐	☐
42. Another student said mean things about my family	☐	☐	☐	☐
43. An adult made fun of me because of my race or the color of my skin	☐	☐	☐	☐
44. Another student made fun of me because of my race or the color of my skin	☐	☐	☐	☐
45. Did you ever get an out of school suspension for something you thought was unfair?	☐	☐	☐	☐
46. Were your ever expelled for something you thought was unfair?	☐	☐	☐	☐
47. Were your ever paddled or physically disciplined for something you thought was unfair?	☐	☐	☐	☐

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's part of a bound notebook.

Please answer the following questions by filling in the box next to your answer. Use dark, heavy marks to fill in the box next to your answer. If you want to change an answer, erase your mark completely. Then fill in the box that shows your new answer. For each statement **MARK ONLY ONE BOX.**

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Please answer the following questions by filling in the box next to your answer. Use dark, heavy marks to fill in the box next to your answer. If you want to change an answer, erase your mark completely. Then fill in the box that shows your new answer. For each statement **MARK ONLY ONE BOX.**

48.	Did your mom graduate from high school?	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Unsure
49.	Did your mom graduate from college?	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Unsure
50.	Did your dad graduate from high school?	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Unsure
51.	Did your dad graduate from college?	☐ Yes	☐ No	☐ Unsure
52.	Do you get free or reduced school lunch?	☐ Yes	☐ No	
53.	Did you ever get an out of school suspension?	☐ Yes	☐ No	If yes, how many times__
54.	Have you ever been expelled from school?	☐ Yes	☐ No	If yes, how many times__
55.	Have you ever been corporally punished (paddled) at school?	☐ Yes	☐ No	If yes, how many times__

Thank you for participating in this survey! Please put this survey in the box at the back of the room.

Appendix B: Parental Consent Form

The University of Tennessee
College of Social Work
Fall 2004

Dear Parent,

Hello, I am a doctoral student at The University of Tennessee and would like your permission to include your child in a study that I will be doing at your child's schools. The purpose of the study is to better understand how often students are mistreated by other students or adults at school. The surveys will be administered during the Fall semester, 2004. **Please indicate whether you give your permission for your child to participate in this study by filling out the consent form on the back of this page and have your child return it to school tomorrow.**

If you are willing to let your child be a part of this study, and your child agrees to participate, I will ask him/her to complete a written questionnaire. Students will be asked questions about their gender, race, age, etc. Students will be asked to respond to 47 questions about how often he/she has been mistreated by adults and/or students at school. For example, one item states, "An adult pushed or shoved me" and asks students to tell how many times this has happened by marking one of the following: "did not happen," "happened one time," "happened 2-3 times," or "happened four or more times." A similar item states, "Another student pushed or shoved me," and asks students to tell how many times this happened. Students will also be asked to write a short paragraph about their worst school experience. The survey will take about 30-45 minutes to complete.

I believe that the information that the students provide will help us to better understand the types of negative experiences that students face while at school. Before you decide to let your child participate, I want you to understand the potential risks. There is a small risk that someone at the school could learn what a child said on the questionnaire. It is important that you know that I will take steps to make sure that the children's information remains confidential. The following steps will be taken:

1. Your child's name will **NOT** be on the survey.
2. When your child is filling out the survey, only the researcher and other students who are completing the survey will be in the room. No school personnel will be in the room, and a research assistant will be posted outside the room to make sure no school personnel come into the room.
3. After your child has completed the survey, he/she will put their survey in a sealed envelope and put the envelope in a box that will be located at the back of the room. Immediately after surveys are completed, they will be removed from school grounds and will not be opened anywhere near the school grounds.
4. Individual responses on the survey will not be revealed to anyone at your child's school nor any other agency.
5. Only the researcher and a few people at UT will be able to see your child's survey. All UT staff who are involved in this study will guarantee that they will never reveal the names of the students who participated in the study, unless the student tells the research that he/she is being abused. Tennessee law requires the researcher to report any case of suspected child abuse. This means that if a student comes to the researcher and tells the researcher that he/she has been abused the researcher must report this to the authorities. However, information written on the survey forms alone will not be reported because there is no way for the researcher to know which student reported the abuse.
6. Neither your name nor your child's name will ever be used in public or attached to any records. Only combined group responses will be reported in reports or articles.
7. All of the questionnaires will be kept in a locked office at the UT campus.
8. Individual surveys will be shredded after the information is recorded.

