

The Effects of Gender on Perceptions of Interactions Between Teachers and Students

by  
Kelee Dawson

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by  
Kelee Dawson

APPROVED:

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Mary Ellen Fromuth, PhD  
Psychology

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Dr. Greg W. Schmidt  
Chair of Psychology Department

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Dr. Teresa Davis  
Psychology  
Honors Council Representative

---

Dr. Philip E. Phillips, Associate Dean  
University Honors College

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## **Abstract**

This study examined the effects of gender on perceptions of psychological maltreatment. Participants were undergraduates (54 men, 114 women) recruited from a psychology research pool. Most (86.9%) were between 18 and 21 years old, and most (50.3%) were Caucasian. Participants read one of four scenarios (varied by gender of student and gender of teacher) in which a teacher gave a negative verbal response to a student. Participants then rated their perceptions of the experience. Seven 2 (gender of participant) x 2 (gender of student) x 2 (gender of teacher) ANOVAs were conducted to measure perceptions. The results indicated that there were a number of main effects and significant interactions. Most consistently, women tended to view the experience more negatively than men. Participants also had stronger prochild feelings and actions for the female student. Participants believed more strongly that the student should tell an adult when the teacher was female.

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

Psychological maltreatment is a common, but not well known, type of child abuse. There is no universally agreed upon definition of psychological, or emotional, maltreatment. Hart et al. (2011, p. 126) cited the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children's (1995) definition of psychological maltreatment as "a repeated pattern of caregiver behavior or extreme incident(s) that convey to children that they are worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered, or only of value in meeting another's needs." Examples of psychological maltreatment include threat of injury, inappropriate expectations, placing child in role reversal, and confinement (English, Thompson, White, & Wilson, 2015). Glaser (2002) uses all of the following criteria to characterize emotional abuse and neglect: "a relationship between the parent and the child," "interactions of concern pervade or characterize the relationship," and "interactions are actually or potentially harmful by causing impairment to the child's psychological/emotional health and development" (p. 702). Additionally, Glaser (2002) states that emotional abuse and neglect include acts of omission (e.g., ignoring) as well as acts of commission (e.g., spurning, terrorizing) and do not require physical contact.

There have been several studies on psychological maltreatment, and there are many different suggestions about subtypes of psychological maltreatment. In a study using Longitudinal Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect (LONGSCAN) data from 846 participants starting when they were 4 or 6 years old and lasting until they were 18 years old, English et al. (2015) organized 27 types of psychological maltreatment into four groups: "psychological safety and security, self-acceptance and self-esteem, autonomy,



and restriction” (p. 58). Hart et al. (2011) cited the six forms of psychological maltreatment categorized in 1995 by the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children: “spurning, terrorizing, isolating, exploiting/corrupting, denying emotional responsiveness, and unwarranted denial of mental health, medical, and educational neglect” (p. 126). Overall, the differences in the findings of these studies suggest that psychological maltreatment is difficult to understand and clearly define.

Because there is no clear definition, it is difficult to identify psychological maltreatment. Being difficult to identify leads to underreporting of psychological maltreatment. Trickett, Mennen, Kim, and Sang (2009) conducted research about the definition and identification of emotional maltreatment in young adolescents who had been multiply maltreated. They found that approximately 50% of the children had been emotionally abused, but, at the time the children were referred, the Department of Child and Family Services identified only 9% as having been abused emotionally. In that sample, they also found that most children experienced multiple subtypes of emotional maltreatment. All in all, the lack of a clear definition for psychological maltreatment makes identification of victims difficult.

Because psychological maltreatment is difficult to identify, there are many different estimates for its prevalence. English et al. (2015) stated that rates of reported emotional abuse span from 0.2% to 44.9% across states in a national report on child abuse. In a survey of households in the United States, Finkelhor, Vanderminden, Turner, Hamby, and Shattuck (2014) reported that 5.6% of participants had been emotionally abused within the past year, and 10.3% of the participants had been emotionally abused at some point in their lives. Psychological maltreatment is difficult to define and identify;

therefore, it is difficult to determine the prevalence. It is important to study psychological maltreatment to gain a better understanding, which could help in identification and lead to better estimates of prevalence.

Another reason it is important to study child psychological maltreatment is the correlation between child psychological maltreatment and mental health problems in adulthood. As children who have been psychologically abused grow up, some develop mental health and other related problems. There have been a number of studies about child psychological maltreatment as it relates to mental health problems in adulthood. In one study using Longitudinal Studies of Child Abuse and Neglect (LONGSCAN) data, English et al. (2015) found that being a victim of certain types of psychological maltreatment predicted specific risk behaviors, “*Psychological safety and security* uniquely predicted the following behaviors: Suicidal thoughts, Arrests, Cigarette Smoking, and Illegal Drugs” (p. 58). Additionally, English et al. (2015) found that emotional maltreatment “appears to have a toxic effect on the nurturing environment in which children live and develop” (p. 59). Further, different types of psychological maltreatment correlated with different problem behaviors, so it is important to continue to research psychological maltreatment.

