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The portrayal of child abuse in young adult literature

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Abstract
The purpose of this content analysis was to determine how characters who are victims of child abuse and characters who are child abusers are portrayed in young adult novels. The research also included determining how realistic the situations involving child abuse are described in the novels.
THE PORTRAYAL OF CHILD ABUSE
IN YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

A Research Paper
Presented to the
Faculty of the Library Science Department

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
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American society has often been described as child-centered. This idealized image seems, however, contradicted by a variety of destructive, violent aspects of child life in the United States, such as hunger, malnutrition, inadequate health care, and physical violence. Any of these elements can block a child's opportunity for growth and development and prevent their human potential from being realized.

Child abuse is not a phenomenon of the twentieth century, nor is it unique to the American society and culture. Historical overviews show that often children had more brutality than love in their lives. In China, female babies were drowned; in Egypt, children were buried alive to serve deceased persons in afterlife. In seventeenth century France, historians relate that babies were thrown into sewers or deserted on highways. Robert M. Mulford declares that child abuse was prevalent in the 1800s in England:

As a result of industrialization in England, cheap labor was in such demand that brokers sprang up to traffic in children who worked from five in the morning until ten at night. Inhuman overseers frequently goaded laggards with whips and prods, and any who dared to run away, and were caught, were chained to their work by their ankles.¹

Nor was the United States immune from abuse of its children. Under Colonial Laws of Massachusetts 1672-1686, children could legally be put to death for disobeying their fathers. In the 1800s, children were sometimes intentionally maimed by abusive parents and sent out on the street to beg. Others, according to O'Brien, "were sold to so-called 'baby farms' where they were neglected or beaten and allowed to die. . . . Within a radius of one and a quarter miles of one such home, bodies of 25 infants were found within a four-month period."\(^2\)

It would appear that parental abuse and neglect were willful and premeditated; thus, it seemed logical to adopt a punitive approach to the perpetrators. Understanding of human motivation and behavior were unknown to the early protectors of children.

It was not until 1909 that the White House Conference on Children recognized that working with parents to prevent recurring abuse and neglect was a necessary function of child protection services. This marked a philosophical turning point in the care and treatment of the abused child and his family. The United States has moved from a time when children were murdered with no penalty to the perpetrators to a time when laws for the protection of children provide both penalties and help to those who abused or neglected children. As more understanding of parental behavior became a part of a social worker's knowledge, skill in diagnosis developed.

Mulford states, "The approach to the parent included the perception of his needs as a person as well as his performances as a parent." \(^3\)

A new awareness on the part of the public came into existence in the 1960s. During this decade, all fifty states passed laws regarding the reporting and treatment of child abuse. Legislation made it mandatory for those professionals who came in contact with children who they believed to be abused to report their condition to designated authorities. McFadden believes that the problem of child abuse is more acknowledged today:

The increase in legislation, the substantial increase in the funding of child abuse programs, and the public support of efforts to combat the problem of child abuse were the result of a tremendous media campaign to publicize incidences of both child abuse and neglect. \(^4\)

Despite this legislation and increased awareness, the maltreatment of children has survived late into the twentieth century. The Kempes offer two beliefs that remain strong to account for the continuance of child abuse and neglect. They claim that children are seen as their parents' property, and it is the parents' right to treat their children as they see fit. \(^5\) Furthermore, children are seen as the parents'...
responsibility, with strong punishment often being necessary to maintain discipline and correct a child's wrongs, according to the Kempes. Even the abused children begin to believe that their parents' punishment is valid and right.

Wolfe and Mosk's study shows that abused children are often withdrawn, demonstrating a lack of trust in others. This lack of trust often results in the abused child feeling isolated, unaware that he is not alone in the abusive actions taken toward him. This is where literature can enter the realm of child abuse.

The role that both fiction and nonfiction books can play in promoting a discussion of problems, including child abuse, is considerable. Children enjoy knowing about other children who have similar problems. As Feldman asserts, "Kids want to know that they are not alone, that there are many life choices and people who understand their personal crisis." Fiction can also provide children or young adults with an interesting or different format for introducing factual information.

The fact that child abuse and neglect are very much a real part of the American society is reflected in the increase in young adult literature dealing with them. Few books focusing on child abuse for young people were published prior

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6 Ibid.


to 1970. It is a relatively new topic for authors of young adult novels; however, it can be an important one for the victim who is abused. Roxbough maintains that at its best, "a novel which concentrates on a crisis of a young person can offer the assurance that one can live through it, that they are shared by us all, even though they take on different forms." 9

Since they can have an important impact on young people, novels focusing on child abuse need to be realistic. The abused children, the abusive parents, and the abusive situation itself must be portrayed as they are in reality. Only then can they be helpful to the young person turning to them out of need or out of a desire to become more informed about the subject.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this research study was to determine how characters who are victims of child abuse and characters who are child abusers are portrayed in books currently available to be read by young adults. This study also examined how realistic the situations involving child abuse are in young adult novels and if any of the characters in these novels express or show any common misconceptions about child abuse. The focus of this research was on the content of the young

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adult novels. The researcher attempted to determine how realistic a picture the authors of young adult literature who focus on child abuse are providing for their readers. No attempt was made to evaluate whether the books are "good" or "bad" literature. No content analyses of young adult novels dealing with child abuse have been published; therefore, this research study began to establish how child abuse is portrayed in young adult literature.

Specific Problem Statements

1. Are characters who are victims of child abuse in books written for young adults presented realistically?
2. Are characters who are child abusers in books written for young adults presented realistically?
3. Are the situations involving child abuse in books written for young adults presented realistically?
4. Do any characters in books written for young adults express common misconceptions or myths about child abuse?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses refer to books written for young adults which focus on child abuse.

H1. The majority of characters who are victims of child abuse will:

a. be female
b. be from homes in which only one of the biological parents resides
c. experience more than one type of abuse
d. experience neglect by their abuser

H2. The majority of characters who are victims of child abuse will exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:
   a. passivity, compliance
   b. aggression
   c. inability to trust others
   d. low self-image
   e. inability to express feelings

H3. The majority of incidents of physical abuse in the novels will be prompted by some behavior or action of the abused child.

H4. The majority of novels will:
   a. have at least one character who displays a misconception or myth about child abuse
   b. contain an element of hope for the characters who are victims of child abuse
   c. show no predominant patterns in the socioeconomic class of abusive families

H5. The majority of characters who are child abusers will exhibit one or more of the following characteristics:
   a. inability to trust others
   b. being victims of child abuse themselves
   c. unrealistic expectations of a child
d. unwilling to allow a child relationships with his/her peers

e. low self-image

f. inability to develop good social relationships

H6. In the majority of two-parent families, one parent will be the active abuser and the other parent will be a passive observer.

**Definitions**

**Young adult** is defined as the period between the ages of twelve and eighteen when an individual is involved in many changes.

**Books written for or appropriate for young adults** will be fiction aimed at individuals from twelve to eighteen years in age that will be chosen by the researcher through the use of selective selection tools.

For the purposes of this study, **child abuse** will be defined as "an act of commission by a parent or caretaker which is not accidental and harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare."\textsuperscript{10}

**Physical abuse** is defined as child abuse "resulting in physical injury, including fractures, burns, bruises, welts, \textsuperscript{10}

cuts, and/or internal injuries. It often occurs in the name of discipline and punishment. . .

Emotional abuse is defined as child "abuse which results in impaired psychological growth and development. It frequently occurs as verbal abuse or excessive demands on a child's performance. . ."

Sexual abuse is defined as "child abuse which results in any act of a sexual nature upon or with a child."

In this research study, neglect refers to "an act of omission, specifically the failure of a parent or other person legally responsible for a child's welfare to provide for the child's basic needs and proper level of care with respect to food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention, or supervision."

In this study, a misconception is an incorrect interpretation or a misjudgment. A myth is an ill-founded belief held uncritically by an interested person or group.

Realistic portrayal is a presentation of accurate or factual material within the content of the novels. The situations surrounding child abuse and the behaviors of those involved in young adult novels will be as true to real life

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11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.
cases of child abuse as possible for realistic portrayal to exist.