It is also possible that a child might feel badly or get upset because he/she remembered an unpleasant experience. In the unlikely event that your child does become upset, a social work researcher, and a school social worker or guidance counselor will be available for your child to talk to.

You do not have to give your permission to allow your child to participate in this study. If you do not want your child to participate, no information will be collected. Please understand that participation is voluntary and that you may withdraw your consent at any time without any consequences. Refusal to participate will in no way affect your child's treatment or receipt of services from the school. Even if you decide to allow your child to be a part of this study, he/she may choose not to answer any questions or quit taking the survey at any time.

This study is being done by the University of Tennessee. If you have questions about this study you may contact Kathryn Davis, MSW (901) 448- 7435. If you have any questions about your child's rights as a research participant, you may contact a representative at the Office of Research at the University of Tennessee at 865-974-3466.

Thank you so much for your help with this study!

Sincerely,

Kathryn Davis, MSW

PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

We are inviting your child to participate in a survey designed to allow students to tell their side of the story about the types of negative interactions that students face during their school careers. The survey will be administered to willing students attending the alternative school. Participation is voluntary. Your child does not have to be part of this study.

Please check one of the boxes below to indicate whether you agree to give your permission for your child to participate.

- ☐ **I give my permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.**
(print child's name)
- ☐ **I do not want my child _____ to participate in this study.**
(print child's name)

Your signature indicates that you have either read the information above or had it read to you. Please indicate whether you give your permission for your child to participate in the study by making an "X" in one of the above boxes. Your child will be given a small thank you gift (i.e., a soda or a juice) for returning the survey. Note, the gift will be given to all students who return the form, regardless of whether parental permission to participate in the study was provided. Also, a small thank-you gift (i.e., UT keychain, UT stickers, UT pencils, or other UT trinket) will be given to students for their participation.

Date

Signature of Parent or Guardian

This study is being done by the University of Tennessee. If you have questions about this study you may contact Kathryn Davis, MSW (901) 448- 7435. If you have any questions about your child's rights as a research participant, you may contact a representative at the Office of Research at the University of Tennessee at 865-974-3466.

Appendix C: Student Assent Form

Assent Form

Prior to beginning the survey, the students will be read the following statement:

“Your parent/guardian has given permission for you to be a part of this study. Now we want to make sure that you understand what this study is about and ask that you give us your permission, too. The purpose of this study is to help us to learn more about how often students are mistreated at school. For example, one item states, “Another student pushed or shoved me.” For this item, you would mark on the survey, how many times you remember this happening since you began Kindergarten (e.g., “Did not happen,” to “happened four or more times”). The survey should take you 30-45 minutes to complete.

I want you to know that all the students at your school have been asked to be a part of this study. You are not being asked to be a part of this study because someone found out about something that has happened to you. The purpose of the study is only to help me understand more about how often students are mistreated by adults or other students at school.

When you get to the part of the survey where you are asked to write about your worst school experience, use the words, “an adult” or “a student” to tell about who was involved in your worst school experience. Please do **NOT** write down or tell me the name (e.g., Mr. Smith or Tommy) of the person involved in your worst school experience. The purpose of this study is **NOT** to get school staff or other students in trouble.