Psychological maltreatment can occur in different forms and be done by different authority figures. Research commonly focuses on psychological maltreatment by parents. There is little research about psychological maltreatment by teachers. Teacher psychological maltreatment can take many forms, and there are many reasons to study psychological abuse by teachers.

It is important to study psychological maltreatment by teachers because of its prevalence. Casarjian (2000) studied teacher emotional and cognitive abuse in 700 students. Cognitive neglect was defined as “the degree to which students feel their teacher facilitates and promotes behaviors that underlie intellectual and academic development” (p. 95). Casarjian found that 67.5% of students reported that the teacher had emotionally abused them at least once during that school year. Additionally, 78.9% of students reported that the teacher had cognitively or emotionally neglected them. Theoklitou, Kabitsis, and Kabitsi (2012) explored both emotional and physical abuse by teachers with a sample of 1,339 students in fourth, fifth, and sixth grade. The results of this study found that 52.9% of the sample reported neglect by teachers, 33.1% reported emotional maltreatment, and 9.6% reported physical maltreatment. Fromuth, Davis, Kelly, and Wakefield (2015) surveyed 453 undergraduates regarding their negative experiences with teachers. The study looked retrospectively at the participants’ experiences with teachers from the beginning of kindergarten until the completion of 12<sup>th</sup>-grade. This study found that 44% of participants self-labeled an experience as emotional maltreatment. Also, 52% of participants reported having been bullied by a teacher. Additionally, the results indicated that “[a]most all participants (98%) reported experiencing at least one negative teacher behavior” on the Psychological Maltreatment by Teachers Scale (PMTS) (p. 130). Some examples of negative teacher behavior on the PMTS include: “swore at me” and “called me names such as stupid” (p. 130). The high occurrence of psychological maltreatment of students by their teachers validates the need for studying teacher psychological maltreatment.

Psychological maltreatment by teachers also is prevalent in other countries. Benbenishty, Zeira, Astor, and Khoury-Kassabri (2002) conducted research about maltreatment by school staff. Out of 5,472 students between fourth and sixth grade, 29.1% reported being a victim of emotional maltreatment by a member of the school personnel in the past month. Khoury-Kassabri (2006) found that out of 17,465 fourth through eleventh grade students in Israel, approximately one-third of respondents reported being a victim of emotional abuse by school personnel. Khoury-Kassabri (2012) looked at verbal and physical maltreatment with questionnaires in which teachers reported their own use of physical and verbal maltreatment. The results of this study indicated that, in the past month, about 20% of teachers reported that they had used verbal violence against a student. Shumba (2002) conducted research about the effects of teacher emotional abuse on students in Zimbabwe. This study looked at the perceptions teacher trainees and teachers had about teacher emotional maltreatment. The results indicated that over 80% of teachers and teacher trainees thought that teachers “shouting at” and “scolding students for a mistake” were not tolerable (p. 788). Thus, teacher psychological maltreatment is an issue that is prevalent and being studied in other parts of the world. It is important to study teacher psychological maltreatment because it is a global issue.

Another reason to study psychological maltreatment by teachers is because of the long-term harm that it can cause to students from any occurrence. Casarjian (2000) studied school-related functioning in 700 students and showed that psychological maltreatment and neglect by teachers predicted students' beliefs about their academic efficacy and self-esteem related to that class. Through a survey of 453 undergraduates,

Fromuth et al. (2015) found that 30% of students reported that, because of the teacher, they skipped school at least one time. Also, 38% of participants reported that “because of the relationship with that teacher,” they felt bad about themselves (p. 131). The study found that many participants thought the experiences had “adverse effects on their life” (p. 127). Additionally, 64% of participants reported that the occurrence had an undesirable effect on how they viewed school later. Overall, teacher psychological maltreatment should be studied because it correlates with long-term problems in students.

An additional reason it is important to study teacher psychological maltreatment is because of the lack of awareness of this issue. A study by Fromuth et al. (2015) examined descriptive features of teacher psychological maltreatment and found that less than 20% of participants reported being educated about teacher bullying. Teacher psychological maltreatment should be studied because if individuals know more about teacher psychological maltreatment, then they may be more likely to report cases and advocate for others.