Assumptions

Today's authors of young adult literature are focusing on the problems and crises of teenagers, making most issues, including child abuse, suitable topics for the young adult reader. Therefore, these authors have an obligation to portray characters who are child abuse victims or child abusers realistically in their writing. Novels which focus on child abuse can be of most value to the reader when the situations and characters involved are as close to the real life situations and characters as possible. The young adult reader can benefit most when a realistic portrayal is provided in the novel.

Victims of child abuse and the child abusers display no one particular set of characteristics. Child abuse and neglect occur in all social, economic, educational, and cultural levels. Abusers can be anyone, not just "other people." However, it is assumed that victims of child abuse and the child abusers will each share some common characteristics which can be placed into categories to be analyzed for this research study.

After 1975, authors began to deal with the issue of child abuse in literature for young adults. Novels are currently available to young people that deal with characters who are victims of child abuse. Since these novels are available, it is assumed that young adults are reading about child abuse.
Limitations

The books analyzed for this research study were limited to those focusing on child abuse as the central issue and written for the young adult reader, ages twelve to eighteen. All the books are fiction and revolve around a main character who is a victim of child abuse. The number of books was limited to eleven, and all deal with a character who spends at least part of the novel in the abusive environment. Novels dealing with a character who has left the abusive environment were not analyzed.

The books analyzed were limited to those published in or after 1975 and recommended or reviewed positively in either a retrospective bibliography or Booklist and/or SLJ School Library Journal. The retrospective bibliographies used were The Bookfinder, Volumes 1 and 2; Fiction Catalog, 10th edition; Junior High School Library Catalog, 4th edition; and Senior High School Library Catalog, 12th edition.

The analysis of the books was limited by the researcher's understanding of child abuse and the interpretation of the content.
CHAPTER 2
The Literature Review

The review of the literature for this research study focuses on the problem of child abuse and how authors of young adult literature portray child abuse in their novels. In reviewing both research studies and opinion articles that concern child abuse, the researcher particularly focused on:
1) definitions of child abuse and neglect; 2) the incidence of child abuse; 3) characteristics of the abused child; 4) characteristics of the abusive parent or guardian; 5) the circumstances surrounding the occurrence of child abuse; and 6) common myths or misconceptions regarding child abuse.

Since very few articles or research studies have been written on how child abuse is portrayed in literature for young adults, the researcher reviewed readings which focus on how realistic today's young adult novels are and what their impact is on the young adult.

Difficulties in attempts to define child abuse stem in part from the fact that there are many forms of abuse. Most definitions deal with physical abuse because its effects are often more immediately obvious and severe. It also represents an act that is more easily discussed. However, definitions still vary as to the range of acts that are considered abusive and to the role of additional variables, such as intentionality. Clearly written definitions, though, are
needed to determine accurately the incidence of child abuse, to study it, and to develop treatment and prevention programs.

In reading both research studies and opinion articles, the researcher found that the authors cited or proposed a variety of definitions of child abuse; in many cases, no definition was offered at all.

One way to approach the issue is to look at the symptoms that the child presents; another way is to look at the actions of the caretaking adults, such as parents, guardians, or friends. The Kempes' book describes physical abuse this way: "Physical violence implies physically harmful action directed against the child; it is usually defined by any inflicted injury such as bruises, burns, head injuries, fractures, abdominal injuries, or poisoning."\(^{15}\)

Wayne and Avery in their work state, "Physical abuse is defined as any nonaccidental physical injury inflicted on a child by a parent (or other caretaker) deliberately or in anger."\(^{16}\) Several researchers criticize both of these definitions; for example, Kaufman alleges that they underrate the theme of intentionality on the part of the caretaker.\(^{17}\)

\(^{15}\) Kempe and Kempe, p. 6.


Gil's broader definition does include the factor of intentionality:

Physical abuse of children is intentional, non-accidental use of physical force, or intentional, non-accidental acts of omission, on the part of a parent or other caretaker in interaction with a child in his care, aimed at hurting, injuring, or destroying that child.18

This definition is not completely satisfactory either since it may not always be possible to differentiate between intentional and accidental behavior. However, it does seem to reduce ambiguity by including all use of physical force and all acts aimed at hurting a child.

The last definition of physical abuse is from the Interdisciplinary Glossary on Child Abuse and Neglect, which first defines child abuse as "an act of commission by a parent or caretaker which is not accidental and harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare."19

According to this, a child is a person under the age of eighteen. The Glossary then breaks down this definition into specific types of abuse. It defines physical abuse as resulting "in physical injury, including fractures, burns, bruises, welts, cuts, and/or internal injuries. It often occurs in the name of discipline and punishment. . . ."20

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20 Ibid.
Even the simplest definition of abuse presents problems because both victims and perpetrators often present confusing and contradictory explanations of the injuries. In practice, reports of child abuse and other forms of child maltreatment usually depend on finding a number of patterns in the family which are associated with the phenomena of abuse.

Although there is more popular and scientific discussion and writing in the area of physical abuse, all research indicates that child neglect is a more common and varied problem. Neglect can be a very insidious form of maltreatment and often can persist unnoticed for a long time. Generally, in defining neglect, the emphasis is on an act of omission. Polansky and others provide the following definition of neglect:

Child neglect may be defined as a condition in which a caretaker responsible for the child either deliberately or by extraordinary inattentiveness permits the child to experience avoidable present suffering and/or fails to provide one or more of the ingredients generally deemed essential for developing a person's physical, intellectual, and emotional capacities.21

This definition is generally well-accepted. The phrase "ingredients generally deemed essential" is capable of being expanded or contracted to fit varying cultural values and the increasing knowledge of what constitutes the elements of essential child care. Usually counted among these elements

are food, clothing, shelter, medical care, education, physical and emotional stimulation, and discipline.

The definition of child neglect by the Glossary is quite similar to Polansky's:

Child neglect refers to an act of omission, specifically the failure of a parent or other person legally responsible for a child's welfare to provide for the child's basic needs and proper level of care with respect to food, clothing, shelter, hygiene, medical attention, or supervision.22

While there is agreement that some parental care and supervision is essential, disagreement exists as to how much is necessary for a minimally acceptable environment. Some people have tended to view child neglect as different from and less important than child abuse, but serious neglect is abuse and can have devastating effects on a child.

Few attempts have been made to define the third type of abuse, emotional abuse. Emotional abuse can be defined as "child abuse which results in impaired psychological growth and development. It frequently occurs as verbal abuse or excessive demands on a child's performance. . . ."23 Emotional abuse comes in many forms, such as teasing, yelling, disinterest, continual criticism, name-calling, threats, and belittling. In emotional abuse, the difference between normal and abnormal is hard to define. O'Brien declares that many normal parents yell and even scream at their children, but

23Ibid.
that some children are berated and rejected on a daily basis. 24

Emotional abuse may be verbal or nonverbal in form, and Starr includes this in his definition. He states, "Emotional abuse is the result of verbal or nonverbal conditions that interfere with the development of competence within a developmental perspective." 25 A nonverbal way of emotionally abusing a child would include the caretakers' ignoring or refusing to talk to the child. Often disinterest and silence go hand-in-hand.

It can be argued that there is a wide continuum of acceptable childrearing practices which makes identification of physical and emotional abuse and neglect extremely complicated. This is true as well of sexual abuse or misuse of children. Sexual abuse is not easy to define because permissible childhood sexual behavior varies according to cultural taboos and family or social practices. A discussion of incest and other forms of sexual abuse of children is likely to create strong feelings of revulsion or disbelief among many people. These are the same feelings that have caused professionals to avoid the problem of sexual abuse and to underestimate its extent and severity. Some researchers have developed definitions and conducted studies regarding sexual abuse, however.