Before you decide to be a part of this study, you should know about the possible risks. There is a small chance that someone at the school could learn what you said on the questionnaire. It is important that you know that the researcher will take steps to make sure that this does not happen. To make sure your information remains confidential. The following steps will be taken:

1. Your name will **NOT** be on the survey.
2. When you are filling out the survey, only the researcher and other students who are completing the survey will be in the room. No teachers or school staff will be in the room.
3. After you have completed the survey, you will put your survey in a sealed envelope and put the envelope in a box that will be located at the back of the room.
4. Only the researcher and a few people at UT will ever be able to see your survey.
5. Reports or articles that are written will not use your name; only the combined answers of many students will be reported.
6. All of the surveys will be kept in a locked office at the UT campus.
7. All surveys will be shredded after the information is put in a UT computer.
8. All UT staff who are involved in this study promise that they will not tell anyone the names of the students who were a part of the study unless, the student tells the researcher that he/she is being abused. Tennessee law requires the researcher to report any case of suspected child abuse. This means that if a student comes to the researcher and tells the researcher that he/she has been abused the researcher must report this to the authorities. However, information written on the survey forms alone will not be reported because there is no way for the researcher to know which student reported the abuse.

It is also possible that you might feel badly or get upset because the survey has caused you to remember something bad that happened. If you become sad or angry, you may talk to the researcher, the school social worker or guidance counselor.

You need to know that you do not have to fill out the survey and that you can stop filling in the survey at any time, for any reason. Please feel free to say as much or as little as you want when completing the story part of the survey. You have the right to ask the researcher questions at any time. Do you understand everything we have said? Do you have any questions?”

Thank you so much for your help with this study!

Sincerely,

Kathryn Davis, MSW

This study is being done by the University of Tennessee. If you have questions about this study you may email or call either Kathryn Davis, MSW, **(901) 448-7435**, email: kdavis11@utk.edu. If you have any questions about your rights, you may call and talk with someone at the Office of Research at the University of Tennessee at **(865) 974-3466**. You will be given a copy of this form to keep.

ASSENT

1. I have fully read, or have had read to me and explained to me in a language I understand, this form.
2. I was allowed to ask questions and all my questions were answered in a way that I understood.
3. I have been given a signed copy of this form, which is mine to keep.
4. I understand that I am being asked to participate in research. I understand the risks and benefits, and agree to participate.
5. I understand that I can stop filling out the survey or not answer questions, at any time, without penalty.

Name

Date

Appendix D: Student Consent Form

The University of Tennessee
Fall 2004

Dear Student,

Hello, I am a doctoral student at The University of Tennessee. I would like to ask you to be a part of a study that I will be doing at your school. The purpose of the study is to help me understand how often students are mistreated while at school. **Please let me know if you would like to be a part of this study by checking one of the boxes on the attached form.**

If you agree to be a part of this study, I will ask you to answer some questions. You will be asked to questions about your gender, race and age. You will be asked 47 questions about how often you have been mistreated while at school. For example, one item states, "An adult pushed or shoved me." You will be asked to tell how many times this has happened to you by marking one of the following: "did not happen," "happened one time," "happened 2-3 times," or "happened four or more times." A similar item states, "Another student pushed or shoved me," and asks you to tell how many times this happened. You will also be asked to write a short paragraph about your worst school experience. Surveys will be given during the Fall semester of 2004. The survey will take about 30-45 minutes to complete.

Before you decide if you want to fill out the survey, you should know about the risks. There is a small chance that someone at the school could learn what you said on the questionnaire. It is important that you know that the researcher will take steps to make sure that that this does not happen. To make sure your answers are not seen by anyone except the researcher, the following steps will be taken:

9. Your name will **NOT** be on the survey.
10. When you are filling out the survey, only the researcher and other students who are completing the survey will be in the room. No teachers or school staff will be in the room.
11. After you have completed the survey, you will put your survey in a sealed envelope and put the envelope in a box at the back of the room.
12. Only the researcher and a few people at UT will ever be able to see your survey.
13. Reports or articles that are written will not use your name, only the combined answers of many students will be reported.
14. All of the surveys will be kept in a locked office at the University of Tennessee.
15. All surveys will be shredded after the information is put into a UT computer.
16. All UT staff who are involved in this study promise that they will not tell anyone the names of the students who were a part of the study, unless the student tells the research that he/she is being abused. Tennessee law requires the researcher to report any case of suspected child abuse. This means that if a student comes to the researcher and tells the researcher that he/she is has been abused, the researcher must report this to the authorities. However, information written on the survey forms alone will not be reported because there is no way for the researcher to know which student reported the abuse.