Although there is a need for it, there is not much research about perceptions of psychological maltreatment. A factor that might influence the perceptions of psychological maltreatment by teachers is gender. Gender may influence perceptions of teacher psychological maltreatment through the gender of the respondent. Recently, Nowlin, Fromuth, Dawson, Kelly, and Taylor (2016) studied factors that affected perceptions of psychological maltreatment. The results of this study indicated that, overall, women viewed psychological maltreatment more negatively than men. The gender of the teacher and the gender of the student could affect perceptions of teacher psychological maltreatment as well.

There is little research on how gender affects perceptions of teacher psychological maltreatment, but there is similar research about how gender affects perceptions of teacher-adolescent student sexual experiences. Dollar, Perry, Fromuth, and Holt (2004) found that gender role expectations influenced participants' perceptions. Specifically, they reported "the relationship between a female teacher and male adolescent student clearly was viewed as the most normative dyad" (p. 98). Also, men made more of a distinction depending on the gender dyad. It is not clear, however, if these results from studies of teacher/adolescent student sexual experiences would generalize to psychological maltreatment by teachers.

Other research has been conducted on multiple types of childhood maltreatment. Waxman, Fenton, Skodol, Grant, and Hasin (2014) explored the impact of gender on personality disorders and childhood maltreatment. They found that, in adults who had been abused as children, vulnerabilities to personality disorders differed by gender. Specifically, men who were maltreated had increased risk of antisocial or narcissistic personality disorder. Women who were maltreated had increased risk for avoidant, paranoid, or schizoid personality disorders. Because the effects of maltreatment can differ based on gender of the victim, individuals' perceptions of maltreatment may differ based on gender as well.

There are many reasons to study perceptions of teacher psychological maltreatment. The definition of psychological maltreatment is not clear. Also, if individuals do not view psychological maltreatment as harmful, then they may be less likely to report the maltreatment or intervene on behalf of the student. If teacher psychological maltreatment is not reported, then students may not receive the necessary

interventions. Another reason to study perceptions is to tailor trainings to areas of need. All in all, it is important to study perceptions of teacher psychological maltreatment.

Overall, the purpose of this study was to explore the effects of gender on perceptions of teacher psychological maltreatment. The goal of this study was to expand on previous research about how gender dyads affect perceptions of maltreatment. Specifically, this study examined how the gender of the participant and the gender of the teacher/student dyad affected perceptions of teacher psychological maltreatment.

Hypotheses:

1. Women would view the experience more negatively.
2. The experience would be viewed more negatively when the teacher was male.
3. The experience would be viewed more negatively when the student was female.
4. There would be significant interactions between participant gender, gender of the student, and gender of the teacher in that male participants would make more of a distinction by gender dyad than female participants.
5. There would be significant interactions between teacher gender and student gender in that participants would make more of a distinction by teacher gender when the student was female than when the student was male.

## CHAPTER II

### Method

#### Participants

There were 168 participants (54 men, 114 women). Participants were recruited from the psychological research pool at Middle Tennessee State University. The majority (86.9%) of the participants were between 18 and 21 years old. There were some (7.1%) participants between 22 and 25 years old, some (2.4%) between 26 and 29 years old, and some (3.6%) 30 years and older. Most (50.3%) of the participants identified as being Caucasian. Some (35.3%) participants identified as being African American, and some (13.8%) identified as being of other racial/ethnic backgrounds. Participants either earned credit to fulfill a psychology course requirement or extra credit for their participation. Institutional Review Board approval for this study was received (see Appendix A). An addendum also was approved (see Appendix B).

#### Materials

*Demographics.* There were three questions regarding demographic information including gender, ethnicity (Caucasian, African American, Other), and age (18 to 21 years old, 22 to 25 years old, 26 to 29 years old, 30 years and older). Ages were grouped to avoid inadvertently identifying participants. See Appendix C.

*Scenario.* The scenario was based on previous work (Nowlin et al., 2016). Participants were given one of four scenarios that described an incident of teacher psychological maltreatment experienced by an 8-year-old student. The scenarios varied by gender dyad of the teacher and student (i.e., male teacher/male student, male teacher/female student, female teacher/male student, female teacher/female student). In



the scenario, the teacher asks a question and calls on the student. The student answers incorrectly. The teacher responds to the student by saying, “Why would you think that? Do you pay attention when I am teaching? You must be stupid. A preschooler could get that question right.”

*Questionnaire.* The questionnaire originally included 35 questions regarding the participants’ perceptions of the experience. The questions were rated on a 7-point Likert-scale that ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The 35 questions were divided into seven categories: appropriateness of teacher’s actions, harmfulness to student, negative teacher motivation, student should tell an adult, participant’s prochild feelings and actions, perceived level of normalcy, and labeling of the experience. Most of the questions and categories were developed for a previous study (Nowlin et al., 2016). For this study, the questions and categories were modified because of issues with reliability. Three questions were eliminated because they did not highly correlate with other items on the scale.