24 O'Brien, p. 20.

The Kempes suggest the following as a definition of sexual abuse:

...the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate the social taboos of family roles.26

Brant and Tisza take a somewhat different approach to the problem of definition. They differentiate between sexual misuse and sexual abuse; Brant and Tisza prefer to label as sexual abuse "those instances in which the interaction between family members represents an exaggeration of family interactions which approaches the acting out of incestuous fantasies."27 They reserve the term sexual abuse for cases in which the child is "an object of an aggressive or sadistic attack which includes forced sexual contact."28

Brant and Tisza's attempt to distinguish between the contexts of sexual abuse and misuse is part of their effort to discern which cases should be reported to government agencies. Many experts in this field argue strongly for criminal court involvement in all cases of sexual abuse of children. Brant and Tisza, on the other hand, believe that sexual misuse cases are most effectively handled without criminal court involvement.29

26 Kempe and Kempe, p. 43.


28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., p. 88.
The Glossary simply defines sexual abuse as "child abuse which results in any act of a sexual nature upon or with a child."\textsuperscript{30}

Given the lack of a uniform definition of abuse, it is not surprising to find that figures concerning its incidence show great variability. Despite the rising concern with this problem, reports of child abuse cases have increased rather than decreased. The report, \textit{National Analysis of Official Child Neglect and Abuse Reporting (1980)}, documents this increase in the rate of official reporting from 416,033 cases in 1976 to 614,291 in 1978 to 789,000 in 1980.\textsuperscript{31} Some researchers claim that statistics such as these show that child abuse is reaching epidemic proportions while others attribute the jump to more careful gathering of the data.

In this study by the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect (NCCAN), the definition of abuse and neglect applied only to children who suffered demonstrable signs of physical or emotional damage. Excluded were children who were suspected of being abused or neglected but showed no outward signs of maltreatment. This may account for the fact this study's incidence rate is considerably lower than the often acknowledged estimate of a million cases per year.


Research by both O'Brien and Starr indicate that each year between 1 and 1.9 million children are subjected to forms of abuse that have caused or could potentially cause injury. Estimates vary from two to fifteen as the number of children who die each day from physical abuse; and many more are handicapped, either mentally, emotionally, or physically. Of the 789,000 cases of child abuse reported by the NCCAN, neglect accounted for 86.4 percent of the types of maltreatment substantiated. Major physical injury, such as fractures or brain damage, represented only 1.9 percent of the reports; other types noted were sexual abuse, 6.2 percent; minor physical injury, such as bruises or welts, 20.7 percent; and emotional abuse, 22.4 percent. These figures add up to more than 100 percent because multiple abuses of a child occur.

Sexual abuse is probably the most underdiagnosed type of child abuse. However, it is increasingly gaining recognition as a social problem of significant proportions in this society. Deitz reports that approximately 400,000 children are sexually abused by adults each year. In most cases, the victimized child is a girl. O'Brien claims that one in four

32 O'Brien, p. 10; Starr, p. 873.
34 Ibid.
females, or 25 percent of all females, will be sexually abused by the time they are eighteen. 36

Problems exist which make interpretation of child abuse incidence data difficult. One problem is the fact that some states list reports of child abuse by individual children while others list reports by family. This can make one state's statistics appear lower than another when actually there may be no difference in the rate. Another problem is variance among states in terms of who is mandated to report and what is mandated to be a reportable condition. Some states fail to contribute any statistics. However, as Kaufman observes, "The national effort to identify the incidence and severity of child abuse and neglect led to the conclusions that reports are increasing rapidly and that as a nation we are not doing enough to address the problem of child maltreatment." 37

Once again, no one particular set of characteristics fits all abused children; yet, some general and often evident characteristics are noticeable in many victims of abuse. One of the most common characteristics of young abused children is their compliance and acceptance of whatever happens. The Kempes state victims of child abuse are "passive and obedient . . . and will remain in uncomfortable positions for a long

36 O'Brien, p. 15.
time if asked to do so." Their findings are similar to those of Barahal, Waterman, and Martin who report that maltreated children have little confidence in their power to shape or control their experiences, especially those that are unpleasant.

Not all children who have been abused are compliant and eager to please. Kempe and Kempe's research points out that at least one-fourth of the children who are abused are negative and aggressive in their behavior, and this may be an imitation of the aggression they have experienced. Children may begin to identify so closely with the abusing parent that they themselves become aggressive. Whether or not a child demonstrates aggressive behavior can be attributed, according to many researchers, to the seriousness of the abuse and the child's age. Kaufman makes this stipulation:

Extremely harsh abuse or consistent abuse of very young children will generally result in the child's withdrawal. A child who experienced some positive nurturance in infancy and less serious injury later is posited as the candidate for acting out.

Another characteristic of abused children is their inability to trust anyone, which often results in their rejecting any interaction with others and becoming withdrawn.

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38 Kempe and Kempe, p. 32.
40 Kempe and Kempe, p. 34.
41 Kaufman, p. 18.
Wolfe and Mosk's research study found that friendly gestures from adults produced an apprehensive, cautious approach in abused preschoolers. Abused children not only distrust adults, but also other children. Kinard's research in the area of abused children's emotional development shows that victims of child abuse have more difficulty socializing with other children than do nonabused children. This inability to trust anyone may impair their capacity to form relationships with other people. The Kempes found that even when abused children seem to be developing a good relationship with someone, such as a therapist, they relapse easily into distrust at the slightest sign of rejection. They seem to learn to be socially deficient through the experience of being mistreated.

Children who are abused consistently display a poor self-image; they usually see themselves as bad, unlovable, and stupid. Kinard's research shows that abused children depict themselves as "unpopular, disobedient at home, sad, doing many bad things, and believing their parents expected too much of them." As mentioned earlier, abused children often accept their parents' punishment as valid; therefore, they do not

42 Wolfe and Mosk, p. 703.
44 Kempe and Kempe, p. 38.
45 Kinard, p. 691.
usually express hatred toward their parents. They are filled with guilt and fear and often will even seek to cover up for their parents by creating stories of how they received their injuries. The Kempes assert, "The abused child accepts his parents' discipline as the right way to bring up children, since it is the only way he knows."46

Finally, a characteristic shared by victims of child abuse is their difficulty in expressing their feelings. Abused children seem stoic, even when in physical pain. O'Brien claims that young people who have been abused need to learn their feelings are permitted and encouraged before they will feel safe in expressing them.47

Just as characteristics of abused young people vary, so do characteristics of child abusers. Parents and others who abuse or neglect children do not appear unusual, but they are often unable to cope with complex problems in their lives. Abusive parents or guardians come from all walks of life, contrary to what has been or is commonly believed. However, some general characteristics seem to occur often in research about abusers of children.

First, a majority of abusing parents were abused or neglected by their own parents. O'Brien's research has found that 85 percent of abusing parents experienced deprivation, if

46 Kempe and Kempe, p. 40.
47 O'Brien, p. 52.
not physical abuse, as children. Studies tend to find that many conscientious parents, who have rejected their own parents' childrearing techniques, may in moments of crises when their own methods are not working, revert to the very techniques they rejected. People acquire their basic knowledge of how to act as parents from their experiences in their own lives. When parents provide destructive, uncontrolled aggression as an example, it seems likely to expect the same from their children.

Another characteristic of child abusers is lack of trust. Giovannoni states, "Part of the problem is that abusive parents do have trouble turning to others for help, in trusting others to want to help." They tend to be isolated, without friends or confidants. Studies of abusing and neglectful families have consistently reported that abusive families are isolated from their extended family and from the community and its services. Not only does the child then spend more time in contact with the parents, increasing the opportunity for abuse to occur, but in failing to develop

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48 Ibid.
normal peer relationships, he may be less able to develop normal adult relationships as a parent later.

Child abusers often share the characteristic of having unrealistic expectations of a child; they expect and demand behavior that is beyond the child's abilities. O'Brien believes that the child is seen as a source of love or support for the parent, instead of someone who needs love and support from the parent.\(^51\) If the child fails to live up to his expected role, the parent often reacts abusively.

Low self-image is another characteristic of child abusers. They see themselves as failures, unable to fulfill the expectations others have had for them. According to the Kempes, child abusers often feel they are inadequate as parents, so they are overcritical of themselves and their children; this then results in reacting to the child in an aggressive, impatient manner.\(^52\) They are often impulsive and have trouble in problem solving and thinking ahead, so simple problems are made worse by the way they try to cope with them.