It is also possible that you might feel badly or get upset because the survey has caused you to remember a time when something bad happened. If you become sad or angry, you may talk to the researcher, the school social worker or guidance counselor. It is also important that you know that the purpose of this research is **not** to get any teacher in trouble nor is the study being done because the school found out about a something that has happened to you. In fact, we ask that you do not tell or write anyone's name (e.g., Mr. Smith, Tommy) when filling out the survey.

You do not have to be a part of this study. If you do not want to fill out the survey, no information will be collected. If you choose not to complete the survey, nothing bad will happen. If you decide to be a part of this study, you can leave questions blank, can write as much (or as little) as you want to on the story part of the survey, or to stop taking the survey at any time without penalty.

This study is being done by a doctoral student at the University of Tennessee. If you have questions about this study you may contact Kathryn Davis, MSW (901) 448-7435. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact a staff member at the Office of Research at the University of Tennessee at 865-974-3466.

Thank you so much for your help with this study!

Sincerely,

Kathryn Davis, MSW

CONSENT FORM

We are inviting you to be part of a study that will let you to tell us how often you have been mistreated at school. It is important that you understand that your participation is voluntary. You do not have to be part of this study.

CONSENT

6. I have read, or have had read to me this form and I understand what was read.
7. I was allowed to ask questions.
8. All my questions were answered in a way that I understood the answer.
9. I have been given a signed copy of this form, which is mine to keep.
10. I know that I am being asked to be a part of a research study. I understand the risks and benefits, and freely agree to be a part of this study.
11. I understand that I can stop answering the survey at any time or not answer questions without penalty.

Please mark one of the boxes below to tell if you want to be a part of the study.

- ☐ I _____ would like to be a part of this study.
(print your name)
- ☐ I do not want _____ to be part of this study.
(print your name)

Your signature means that you have either read the information above or had it read to you. Please tell us if you would like to be a part of the study by making an "X" in one of the above boxes.

Date

(Write your name here)

Appendix E: MSWE Qualitative Response Table

		Physical Maltreatment	Psychological Maltreatment	Other
1	A 11 year old male student in the 5 th grade wrote, “when brought a bag to school – weed bag + I didn’t know what it was. Then I showed someone I came to Xxxxx Xxxxx It took 7 days to get transportation.” The student reported that a white, male, substitute teacher was involved in this incident.			
4	A thirteen year old boy in the seventh grade wrote that his WSE was a fight. He wrote, “I got into a very big fight.” He indicated that this incident happened when he was 12 years old (5 th grade). He reported that the incident involved a black, male Vice Principal.			
6	A female student reported being inappropriately touched by an adult at the school. This fourteen year old identified her worst school experience that involved a teacher when she was in the sixth grade. The student wrote, “I got in trouble for what another teacher did to me. They touched me inappropriately and I thought it was my fault. They followed me and kept me after class. Always had me doing things for them. They sat behind me in class. Gave me my grades, and treated me differently from all others.” This incident involved a white, male teacher.			
7	One sixth grade female student’s narrative response was not legible. This student wrote, “they Butminiss for chewing on a pen cap.” However, the demographic questions were clearly marked and therefore included in the analysis. The incident involved a white, male, Vice Principal. The student reported that she was in the sixth grade at the time of the incident (age 11).			
9	A thirteen year old boy (7 th grade) indicted that being called names by another student was his WSE. However, the demographic questions related to this question indicted that an adult was involved in the student’s WSE. The student reported that the incident occurred when he was 12 years old and in the 6 th grade. He wrote, “one student call me name in school.” He reported that the incident involved a white, male Principal.			
12	A 14 year old boy in the 8 th grade wrote, “I saw a teacher cut a boys hair when he was sleeping.” He indicated that this incident occurred when he was in the 4 th grade (age 10). The incident involved a white, female teacher.			