There were six questions regarding appropriateness of teacher’s actions ( $\alpha = .73$ ; e.g., Mr. Jones reacted appropriately to the situation). There were nine questions regarding harmfulness to the student ( $\alpha = .79$ ; e.g., the experience will have a negative long-term effect on Jack). There were four questions regarding negative teacher motivation ( $\alpha = .71$ ; e.g., Mr. Jones said what he did because he was trying to motivate Jack to pay attention). There were four questions regarding whether or not the student should tell an adult ( $\alpha = .70$ ; e.g., Jack should tell another adult about what happened). There were six questions regarding the participant’s prochild feelings and actions ( $\alpha = .76$ ; e.g., if I was present, I would tell an authority figure). There were

two questions regarding perceived level of normalcy ( $\alpha = .68$ ; e.g., being spoken to by a teacher in this manner is a normal part of growing up). At the conclusion of the survey, the participants were asked whether what occurred should be considered psychological maltreatment. See Appendix D for the specific questions and grouping. See Appendix E for an example of the survey.

### **Procedure**

The participants were informed prior to participating that the study would examine perceptions of a negative experience between a teacher and a student. To keep from influencing responses of the participants, the term *maltreatment* was not used in recruiting information or in the informed consent form (see Appendix F). The term was not used in the questionnaire until the final question, which asked if the incident should be labeled as psychological maltreatment. Participants completed individual questionnaires in a group setting. The four scenarios were distributed in a randomly determined, repeated sequence. Each participant read only one scenario. An almost equal number of men read each of the four scenarios. For the female teacher/female student and male teacher/female student scenarios, 13 men read each. For the male teacher/male student and female teacher/male student scenarios, 14 men read each. An almost equal number of women read each of the four scenarios. For the female teacher/female student and male teacher/female student scenarios, 28 women read each. For the male teacher/male student and female teacher/male student scenarios, 29 women read each.

## CHAPTER III

### Results

#### **Analytical Plan**

Seven 2 (gender of participant) x 2 (gender of student) x 2 (gender of teacher) ANOVAs were conducted to measure appropriateness of teacher's actions, harmfulness to student, negative teacher motivation, student should tell an adult, participant's prochild feelings and actions, perceived level of normalcy, and labeling of the experience. Ryan-Einot-Gabriel-Welsch multiple range tests (REGWQ) were performed as follow-up analyses.

#### **Main Effects: Gender of Participant**

As seen in Table 1, there were many significant main effects for gender of participant. Overall, women tended to view the experience more negatively than men. As compared to men, women tended to believe that the experience was more harmful to the student and that the teacher's motivation was more negative. Also, as compared to men, women were more likely to believe that the student should tell an adult, and women were more likely to indicate that they would have prochild feelings and actions. As compared to women, men tended to believe that the experience was more normative. Though there was no statistically significant difference between men and women on labeling of the experience, both groups (men  $M = 5.50$  and women  $M = 5.61$  on a 7-point scale) indicated high rates of labeling the experience as psychological maltreatment.

Table 1

*Main Effects of Gender of Participant on Perceptions of Psychological Maltreatment*

	Men ( <i>n</i> = 54)		Women ( <i>n</i> = 114)		<i>F</i> (1, 160)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Appropriateness of Teacher's Actions	9.50	3.77	8.57	4.11	2.06
Harmfulness to Student	48.59	7.74	51.18	6.87	4.98*
Negative Teacher Motivation	18.46	4.62	20.00	4.24	5.03*
Student Should Tell an Adult	22.02	3.61	24.58	3.38	20.59***
Participant's Prochild Feelings and Actions	34.26	5.78	37.26	5.14	12.17***
Perceived Level of Normalcy	5.43	2.70	3.63	2.26	20.09***
Labeling of the Experience	5.50	1.45	5.61	1.29	0.33

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

### **Main Effects: Gender of Student**

As seen in Table 2, one significant main effect was found for gender of the student. Participants had stronger prochild feelings and actions when the student was female than when the student was male.

### **Main Effects: Gender of Teacher**

As seen in Table 3, one significant main effect was found for gender of the teacher. Participants believed more strongly that the student should tell an adult when the teacher was female than when the teacher was male.