Child abusers usually try to hide their child's injuries; they are often reluctant to give information about the child's condition. When questioned, they offer contradictory explanations or are unable to explain the injuries. They often choose a different hospital or doctor each time the

\(^{51}\) O'Brien, p. 47.

\(^{52}\) Kempe and Kempe, p. 21.
child must have medical attention in an attempt to hide the abuse.

Finally, some researchers report a wide range of IQ levels among their study samples, while others report low IQ as characteristic of the abusive population. The majority of the evidence suggests that there is a higher number of abusers with low IQs than would be expected, although it is difficult to interpret because of the lack of agreement on what constitutes a low IQ. 53

In terms of education, the National Analysis report found that abusive parents have limited education; 64.5 percent have less than a high school diploma. 54 The handicap of either low intelligence or limited education makes it more difficult to have knowledge and good judgment in caring for children. Poor parental skills are often related to child neglect. Martin and Walters state, "Children who were neglected or sexually abused were more likely to have parents who evidenced intellectual inadequacies." 55

Child abusers do not fit a single pattern that can be diagnosed and then treated; however, most tend to experience feelings of frustration, isolation, and helplessness. Often,

54 U.S., Dept. of Health and Human Services... National Analysis, p. 29.
this is compounded by a general lack of child-care skills. It is unlikely that any one force will explain all abusive or neglectful behavior even in one individual; findings of possible causes for abuse may even be contradictory, which is evidence of the complexity of child abuse.

Although it is important that each person and each environment be evaluated differently, at the same time it seems essential to identify some risk-related factors or situations common to some, but not to all, potential abusers. Statistics regarding the relationship between the perpetrators and the children indicate that the parent-child relationship predominates in cases of child abuse, with natural parents being the abusers 81.7 percent of the time and stepparents, adoptive, and foster parents adding an additional 8.9 percent. Among two-parent families, there is generally one parent who is the active abuser, or more obviously neglectful of the child, and one who acts as an accessory by condoning or covering up the abuse and neglect. Studies of sexual child abuse particularly fit this pattern; in these cases, the father is usually the abusive parent.

The mothers in incestuous families are described as passive, depressed, often disabled in some way, and submissive to their husbands' authority. A study by Herman and

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56 U.S., Dept. of Health and Human Services... , National Analysis, p. 5.

Hirschman states that many daughters, who have been sexually abused by their fathers, report having seen their mothers beaten. 58 These mothers fail to report incest because of a divided loyalty between their husband and their child; they do not reject their daughters but are too fearful and emotionally weak to deal with the consequences of reporting incest. Dietz and Craft add, "The daughter learns to tolerate abuse from the example of her mother and emulates her passivity and submissiveness to her father." 59 Therefore, families in which mothers are powerless, whether through battering, physical disability, mental illness, or other reasons, seem particularly at risk for father-daughter incest.

There is growing consensus among researchers and social workers that the maltreatment of children results, in part, from stress; therefore, the effect of financial problems or the frustration of social discrimination will contribute to patterns of failure. The Kempes propose that the relationship of economic factors with child abuse, and even more with neglect specifically, is close. 60 In the largest study of circumstances on abusive and neglectful families, the NCCAN found that insufficient income was a factor in only 25.2 percent of the abusive families, whereas it was a factor in 48

59 Dietz and Craft, p. 606.
60 Kempe and Kempe, p. 23.
percent of the neglectful families; similarly, inadequate housing was a factor in only 9.2 percent of abusive families but was a factor in 26.2 percent of the neglectful families. This suggests that neglect seems to be more directly related to economic factors than physical abuse is. Several other studies have also found that rates of child abuse are higher in regions characterized by a high proportion of low-income families and in areas characterized by unusually high rates of unemployment.

Concerning unemployment, the NCCAN reports, "It is probably not unemployment per se that elicits the abusive behavior but the attendant stresses, such as the father being present in the home more when he is experiencing a loss of status because of his unemployment." The family is also experiencing difficulties in caring and providing for children when their resources are insufficient.

A potential problem with such studies is that biases inherent in the reporting of maltreatment may underestimate its incidence among affluent families, thereby exaggerating

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the association of low income or unemployment with child abuse. There are a number of reasons why families with lower incomes may be overrepresented in incidence data. These families are more likely to use those facilities which are the sources for most of the reports (hospitals, police, public social agencies) while middle income families can afford private physicians who are less likely to account for any substantial percentage of reports. 64

Higher-income families find it easier to hide abuse by calling it an "accident," and they tend to live in private detached homes where abuse is less easily detected. 65 While it is difficult to assert that abuse is class-related on the basis of the data available and the problems of reporting bias, there is some evidence that suggests that certain sources of stress which may elicit abuse may be class-related.

While neglect seems to be a cause of parent-related reasons, such as poor parenting skills or low income, physical abuse often is a cause of the child's behavior. Reasons for physical abuse involve specific types of child behavior, for example, fighting, refusals, accidental occurrences, or inconveniences due to the child. Herrenkohl and his colleagues allege that most of the child-related circumstances are not unusual in the course of childrearing, and that they are related to physical abuse shows an inadequacy in the

65 Ibid.
parent-child interaction. Often in cases of physical abuse, the child is seen as a frustrator who blocks the parent's efforts to achieve a goal.

With emotional abuse, adult actions are more significant than the child's. Reasons for emotional child abuse include fighting between adults, adult anger, or the head of the household's leaving the family. Herrenkohl's research offers the following explanation:

Adult redirection of anger and hostility toward the child may be due to the child's interfering with the parents, to the child's being the subject of the disagreement between the adults, or may be because the child or the child's behavior is associated by the abusing adult with the other adult in the conflict.67

Emotional abuse is more common in higher-income families than among the poor, according to Sanoff.68

Despite much focus recently on all forms of child abuse, its causes, its victims, and its perpetrators, too many remain either uninformed or misinformed on this topic. Several misconceptions, which are long-standing and not easily dispelled, can particularly hamper efforts to identify and eventually treat or prevent abusive action.

67 Ibid.
One of the major misconceptions about abusive parents is that they are always financially poor. Child abuse and neglect cut across all social, economic, educational, and cultural lines. Abusers include people on welfare as well as highly-paid professionals, high school dropouts as well as those with advanced degrees. Many see abusers as "other people" rather than realizing that under certain conditions anyone has the potential to harm a child.

Another misconception is that abusive parents are incurably abnormal, psychotic, or criminal. The Kempes and O'Brien all argue that most studies show a very low percentage of the total abusing population to be psychotic, psychopathic, or of borderline intelligence.\(^{69}\)

A dangerous myth that can foster child abuse is the belief that children are the property of their parents. This promotes an abnormal child-parent relationship in that it ignores the child as a person who has his own basic rights. The Kempes assert, "The rationale that a parent can do anything he wants in his own house perpetuates the avoidance of responsibility on the part of neighbors, friends, and the community."\(^{70}\)

Although it is changing, a fourth misconception about child abuse is that it is very rare. Many see the United States as being a youth-focused society that meets the needs

\(^{69}\)Kempe and Kempe, p. 57; O'Brien, p. 49.

\(^{70}\)Kempe and Kempe, p. 8.
of its young members. However, O'Brien counters, "The United States doesn't even rank among the ten nations having the lowest incidence of infant mortality and of mothers dying in childbirth." 71 Certainly, even the reported cases of child abuse represent only a part of the total number.

A final myth which hampers the prevention of child abuse is one stating that if a person has the biological ability to have a child, then one automatically knows how to be a parent. Parenting, unfortunately, is not an automatic skill or talent that emerges at the birth of a child.

In discussing how child abuse is or should be portrayed in young adult literature, a definition of this genre must be established. According to Ramsdell, "young adult" refers to material written specifically for, and often about, adolescents. 72 Who is the adolescent reader? Many resist the idea of categorizing a reader by chronological age or maturity level because of the variety of responses this creates. Some would limit adolescence to the years twelve through eighteen while others would expand this and include anyone from ten through twenty-two.