15	A 14 year old girl who was in the 8 th grade wrote, “my school was fun, but when my math teach” She indicated that this experience involved a white, female teacher when she was 13 years old and in the 8 th grade.			
16	A 13 year old girl who was in the 8 th grade wrote, “We I had a fight all the teacher said I hit girl first and I didn’t” She indicated that a white, female teacher was involved. This incident occurred when the student was in the 6 th grade (age 11).			
18	A 13 year old boy in the 8 th grade wrote, “when I got kick out for fighting another school.” He reported that this incident occurred when he was in the 8 th grade (age 13). He indicated that the adult involved was a Vice Principal who was a white male.			
19	A 14 year old boy in the 8 th grade indicated that his worst school experience involved a Vice Principal and a Teacher. He indicated that the person was female, male, black and white. He was 13 years old and in the 7 th grade at the time. He wrote, when I went to juvenile. I went to juvl Because I was DTP.”			
21	A fourteen year old student who was in the 8 th grade reported that his WSE occurred when he was in the third grade (age 6). He reported that “my teacher wouldn’t let me go the bathroom and I yoused it on myself.” He reported that a white, female teacher was involved in this incident.			
22	A 15 year old student in the 8 th grade described an incident in which he had been pushed. This student wrote, “An adult (teacher) pushed me into the snack machine.” He reported that the incident occurred when he was 14 years old in the 8 th grade. The adult was identified as a black, female teacher’s aide.			
23	A 14 year old male student who was in the 8 th grade wrote, “My worst experience was a teacher making me take a test.” He indicated that this occurred when he was 14 years old in the 8 th grade. The adult was a white, female teacher.			

24	A 13 year old 8 th grade male student wrote that his WSE involved a Principal, Vice Principal, and a Bus driver. He indicated that the individuals involved were both black and white and of both genders. He described the incident as follows, "My worst experience was getting suspended by getting suspended for 73 days over something stupid." He reported that he was 13 years old and in the 8 th grade.			
27	Another 14 year old male student (8 th grade) also reported that his WSE involved not being allowed to go to the bathroom. This student wrote, "In Xxxxxx my teacher she wouldn't let me go to the bathroom. Then she would always get me in trouble. She was also prejudice." This incident involved a white, female teacher.			
28	A 13 year old male student who was in the 8 th grade, reported that his WSE happened when he was 13 years old and in the 8 th grade. He wrote, "An adult wouldn't let me go to the bathroom." This student indicated that a white, male teacher was involved in this incident.			
29	A 13 year old student in the 8 th grade reported that his WSE was "taking a test." He indicated that the incident happened when he was 12 years old and in the 7 th grade. This incident involved a white, male teacher.			
31	A thirteen year old male student in the 8 th grade wrote, "I was yelled at." This student reported that he was in 12 years old and in the 7 th grade at the time of the incident. The incident involved a black, female substitute teacher.			
32	This student was a 12 year old boy who was in the 7 th grade. He reported that his WSE occurred when he was in the 6 th grade. He wrote, "getting paddled." This student indicated that a white, male principal was the adult involved in this incident.			
34	A 13 year old male student in the 7 th grade wrote, "My worst school experience was at xxxxxxxx Middle School I was sepeded every other day." The student indicated that his WSE involved a white male. The student indicated that he was not in school then and was 3 years old at the time. The role of the adult was "other."			

35	A 14 year old female student in the 8 th grade described her WSE as involving a white, female substitute teacher. She wrote, "I got expelled out of the school I use to go to cause I was susped." The student was 13 years old and in the 8 th grade.			
36	This student was a 13 year old boy (8th) who wrote that his WSE happened when he was in the 8 th grade. He wrote, "I got suspended from school because the teacher hit me. I got in trouble in school because I got caught in the classroom because the kids got me in trouble." This incident involved a white, male teacher's aide.			
37	A 12 year old male student in the 7 th grade wrote, "when I was in 4 -5 grade, everybody acted like I did not exist" The student wrote that the incident involved a white, female teacher. The student was 5 or 6 and in the 4 th or 5 th grade at the time of the incident.			
39	A 16 year old female student who was in the 9 th grade wrote, "this teacher said that I was dressed like a hoe and I told her that the only thing rong with my clothes is my shirt showed a little of my stomach and she pulled me in the bathroom and said sorry and then I yelled at her because she imbarised me in front of my whole class and she sent me home." The girl reported that this incident involved a white, female teacher and occurred when she was 15 and in the 8 th grade.			
40	A 16 year old female student who was in the 10 th grade reported that her WSE involved a white, female bus driver. This student wrote, "I will my bus driver hated me way I do not know 1 day she cam and thay did not say it on the radio and she got mad becuss she had to come back and get me she was mad and she and ever body was cussing me out and ask her to stop and she got even more mad and called the police on me." The student reported that she was 13 years old and in the 7 th grade at the time of the incident. This incident involved a white, female bus driver.			