### **Significant Interactions**

Two significant interactions were found for negative teacher intentions. The first was on gender of the participant by gender of the teacher  $F(1,160) = 3.92, p < .05$ . A follow-up REGWQ found that female participants who read the scenario with the male teacher viewed the teacher's motivation ( $M = 20.37$ ) more negatively than male participants who read the scenario with the male teacher ( $M = 17.44$ ). There were no significant differences involving the other two groups (male participant/female teacher:  $M = 19.48$  and female participant/female teacher:  $M = 19.63$ ). The other significant interaction was on gender of the student by gender of the teacher  $F(1,160) = 5.82, p < .02$ . A follow-up REGWQ found that none of the groups were significantly different from each other (male student/male teacher:  $M = 18.32$ ; male student/female teacher:  $M = 20.37$ ; female student/male teacher:  $M = 20.49$ ; female student/female teacher:  $M = 18.84$ ).

Table 2

*Main Effects of Gender of Student on Perceptions of Psychological Maltreatment*

	Male Student ( <i>n</i> = 82)		Female Student ( <i>n</i> = 86)		<i>F</i> (1, 160)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Appropriateness of Teacher's Actions	9.22	4.78	8.53	3.11	1.83
Harmfulness to Student	50.04	7.32	50.65	7.20	1.22
Negative Teacher Motivation	19.34	4.53	19.66	4.31	1.10
Student Should Tell an Adult	23.44	3.81	24.06	3.48	1.51
Participant's Prochild Feelings and Actions	35.54	6.46	37.02	4.34	4.85*
Perceived Level of Normalcy	4.41	2.68	4.01	2.41	0.39
Labeling of the Experience	5.45	1.45	5.70	1.23	2.45

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

Table 3

*Main Effects of Gender of Teacher on Perceptions of Psychological Maltreatment*

	Male Teacher ( <i>n</i> = 84)		Female Teacher ( <i>n</i> = 84)		<i>F</i> (1, 160)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Appropriateness of Teacher's Actions	9.12	3.84	8.62	4.19	1.26
Harmfulness to Student	49.93	7.93	50.77	6.50	0.49
Negative Teacher Motivation	19.43	4.65	19.58	4.18	0.97
Student Should Tell an Adult	23.11	3.95	24.40	3.22	4.47*
Participant's Prochild Feelings and Actions	35.98	5.30	36.62	5.74	0.05
Perceived Level of Normalcy	4.42	2.65	4.00	2.44	0.79
Labeling of the Experience	5.63	1.36	5.52	1.33	0.16

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

Two significant interactions were found for labeling of the experience. The first was on gender of the participant by gender of the teacher  $F(1,160) = 5.39, p < .03$ . A follow-up REGWQ found that none of the groups were statistically significantly different from each other (male participant/male teacher:  $M = 5.22$ ; male participant/female teacher:  $M = 5.78$ ; female participant/male teacher:  $M = 5.82$ ; female participant/female teacher:  $M = 5.40$ ). The other significant interaction was on gender of the student by gender of the teacher  $F(1,160) = 7.03, p < .01$ . A follow-up REGWQ found that none of the groups were statistically significantly different from each other (male student/male teacher:  $M = 5.27$ ; male student/female teacher:  $M = 5.63$ , female student/male teacher:  $M = 5.98$ ; female student/female teacher:  $M = 5.42$ ).



## CHAPTER IV

### Discussion

This study explored the effects of gender on perceptions of psychological maltreatment by teachers. It is important to study perceptions of teacher psychological maltreatment because there is not a clear definition. Given the lack of physical evidence and a clear definition, there may be some subjectivity and variability in labeling the experience as psychological maltreatment. Additionally, if individuals do not view teacher psychological maltreatment negatively, then they may be less likely to report incidents. If teacher psychological maltreatment is not reported, then students might not receive the interventions that they need. Therefore, studying perceptions of teacher psychological maltreatment is important.

The current study explored the effects of gender on perceptions of psychological maltreatment. The first main effect considered was the gender of the participant. The results indicated that women tended to view the experience more negatively than men. These findings are similar to results from Nowlin et al. (2016), which found that women viewed a scenario of psychological maltreatment more negatively than men. Also, the results are consistent with research findings on child sexual abuse. A study on perceptions of sexual involvement between teachers and students (Fromuth, Kelly, Wilson, Finch, & Scruggs, 2013) found that women viewed the teacher-student sexual interaction more negatively than men. Also, Fromuth and Holt (2008) found that when given a scenario depicting an occurrence of teacher sexual misconduct, women viewed the experience more negatively than men. Previous research has found that women are more empathetic than men. Luo et al. (2015) found that “females were more sensitive to

sad expressions when identifying the emotions of others” (p. 318). It is possible that women viewed the experience more negatively than men because women are more empathetic.