A more flexible approach in defining young adults is often used. The Young Adult Services Division of the American Library Association believes in allowing the "developmental needs of individuals determine whether they will best be

71 O'Brien, p. 27.

served as children, young adults, or adults." The adolescent, then, would be the individual involved in a period of change, regardless of his age; and young adult literature is what is written for him while he is going through this time.

The 1980s has seen the emergence of the "young adult problem novel," the story that makes any problem a suitable topic for the young adult reader. Today's young adult literature exposes all sorts of the world's cold realities, including child abuse. The question that arises is whether or not literature for young adults should be explicitly realistic, and whether novels dealing with teenagers' troubles can help these youth.

Klein states, "We can't protect our children any more from all we would like to spare them. All we can do is to help children see it all . . . and to be honest in the books we write for them." Young adult literature can help readers understand the world around them and form perceptions of people and places. To produce such writing, authors must be honest in presentation of character, situation, and setting. This honesty can serve to heighten awareness of the situation. Defenders of today's realistic fiction contend that reading about a problem does not make a reader change his life.


patterns, but it can result in an increased understanding of contemporary social and moral issues.

Is reality what today's young adults want from their literature? Richard Peck claims that a novel should be based on reality, but rise above that into hope.\textsuperscript{75} If hope is what students want from their novels, then today's young adult literature appears to be meeting their needs. Even though novels deal with sordid and brutal realities, most of the protagonists survive the consequences. In the only article found by the researcher on child abuse in young adult literature, Robinson declares, "The only thread running through each novel... is hope. In each case, there is a person who cares who is willing to get involved."\textsuperscript{76}

Society as shown in today's literature for young adults may not always be pleasant, but neither is life itself for many teens. Literature can help the reader to recognize that he is not the first to meet his problem, and to find solutions that help him to meet life without feelings of guilt, shame, or inferiority. According to Mertz and England, characters in young adult literature "give evidence of having learned to cope with life; they reveal a gradual growth to awareness."\textsuperscript{77}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{75}Richard Peck, "People of the Word," School Library Media Quarterly, 10, No. 3 (Fall 1981), 16.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{76}Nancy Wessels Robinson, "Child Abuse in Young Adult Literature," Connecticut English Journal, 12, No. 1 (Fall 1980), 70.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{77}Maia Pank Mertz and David A. England, "The Legitimacy of American Adolescent Fiction," SLJ School Library Journal, 30, No. 2 (October 1983), 123.}
The message of young adult problem novels is that the adaptability of youth will eventually win out and help them rise above the problems they face; therefore, authors are providing both the reality and the optimism young people are looking for.

Authors are finally addressing the problem of child abuse in literature for young adults. By reading the current research studies and opinion articles on child abuse, one can learn numerous facts regarding this topic. Since much of today's young adult literature deals with teenagers' problems in an open and realistic way, it seems probable that, at last, child abuse will be quite accurately handled for today's young readers.
CHAPTER 3
Methodology

The research technique for this study is content analysis. Busha and Harter define content analysis as "a procedure designed to facilitate the objective analysis of the appearance of words, phrases, concepts, themes, characters, or even sentences and paragraphs contained in printed or audiovisual materials." In an analysis of a novel's content, observed data can be categorized and then quantified. Content analysis is aimed at exactness and the elimination of bias in the research process. Busha and Harter state that its methods are used to decrease the degree of subjectivity usually found in procedures designed to analyze the contents of materials.

Since there is no comprehensive list of fiction books available to be read by young adults that focus on child abuse as the primary issue, the researcher compiled a list of eleven books to be used in this research study through the use of selection tools. Those novels selected were limited to fiction books either intended for or appropriate for young adults that have been published in and after 1975.

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79 Ibid., p. 172.
All novels selected for this analysis were listed either in a selective, retrospective bibliography, such as The Bookfinder, Fiction Catalog, or the Junior or Senior High School Library Catalogs, or for the more current titles, positively reviewed in Booklist and/or SLJ School Library Journal. 

The researcher compiled an initial list of novels through the use of the retrospective bibliographies, and then the most recent fiction books about child abuse that were reviewed positively were located through Booklist and/or SLJ School Library Journal. 

After following these procedures, the researcher deleted from the list those titles that did not focus on a victim of child abuse who did not spend at least part of the novel still in the abusive environment, such as Center Line by Joyce Sweeney, and those novels dealing with child abuse but not containing a main character who is the victim of child abuse, such as Ask Me No Questions by Ann Schlee.

Appendix C gives a complete citation with word-for-word reviews from selection tools for each novel that was analyzed in this research paper. The Book Review Index was used to

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locate the reviews of the titles from the retrospective bibliographies.

The books used in this content analysis were obtained from libraries in the Cedar Falls, Iowa, area. Each novel was read in its entirety by the researcher.

Each of the books was analyzed for its portrayal of child abuse, victims of child abuse, and child abusers using a checklist with ten elements. Five of these elements were analyzed in quantitative terms; the researcher not only determined if or how an event or incident occurred, but also how often in order to study the extent of occurrence in each novel. These five elements include: type of abuse, characteristics of the abused, event prompting the physical abuse, misconceptions or myths about child abuse, and characteristics of the abuser. All elements were compiled by the researcher on the basis of research studies and opinion articles read for the literature review. By clearly defining the terms used in each category and making each mutually exclusive, the researcher attempted to increase validity when determining percentages.

The ten elements of the content analysis checklist are listed below, along with definitions of any terms within the categories of each element that need clarification.

1. **Sex** of the character who is a victim of child abuse.
2. **Family pattern** includes whether the character who is a victim of child abuse comes from a home in which both, one, or neither biological parent(s) reside.
3. **Type(s) of abuse** include physical, sexual, emotional, or neglect. (See definitions in Chapter 1)

4. **Characteristics of the abused** include:
   
a) passivity, compliance—passivity is defined as a condition of "being timid, helpless, lacking in self-confidence, depending on others to make decisions, and avoiding all open expression of anger or aggression."\(^{81}\) Compliance is "a yielding; making one's desires conform to the wishes of others."\(^{82}\)
   
b) aggression—defined as "behavior motivated by anger, hostility, or overcompetitiveness and directed toward harming, destroying, or defeating other people, objects, or in some cases, the self."\(^{83}\)
   
c) inability to trust others
   
d) low self-image—defined as "an individual's poor picture or concept of himself, including a self-evaluation of his abilities, personal worth, goals, personality characteristics, and potential."\(^{84}\)
   
e) inability to express feelings

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\(^{84}\) Ibid., p. 664.
f) guilt--defined as feeling responsible and deserving of the abuse.

g) other

5. **Event prompting physical abuse** includes the child's behavior/actions, such as refusal, fighting, misbehavior, or inconvenience; the abuser's behavior/actions, such as drinking, anger, use of drugs, or stress; unable to identify; and not applicable.

6. **Misconceptions or myths** about child abuse (See Chapter 1 for definitions) include beliefs that the abusive family is always financially poor; that the abusers are abnormal or psychotic—abnormal is defined as behavior which deviates markedly from what is considered normative, healthy, or desirable, and psychotic is defined as characterizing a state of severe mental disorder marked by disorganization of thought, disorientation as to time, space, or person, and disturbances in emotionality; that children are the property of their parents; that child abuse is rare; that one naturally knows how to be a parent; other; and none.

7. **Hope** for the character who is a victim of child abuse includes an offer of help or no offer of help to the child.

8. **Social class** of the family includes:

   a) upper class--defined as a group emphasizing "tradition, familism, lineage, and marriage within the class

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85 Chaplin, p. 2.