42	A 15 year old boy in 10 th grade wrote, “I was suspended for a stolen calculator, that I didn’t steal. I bought it not knowing it was stolen, a pack of cigarats, dipping all in one day. I think the calculator was unfair but the rest was my falt. I was suspended longer for the calculator though.” The student reported the role of the Principal, Vice Principal and Teahcer. The adult was a white, female. The student indicated that he was 15 years old and in the 10 th grade.			
43	A 16 year old boy in the 9 th graded reported, “My worst school experience was in xxxxxx county schools and everybody including the teachers were racist and I got in a fight cause a white boy called me a nigger and I sprung on him and they didn’t even suspend him but they gave me 10 day for that fight that I got into with him even know his words is was caused the hole situation.” The persons involved in this student WSE were described as a Principal, Vice Principal, one was female and one was male both were white. The student reported that he was 14 years old and 7 at the time of the incident.			
48	An 18 year old boy in the 12 th grade wrote, “I was in 6 th and the teacher tried to pick me out of everone just because I was the only person who made people laught.” The student indicated that a black, male teacher was the adult who was involved in his WSE. The student reported that he was 11 years old and in the 6 th grade.			
50	One student did not respond to the narrative section of the survey. This student did respond to the subsequent questions on the survey related to his/her WSE, therefore, the survey was included in the analysis.			

Vita

Kathryn Whitted received her MSW degree from Western Michigan University in social work in 1998 and her bachelor's degree in social work from Northern Michigan University in 1996.

Kathryn is registered in the state of Michigan as a Certified Social Worker. As a clinical social worker, she has worked in adoption and foster care serving at-risk youth and their families, as a School Social Worker, and as a Mental Health Consultant for Head Start. She has also worked at a residential treatment facility for emotionally and behaviorally disturbed youth.

She is currently pursuing her doctorate in social work at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville TN. While working on her doctorate at the University of Tennessee, Kathryn has served as a research assistant and a field consultant, and has taught courses in social work at the graduate and undergraduate level. As a teaching assistant, she helped teach Human Behavior and the Social Environment I & II (SW 514 and 515) and developed an online school social work course, School Social Work On-line (SW 535 Online). As an instructor, she has taught Human Behavior and the Social Environment II (SW 515), Clinical Social Work Practice with Individuals (SW 521), and Skills Development Lab (SW 580). Most recently, she has taught Social Work Practice III (SWRK 3906) at the University of Memphis, Division of Social Work.

Kathryn has co-authored two journal articles in the areas of school bullying, student-teacher relationships, and dropouts. One of these articles, co-authored by Dr. David Dupper, was titled "Student-Teacher Relationships: An Overlooked Factor in School Dropout." This article was published in the *Journal of Human Behavior in the*

Social Environment in 2004. It was also published in 2004 as a chapter in a book titled *How Institutions Are Shaping the Future of Our Children: For Better or for Worse*. Most recently, an article written by Kathryn and Dr. David Dupper, titled “Best Practices for Preventing or Reducing Bullying in Schools,” was accepted for publication by the journal *Children and Schools*. This article is currently in press.

She has also presented a workshop entitled, “Creative and Positive Parenting - What to Do When Traditional Discipline Techniques Don’t Work,” at the State of Michigan Foster and Adoptive Parent Conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan in 2000.