The next main effect considered was the gender of the student. The results indicated that participants reported stronger prochild feelings and actions when the student was female than when the student was male. This finding is consistent with gender role stereotypes. Generally, boys are thought to be tough, and girls are thought to be more fragile and in need of help. Overall, participants were more likely to believe that they should speak up on behalf of the girl than the boy. This finding is similar to previous research by Dollar et al. (2004), which found that expected gender roles influenced respondents’ views of teacher-student sexual experiences. Both studies found that the results were generally consistent with gender role stereotypes.

Another main effect considered was the gender of the teacher. The results indicated that participants believed more strongly that the student should tell an adult when the teacher was female than when the teacher was male. It is possible that because there are more female teachers than male teachers, participants were more concerned about the student telling an adult when the teacher was female. This situation would be more common because elementary school teachers are more often female. Also, it is possible that participants’ perceptions were influenced by gender-role stereotypes. Women are typically thought of as more compassionate, so participants may have thought that the female teacher should have been ‘nicer’ to the student.

Significant interactions were found between gender of participant and gender of the teacher. Female participants reading the scenario with the male teacher tended to

view the motivation of the teacher more negatively than male participants reading the scenario with the male teacher. It is possible that men, more than women, identified with the male teacher and, therefore, thought the male teacher had a more positive motivation. It also is possible that, compared to men, women think of men as more stern and, therefore, thought that the male teacher had a more negative motivation.

Overall, there were statistically significant main effects for gender of participant, gender of student, and gender of teacher. Also, there was a statistically significant interaction between gender of participant and gender of teacher on negative teacher motivation. Many of the results were consistent with previous findings in research of psychological maltreatment and sexual maltreatment. Understanding how gender affects perceptions of teacher psychological maltreatment can help in education, identification, and reporting of teacher psychological maltreatment

There were some limitations of this study. There were sample issues. The sample size of women was larger than the sample size of men. The pool of participants only included undergraduate students at a university, which may be biased by educational level and age of participants. There also were measurement issues. The survey items used for this study only had been used once previously, and they were modified for this study. Also, the scenario was modified for this study from previous work, and this version had never been used previously. Psychological maltreatment is characterized by repetitiveness, but the scenario for this study was based on a single experience. Another limitation of this study was the age of the child. It is possible that participants did not make much of a distinction by gender of the student or gender of the teacher because of the age of the child. If the child had been older, participants might have made a greater

distinction by gender of the student and/or gender of the teacher. In a study about perceptions of teacher sexual misconduct, Fromuth and Holt (2008) found that there was not a difference between men and women in recommended years of imprisonment for the teacher in the scenario with the 9-year-old or the 12-year-old student. In contrast, in the scenario with the 15-year-old student, as compared to men, women assigned longer imprisonment for the teacher. The findings suggest that participants may view maltreatment of younger children similarly regardless of gender, but they view maltreatment of older children differently depending on the gender of the child. Finally, this study was limited because it looked at perceptions. It is not known if participants would act accordingly.

Future research on teacher psychological maltreatment is needed. This study used a scenario with an 8-year-old child. Additional research could be done with an older child in the scenario. Also, measuring the knowledge of individuals about teacher psychological maltreatment could be useful in designing education programs and trainings. Finally, continuing research on perceptions of all types of psychological maltreatment is needed.

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## **Appendices**



**APPENDIX A: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter**

**IRB  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**

Office of Research Compliance,  
010A Sam Ingram Building,  
2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd  
Murfreesboro, TN 37129



**EXEMPT APPROVAL NOTICE**

12/2/2015

Investigator(s): Kelee Dawson  
Department: Psychology  
Investigator(s) Email: nd3b@mtmail.mtsu.edu  
Protocol Title: "Perceptions of Interactions Between Teacher and Students"  
Protocol ID: 16-1118

Dear Investigator(s),

The MTSU Institutional Review Board, or a representative of the IRB, has reviewed the research proposal identified above and this study has been designated to be EXEMPT.. The exemption is pursuant to 45 CFR 46.101(b) **(2) Educational Tests, Surveys, Interviews, or Observations**

The following changes to this protocol must be reported prior to implementation:

- Addition of new subject population or exclusion of currently approved demographics
- Addition/removal of investigators
- Addition of new procedures
- Other changes that may make this study to be no longer be considered exempt The following changes do not have to be reported:
  - Editorial/administrative revisions to the consent of other study documents
  - Changes to the number of subjects from the original proposal

All research materials must be retained by the PI or the faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) for at least three (3) years after study completion. Subsequently, the researcher may destroy the data in a manner that maintains confidentiality and

anonymity. IRB reserves the right to modify, change or cancel the terms of this letter without prior notice. Be advised that IRB also reserves the right to inspect or audit your records if needed.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board

Middle Tennessee State University

NOTE: All necessary forms can be obtained from [www.mtsu.edu/irb](http://www.mtsu.edu/irb).