86 Ibid., p. 431.
to preserve the favored position of its members."\textsuperscript{87} It consists of a relatively small group of families with inherited wealth and position and who value and practice a graceful style of living that sets them apart from the other classes. They often live in exclusive neighborhoods and send their children to prep schools.

b) middle class--defined as a group showing concern for "self-improvement, occupational success and advancement, the importance of the nuclear family, education in terms of its contribution to career advancement, and deferred gratification."\textsuperscript{88} Most members of this class have a college education and work for a living, not inheriting great wealth. Their occupations include business owners and managers, lawyers, physicians, clerks, and teachers. They have a high rate of religious participation and are prominent in civic and governmental affairs.

c) lower class--defined as a group "characterized by the basic value of 'getting by' and being concerned more with immediate needs than with long-range goals."\textsuperscript{89} Its members have less formal education and training than those of the other classes and often have jobs requiring manual labor. They tend to have little commitment to their jobs.

\textsuperscript{88}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{89}Ibid.
9. Characteristics of the abuser include:
   a) inability to trust others
   b) being a victim of child abuse him/herself
   c) unrealistic expectations of a child—defined as an incorrect or misjudged state of anticipation, such as a belief that the child is capable of an activity beyond his years or ability.
   d) unwilling to allow the child relationships with any peers
   e) low self image—(see definition under 4, d of this section.)
   f) inability to develop a good social relationship(s)—a good social relationship is defined as having close friends with whom to interact and communicate.
   g) other
   h) unable to identify

10. Two-parent patterns of child abuse include both parents as abusers; one parent as abuser and one as passive observer; one parent as abuser and one unaware of the abuse; and not applicable.

   The researcher recorded all data from the analyses of the novels on individual checklists which are found in Appendix A.
Eleven young adult novels dealing with child abuse as the central issue were analyzed for this study. A checklist with ten elements was used as the instrument in analyzing these novels; the elements focused on determining the characteristics of the abused and the abuser, the home environment in which the abuse occurs, and the types of abuse experienced by the victims. All kinds of abuse are being written about by young adult writers, with physical and emotional abuse being the most prevalent in the novels analyzed. In some instances, the authors simply implied that abuse had occurred, making it necessary for the researcher to make a subjective decision about what had prompted it and how extensive it was. For example, incidents of sexual abuse were not described by the authors; they were implied. Burge and Shane in The Boy in the Off-White Hat go fishing for a day; and that afternoon Shane suffers his first abusive experience, although it is never described to the reader. Therefore, the researcher could not determine the specific actions taken against Shane. Overall, the researcher found the novels to be quite realistic in their portrayal of child abuse and its victims and abusers.

The data related to each of the six hypotheses and their subdivisions were separately tabulated. A majority consisted
of percentages that were 50 percent or above, and these figures were used to accept or reject the hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1a: The majority of characters who are victims of child abuse will be female. As shown by Table 1, 73 percent of the characters who were victims of child abuse were female. On the basis of this percentage, Hypothesis 1a was accepted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One novel, Things Are Seldom What They Seem, contained two female characters who were sexually molested; however, data were taken for only the protagonist of the novel.

All four types of abuse were experienced by both male and female characters. This is realistically representative since any one type of abuse is not limited to one sex or the other. Although female children are more apt to experience sexual abuse, male children are also often victims of this. Of the three novels dealing with sexual abuse, two of the protagonists were female and one was male. Abby in Abby, My Love was sexually abused by her father; Maggie in Things Are Seldom What They Seem was abused by one of her teachers. In
The Boy in the Off-White Hat, Shane was sexually abused by Burge, Shane's mother's boyfriend.

Hypothesis 1b: The majority of characters who are victims of child abuse will be from homes in which only one of the biological parents resides.

Table 2
Family Pattern of Abused Child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both biological parents at home</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One biological parent at home</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither biological parent at home</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the data displayed in Table 2, 73 percent of the characters in the novels who were victims of child abuse were from homes in which only one of the biological parents resided; therefore, Hypothesis 1b was accepted.

In two of the 8 novels in which there is just one biological parent, there is also a stepparent. In the other six novels, or 75 percent of the cases, the biological parent is a single parent. As research indicates, a single parent often experiences more stress and greater responsibility than two parents together, and that excessive stress in families leads to abuse. The authors of the novels analyzed demonstrate this. Several of these single parents feel their
children are burdens. One example of this is Claire's mother in *Cages of Glass, Flowers of Time* who states, "Saddlin' me with you! Tellin' me I got to see to you! I'd like to know when someone's going to see to me!" In the two novels in which the biological parent has a spouse, the abuse is still done by that natural parent.

The researcher, in order to clarify who did the abusing in the novels, made the decision to display in tabular form the relationship of the abuser to the abused child. Table 3 shows that in 73 percent of the abuse cases in the novels a biological parent was responsible for the abuse. The result agrees with the research findings cited in the literature review stating that biological parents are the abusers 81.7 percent of the time. Although the mother was the abusive

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Table 3  
Abused and Abuser Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abuser</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biological mother</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological father</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepparent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyfriend/girlfriend of parent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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parent in 55 percent of the novels analyzed, there was no research found that supports that a mother is more abusive than a father.

In two of the novels, the boyfriend of the victim's biological mother was the abuser. Neither Steve in *The Lottery Rose* or Burge in *The Boy in the Off-White Hat* lived with the victim and his mother, but would abuse the child when visiting. In *The Lottery Rose*, Georgie feared Steve's visits:

> It was then that Georgie was apt to be half-starved after being tied in a closet without food, sometimes for a day, sometimes for two or even three days. His eyes were always blackened when he returned to school . . . and his forehead was usually crossed with raw stripes made by Steve's belt. 91

Finally, in one novel the abuser had no close relationship to the parents. Maggie was sexually molested by her drama coach in *Things Are Seldom What They Seem* as was a friend of Maggie's.

From the figures tabulated in Table 4, it can be determined that ten out of the eleven, or 91 percent, of the characters who were victims of child abuse suffered from more than one type of abuse; therefore, Hypothesis 1c--The majority of characters who are victims of child abuse will experience more than one type of abuse.--was accepted.

Only Abby in *Abby, My Love* suffered just one type of abuse, sexual abuse by her father. Fifty-five percent of the

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characters experienced two types of abuse while the remaining four characters, or 36 percent, suffered from three types of abuse.

Table 4

Type of Abuse of Characters in Eleven Novels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abused Character</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Sexual</th>
<th>Emotional</th>
<th>Neglect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurie</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shari</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Til</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgie</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethel</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

William Beech in *Good Night, Mr. Tom* experienced physical and emotional abuse and neglect by his mother. After being locked in the cellar by his mother, William was finally found weeks later holding his dead baby sister:

The small alcove stank of stale urine and vomit. A thin emaciated boy with matted hair and skin like
parchment was tied to a length of copper piping. He held a small bundle in his arms. His scrawny limbs were covered with sores and bruises and he sat in his own excrement. He shrank at the light from the torch and made husky gagging noises.92

Another example of a character experiencing more than one type of abuse is the harsh treatment Shari undergoes in **Fly Free** from her mother. In an incident of physical abuse, Shari's "hand went automatically to her head where her mother had knocked it against the corner of the kitchen cabinet. Blood oozed through her hair as her mother slapped her cheek, so hard that Shari fell down."93 Shari also experiences emotional abuse by her mother's calling her "dummy" and "Shari Ape Face" on numerous occasions, as well as through statements such as, "You've always been a mean rotten kid since the day you were born."94

Emotional abuse was most prevalent, occurring in 82 percent of the novels. All types of child abuse result in emotional repercussions for the victims, as is evident in the novels analyzed. Whether a child suffers from physical or sexual abuse or neglect, the victim experiences emotional effects from that cruelty. Emotional abuse, however, also occurs apart from the other types of abuse. It is these

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94 Ibid., p. 105.
separate incidents of emotional abuse, incidents not occurring in conjunction with another form of abuse, that were recorded by the researcher.