IRBN005

Version 1.0

Revision Date 06.03.2015

Institutional Review Board Office of Compliance Middle Tennessee State University

**APPENDIX B: Institutional Review Board Addendum**

1/25/2016

Investigator(s): Kelee Dawson

Department: Psychology

Protocol Title: Perceptions of Interactions Between Teacher and Students

Protocol Number: #16-1118



Dear Investigator(s):

I have reviewed your research proposal identified above and your requested changes. I approve of the following change:

1. Add coinvestigators: Danielle Nowlin, Madison Curtis, Ashley Taylor, Kin Leong Chan

Please note that any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615)494-8918 or [compliance@mtsu.edu](mailto:compliance@mtsu.edu). Any change to the protocol must be submitted to the IRB before implementing this change.

According to MTSU Policy, a researcher is defined as anyone who works with data or has contact with participants. Anyone meeting this definition needs to be listed on the protocol and needs to complete the online training. If you add researchers to an approved project, please forward an updated list of researchers to the Office of Compliance *before* they begin to work on the project.

Sincerely,

Office of Compliance

Middle Tennessee State University

Template Revised March 2014

MTSU Compliance Office

010A Sam Ingram Bldg.

1301 E. Main St.

Murfreesboro, TN 37129

## APPENDIX C: Demographic Questions

Please complete the follow questions regarding demographic information.

1. What is your biological sex?

1. Male
2. Female
3. Other
4. prefer not to answer

2. How old are you?

1. 18-21
2. 22-25
3. 26-29
4. 30 & older
5. prefer not to answer

3. What is your ethnicity?

1. Caucasian
2. African American
3. Other
4. prefer not to answer

## APPENDIX D: Scale Composition

### Appropriateness of Teacher's Actions

Mr./Mrs. Jones reacted appropriately to the situation. **R**  
Mr./Mrs. Jones should be more sensitive to Jack/Jill's feelings.  
Mr./Mrs. Jones didn't say anything wrong to Jack/Jill.  
Mr./Mrs. Jones should be more careful with his/her words. **R**  
Mr./Mrs. Jones overreacted to the situation. **R**  
More teachers should react like Mr./Mrs. Jones to help children.

### Harmfulness to Student

Because of what Mr./Mrs. Jones said, Jack/Jill will believe he/she is stupid.  
Jack/Jill will quickly forget this experience. **R**  
Jack/Jill will be upset by what Mr./Mrs. Jones said.  
Jack/Jill will be unaffected by the experience. **R**  
The experience will have a negative long-term effect on Jack/Jill.  
The next day, Jack/Jill will laugh about the experience. **R**  
This experience is psychologically harmful to Jack/Jill.  
This experience will affect how Jack/Jill feels about school.  
Because of what Mr./Mrs. Jones said, the other children will think more negatively of Jack/Jill.

### Negative Teacher Motivation

Mr./Mrs. Jones said what he/she did because he/she was trying to motivate Jack/Jill to pay attention. **R**  
\*This happened because Mr./Mrs. Jones is a negative person.  
Mr./Mrs. Jones said what he/she did because he/she was trying to help Jack/Jill learn. **R**  
Mr./Mrs. Jones was intentionally trying to hurt the Jack/Jill's feelings.  
Mr./Mrs. Jones behaved this way because he/she was concerned about Jack/Jill. **R**

### Student Should Tell an Adult

Jack/Jill should tell another adult about what happened.  
Jack/Jill should toughen up and forget about what happened. **R**  
Jack/Jill should tell another teacher about what happened.  
Jack/Jill should tell his/her parents about what happened.  
\*Jack/Jill should think more carefully before asking questions. **R**

### Participant's Prochild Feelings and Actions

If I was present, I would tell an authority figure.

If I witnessed this interaction, I would not do anything. **R**

If I was present during this interaction, I would be concerned.

If I was in this situation, I would have the same reaction as Mr./Mrs. Jones. **R**

If I witnessed this interaction, I would talk to the teacher about his/her behavior.

If I observed this interaction, I would feel uncomfortable.

### Perceived Level of Normalcy

Being spoken to by a teacher in this manner is a normal part of growing up.

This type of interaction is a normal part of growing up.

\*This type of interaction is unusual in a classroom. **R**

### Labeling of the Experience

What Mr./Mrs. Jones said should be considered psychological maltreatment.

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\* indicates questions that were removed after the survey was given.