Following the established definition of emotional abuse which includes "verbal abuse or excessive demands," one finds much emotional abuse in the form of verbal abuse in the analyzed novels. Although due to her own neglect of her daughter, Claire's mother in Cages of Glass, Flowers of Time tells her boss, "I have a pig at home, too" because Claire eats so quickly when finally given some food.\footnote{Culin, p. 71.} Ethel in Just An Overnight Guest is told by her mother that she is always causing trouble and is going to be dropped into a well and let drown because of it.\footnote{Eleanora E. Tate, Just an Overnight Guest (New York: Dial Press, 1980), p. 130.}

Incidences of physical abuse were evident in 73 percent of the novels analyzed. The types of physical abuse were varied and resulted in many injuries, such as bruises, welts, burns, cuts, and sores for the victims. In Maddy's Song, Jack Dow's hits with a block of wood "made a cut across one eyebrow. It would show ... the thumpings came: the back of her head against wood again and again. That would not show."\footnote{Margaret Dickson, Maddy's Song (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1985), p. 159.}
Another example of the physical abuse authors are showing occurs in Don't Hurt Laurie! Laurie's mother first hits her daughter on her head and shoulders with a broom, then hits her with "something heavier, something that cut into her arms and hands . . ."98 Laurie later learns this was a fireplace poker.

Whereas the descriptions of physical abuse and emotional abuse, when in the form of verbal abuse, were very detailed and graphic, the episodes of sexual abuse, which occurred in 27 percent of the novels, were not. The author, such as in The Boy in the Off-White Hat, leads up to the sexual encounter so that the reader knows it happens, but never describes it. The reader is aware of its occurrence because of the victim's changed behavior and actions afterward. Skeeter, a friend of Shane's in The Boy in the Off-White Hat, notices changes in Shane after first being sexually abused by Burge:

He wasn't wearing his Burge hat, for the first time in the two months since Burge gave it to him . . . He had changed into different jeans. His other ones, clean that morning, were kicked into a wad in the corner . . . His eyes had a look I'd never seen before. It went beyond scared or guilty, although they were in it too. It was more like shock.99


Because of the multiple abuses of a child, the figures total more than 100 percent. The incidences of neglect will be discussed in the next hypothesis.

In examining the number of occurrences of each type of abuse, Table 5 shows that acts of physical and emotional abuse were most common with 24 incidents of each in the novels analyzed. These two types of abuse together comprise 74 percent of all the abusive acts described in the novels.

However, physical and emotional abuse were also the two types
of abuse that were most specifically described and evident in the novels.

Acts of sexual abuse, occurring 5 times, and neglect, occurring 12 times, were either not specifically described by the authors or were ongoing, making it difficult for the researcher to determine an accurate number of individual occurrences. For example, in *Abby, My Love*, the sexual abuse of Abby by her father began when she was about 4 years old and was still continuing at her age of 12. A specific incident of abuse was never portrayed in the novel; the abuse was ongoing, but it was not possible to specify a certain number of incidents. In these situations, the researcher simply determined the abuse's existence and noted it as occurring once.

Some episodes of neglect were very evident; yet others, such as a child experiencing hunger or lack of attention from a parent, were also ongoing. The continuance of abuse made it difficult to pinpoint where one incident of neglect ended and another started.

Despite the problems in calculating the number of occurrences of abuse, particularly neglect and sexual abuse, the authors of the novels analyzed tended to focus more on acts of physical and emotional abuse than the other two types of abuse. However, not one type of abuse was altogether overlooked or ignored by authors of young adult books. Novels dealing with all types of child abuse are being written for young adults.
Hypothesis 1d: The majority of characters who are victims of child abuse will experience neglect by their abuser.

As the display in Table 4 reveals, 45 percent of the abused characters experienced neglect by their abuser. Since 50 percent or above is considered a majority, Hypothesis 1d was rejected. As defined, neglect includes a broad range of actions on the part of a parent or guardian to provide for a child's basic needs. The occurrences of neglect in the novels analyzed were also of different types.

In three of the novels in which neglect is present, the abuser has a drinking problem. In such situations, money is spent on buying alcohol instead of food; or because the abuser is too drunk, she does not realize her neglect in providing food for her child. All three of these neglectful parents are the victim's biological mother.

Lack of proper nourishment is a continual problem for Claire in *Cages of Glass, Flowers of Time* because of her mother's spending money for alcohol:

> I saw there was hardly any food in the cart. Just a few things and beer. If I did what she said, maybe she'd get more food. Maybe she'd come back next week. Maybe she wouldn't wait three weeks again. 100

Although the main abuser in *The Lottery Rose* is the boyfriend of Georgie's mother, Georgie does experience neglect because of his mother's drinking. He does not like to approach his mother for anything, especially when she is drunk, but must

100 Culin, p. 6.
because of his hunger. "He hadn't had breakfast and she had been too far along with her drinking the night before to cook supper for him. . . . He needed food and she was his only hope." 101

Miz Mary, Ethel's mother in Just an Overnight Guest, neglects to provide proper supervision for her four-year-old daughter. While Miz Mary spends the night away from home drinking, Ethel is left alone. As Miz Mary claims, "Ain't nothin' gonna bother her. She's stayed by herself all night plenty times." 102 At times her mother would lock her inside, so Ethel could not get out.

In Fly Free, Shari suffers yet a different form of neglect. Her mother, Charlotte, never encourages Shari to overcome her shyness nor makes any positive comments to Shari to improve her low self-image. Charlotte is neglectful in providing adequate support and love for Shari's proper emotional development.

As Table 5 shows, no one novel had its focus largely on neglect although such novels do exist. Ask Me No Questions by Ann Schlee was not analyzed for this research paper because the book's protagonist did not experience child abuse; however, a group of children she meets suffer extremely from neglect.

102 Tate, p. 15.
Only *Just An Overnight Guest*, containing 3 acts of neglect, 2 acts of emotional abuse, and 1 act of physical abuse, has more individual acts of neglect than the three other types of abuse. In the other four novels, there are more individual acts of either physical or emotional abuse than acts of neglect. Therefore, the authors of the analyzed novels do not seem to be portraying neglect as the primary type of abuse from which children suffer. They are, however, picturing a variety of neglectful actions parents make and showing that they often occur in addition to other types of abuse.

**Hypothesis 2:** The majority of characters who are victims of child abuse will exhibit one or more of the following characteristics: passivity, compliance; aggression; inability to trust others; low self-image; or inability to express feelings. According to data displayed in Table 6, 100 percent of the characters in the novels exhibited characteristics typical of victims of child abuse. On the basis of this percentage, Hypothesis 2 was accepted. Passivity or compliance, inability to trust others, and low self-image were each characteristics in 73 percent of the abused characters. An inability to express feelings was also quite common, being found in 64 percent of the characters. A less frequent behavior of victims of child abuse in the novels was aggression, present in 27 percent of the characters. Nine of the eleven characters, or 82 percent, exhibited more than one of the five characteristics listed.
Besides establishing the presence of the characteristics in the victims, the number of times each behavior was exhibited was also determined. As shown in Table 7, a total of 113 characteristics were exhibited by the eleven characters who suffered abuse. Since the 'Other' category contains a variety of behaviors, passivity or compliance was the single most frequent characteristic exhibited by the victims of child abuse.

### Table 6
Characteristics of the Abused Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abused Character</th>
<th>Passivity, compliance</th>
<th>Aggression</th>
<th>Inability to trust others</th>
<th>Low self-image</th>
<th>Inability to express feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurie</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shari</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Til</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgie</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total No.</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>%</strong></td>
<td>73</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
abuse in the novels. Twenty-one instances of passivity or compliance were shown by the abused children, thus being a behavior 19 percent of the time.

Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abused Character</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abby</td>
<td>Passivity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurie</td>
<td>Compliance</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shari</td>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddy</td>
<td>Inability to trust others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>Low self-image</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Til</td>
<td>Inability to express feelings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shane</td>
<td>Guilt</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgie</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In *Fly Free*, Shari often remained passive as a type of self-defense:

Long ago she had learned to shield herself against pain when her mother hit her, but the nonphysical hurts were hardest to deny. . . . To feel nothing was better, to remove herself so that the body that was there didn't hold her anymore. Then after
awhile the danger would go away, and if she was reminded of the hurt, it would be just another item to box away.103

Shari's passivity was a way for her to protect herself from the hurt inflicted by her abusive, neglectful mother.