**R** indicates items that were reversed.

## APPENDIX E: Survey Example

Please read the following scenario and complete the questions.

During class, the teacher, Mr. Jones, asked a question. An 8-year-old boy, Jack, was called on and answered the question incorrectly. Mr. Jones said, "Why would you think that? Do you pay attention when I am teaching? You must be stupid. A preschooler could get that question right."

1. Mr. Jones reacted appropriately to the situation.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

2. Because of what Mr. Jones said, Jack will believe he is stupid.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

3. Mr. Jones said what he did because he was trying to motivate Jack to pay attention.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

4. Jack should tell another adult about what happened.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

5. If I was present, I would tell an authority figure.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

6. Being spoken to by a teacher in this manner is a normal part of growing up.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

7. Mr. Jones should be more sensitive to Jack's feelings.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

8. Jack will quickly forget this experience.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

9. This happened because Mr. Jones is a negative person.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

10. Jack should toughen up and forget about what happened.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

11. If I witnessed this interaction, I would not do anything.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

12. This type of interaction is a normal part of growing up.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

13. Mr. Jones didn't say anything wrong to Jack.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree



14. Jack will be upset by what Mr. Jones said.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

15. Mr. Jones said what he did because he was trying to help Jack learn.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

16. Jack should tell another teacher about what happened.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

17. If I was present during this interaction, I would be concerned.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

18. This type of interaction is unusual in a classroom.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

19. Mr. Jones should be more careful with his words.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

20. Jack will be unaffected by the experience.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

21. Mr. Jones was intentionally trying to hurt Jack's feelings.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

22. Jack should tell his parents about what happened.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

23. If I was in this situation, I would have the same reaction as Mr. Jones.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

24. Mr. Jones overreacted to the situation.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

25. The experience will have a negative long-term effect on Jack.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

26. Mr. Jones behaved this way because he was concerned about Jack.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

27. Jack should think more carefully before answering questions.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

28. If I witnessed this interaction, I would talk to the teacher about his behavior.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

29. More teachers should react like Mr. Jones to help children.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

30. The next day, Jack will laugh about the experience.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

31. If I observed this interaction, I would feel uncomfortable.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

32. This experience is psychologically harmful to Jack.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

33. This experience will affect how Jack feels about school.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

34. Because of what Mr. Jones said, the other children will think more negatively of Jack.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

35. What Mr. Jones said should be considered psychological maltreatment.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
strongly disagree						strongly agree

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This survey represents the male teacher/male student version.

## APPENDIX F: Informed Consent Form

### Informed Consent

Middle Tennessee State University

**Project Title:** Perceptions of Interactions Between Teachers and Students

**Purpose of Project:** The purpose of this study is to explore perceptions of potentially negative interactions between teachers and students. Further, it will help us understand the factors that affect these perceptions.

**Procedures:** We would like to ask you to participate in this study concerning perceptions of interactions between teachers and students by completing a survey. This study should take less than 30 minutes to complete. First, you will be asked to complete a demographics section. Then, you will be asked to read a brief scenario involving a teacher and student, and rate your perceptions of this experience. You will receive one research credit for your participation. The surveys are anonymous, and you will not be asked about any personal experiences.

**Risks/Benefit:** None of the questions in this survey inquire about your past experiences. There are no foreseeable risks. The potential benefits that may result from this study are that we will learn how people perceive potentially negative interactions between teachers and students. The benefit to participants is 1 research credit and the opportunity to learn about research.

**Confidentiality:** All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private but total privacy cannot be promised. Your information may be shared with MTSU or the government, such as the Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board, Federal Government Office for Human Research Protections, if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.

**Principal Investigator/Contact Information:** If you should have any questions about this research study or possible injury, please feel free to contact Kelee Dawson at [knd3b@mtmail.mtsu.edu](mailto:knd3b@mtmail.mtsu.edu) or my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Fromuth at 615-898-2548 or [MaryEllen.Fromuth@mtsu.edu](mailto:MaryEllen.Fromuth@mtsu.edu).

Participating in this project is voluntary, and refusal to participate or withdrawing from participation at any time during the project will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. All efforts, within reason, will be made to keep the personal information in your research record private but total privacy cannot be promised, for example your information may be shared with the Middle Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board. In the event of questions or difficulties of any kind during or following participation, you may contact the Principal Investigator as indicated above. For additional information about giving consent or your rights as a participant in this study, please feel free to contact the MTSU Office of Compliance at 96150 494-8918.

## Consent

I have read the above information and my questions have been answered satisfactorily by project staff. I believe I understand the purpose, benefits, and risks of the study and give my informed and free consent to be a participant.

---

SIGNATURE

---

DATE