For other victims of child abuse, passivity is taught and encouraged by the abuser. For example, William in Good Night, Mr. Tom is reluctant to talk to others, even children his own age. He recalls, "Mum had said that if he made himself invisible people would like him and he wanted that very much."104

The other characteristics listed in Table 7 were also quite prevalent in the characters suffering from abuse and were all exhibited with about the same frequency. A low self-image, the inability to trust others, and guilt were each exhibited 14 times, or 12 percent of the time, making for the realistic representation of the abused children.

In Maddy's Song, Maddy expresses simply and clearly the reason for her inability to trust others, "It wasn't safe to trust anyone. How could you?"105 Her feelings echo those of other abused characters when she wonders since her own father abuses her, who would possibly want to help her? Often, these characters were particularly untrusting of adults, as was

103 Adler, p. 40.
104 Magorian, p. 92.
105 Dickson, p. 10.
Laurie in *Don't Hurt Laurie!* "She'd only met Nell a few times, and was as wary of her as she was of most adults. Nell had never done anything to make Laurie think she was mean, but you never knew."¹⁰⁶

A low self-image was also a common characteristic of the abused. When Georgie is told by a friend that he's misbehaving and acting mean to others, Georgie replies, "I am mean. And I'm dumb."¹⁰⁷ William in *Good Night, Mr. Tom* also suffers from a low self-image and cannot believe it when someone finally tells him he's liked. "No one had ever said that they liked him. He'd always accepted that no one did. Even his mum said she only liked him when he was quiet and still."¹⁰⁸

Realistically, the authors are also showing the feelings of guilt that abused children often experience. Many of the characters felt they were guilty of wrongdoing; therefore, they were also deserving of the abuse they received. Til reasons in *The Girl Who Lived on the Ferris Wheel*, "If your mother was right, then you must be wrong. I'm sloppy and lazy and dirty and insolent. I must be. My mother says so and everybody knows that your mother is always right."¹⁰⁹

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¹⁰⁶ Roberts, p. 35.
¹⁰⁷ Hunt, p. 60.
¹⁰⁸ Magorian, p. 73.
All three of the sexually abused characters experienced feelings of guilt. Both Shane in *The Boy in the Off-White Hat* and Abby in *Abby, My Love* do not believe they can tell anyone what they have experienced because they feel guilty. Shane and Abby both state they will be hated if they reveal the truth.

Characters suffering from the other types of abuse also experienced pangs of guilt. William does not want people to see the scars and bruises on his legs from his mother's beatings, or they would "know how wicked he had been." 110

A variety of characteristics comprise the 'Other' category; some occurring in more than one victim include: fear, hopelessness, loneliness, and lying for the abuser. A victim's lying to others about how his/her injuries were received is a realistic behavior of the abused. In *Don't Hurt Laurie!*, the abused "had a good imagination to account for the injuries, but she always felt peculiar when she told lies. Even when she knew she had to lie because telling the truth would only get her into more trouble." 111

Two of the sexually abused characters felt as if they were someone else, with Shane in *The Boy in the Off-White Hat* even giving himself a new identity. After several incidents of being sexually abused, Shane claims he is John and that

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110 Magorian, p. 31.
Shane has gone away. He explains, "Shane was bad. He was so bad he couldn't live here anymore... If his mother knew how bad he was, she wouldn't ever want that Shane back again."\footnote{Hall, p. 73.} Abby wants to be a twelve-year-old girl, but feels she is an adult. She asks a friend if he has ever felt he were two different people at once since she often feels that way.\footnote{Hadley Irwin, \textit{Abby, My Love} (New York: Atheneum, 1985), p. 87.}

In summarizing the findings related to Hypothesis 2, the characteristics of the abused were accurately portrayed in the eleven books analyzed. As in real cases of abuse, the behaviors exhibited by the books' abused protagonists were varied. However, the researcher determined that five to six characteristics were often shared by these victims of abuse, revealing some common ways of reacting to the abuse.

The numbers in Table 8 reveal that 22 incidents of physical abuse occurred in the novels analyzed. Eighty-two percent of them were prompted by the child's own behavior or action; therefore, Hypothesis 3, the majority of incidents of physical abuse in the novels will be prompted by a behavior or an action of the abused child, was accepted.

Most of the behaviors of the children that prompt abuse are not unusual actions for young people growing up. Some of the actions include fighting, refusals, accidents,
inconveniences, or misbehavior. Similar types of behaviors were exhibited by the characters in the novels.

For using her mother's curlers without permission, Laurie in *Don't Hurt Laurie!* is hit on her face with a hard blow from her parent's hand. Then, when Laurie bends over to pick up a curler on the floor, Annabelle kicks her and yanks hard on her daughter's hair. In *The Girl Who Lived on the Ferris Wheel*, Til's mother, Gertrude, is overly meticulous in her housekeeping; therefore, Til often is abused in some way for a crumb of food found somewhere in the house. On one such occasion, when Til takes toast into the living room, she is jerked violently back and forth "before Gertrude's palm came down across her face. . . . Gertrude would hold her out and then hit her, and the blow would throw her across the room.

---

**Table 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child's behavior</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuser's behavior</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to identify</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

114 Roberts, p. 63.
It was like being turned into a football and played with, but this game had only one player."\textsuperscript{115}

Three characters suffer physical abuse because they are caught doing something that reminds the abuser of the victim's father. In \textit{Cages of Glass}, \textit{Flowers of Time}, Claire's father, divorced from her mother, had been an artist and had taught his daughter to draw. Although careful not to let her mother know she drew, Claire was once caught and slapped violently. This incident also brought verbal abuse with Claire's being told, "I told you never to draw. I ought to kill you. . . . You're no good."\textsuperscript{116}

Laurie also experiences physical abuse because of her actions, which remind her mother of her ex-husband who deserted them years ago. Annabelle screams in \textit{Don't Hurt Laurie!}, "You're just like your father, never have any consideration for anyone else."\textsuperscript{117} During another occasion of physical abuse, Laurie's mother claims, "Laurie's a liar. Just like her father, he lied about everything. . . ."\textsuperscript{118}

Just 14 percent of the physical abuse was not prompted by a particular action of the child, but instead was caused by the abuser's own behavior. In two of these three instances,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{115} Moeri, p. 33.
  \item \textsuperscript{116} Culin, p. 271.
  \item \textsuperscript{117} Roberts, p. 63.
  \item \textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 149.
\end{itemize}
the abuser had been drinking. After drinking, Claire's mother in *Cages of Glass, Flowers of Time* burns her daughter's arm with a cigarette. Ethel also suffers abuse by her alcoholic mother in *Just an Overnight Guest*. In the third instance, the mother's fierce anger causes the abusive action.

At times, the researcher had to make a subjective decision as to the more dominant cause of the physical abuse. Sometimes the abusive action was due to a combination or overlapping of behaviors exhibited by both the child and parent. An example is in *The Lottery Rose*. Steve's assertion of authority, his trying to demonstrate to Georgie who the "boss" is, is partly the cause for his beating Georgie. However, Georgie's own action of taking a piece of bread without asking for it is considered by the abuser to be a misbehavior on the part of the child and definitely prompts the abuse. In these cases, the researcher attempted to determine if the victim's or the abuser's behavior seemed more dominant and chose one of the two as the cause of abuse.

**Hypothesis 4a:** The majority of novels will have at least one character who displays a misconception or myth about child abuse.

The data displayed in Table 9 show that 6 out of eleven, or 55 percent, of the novels contained at least one character who displayed a misconception or myth about child abuse. Based on this percentage, Hypothesis 4a was accepted.

---

119 Culin, p. 19.
None of the novels analyzed by the researcher had more than one character who expressed statements demonstrating a misconception about child abuse. Also, each of the six characters who did hold a myth about abuse only displayed that misconception once during the course of the novel. Therefore, the extent of the presence of misconceptions in these novels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Novel</th>
<th>Misconception or Myth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family is poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abby, My Love</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Hurt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fly Free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maddy's Song</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things Are</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seldom What</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They Seem</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Girl Who Lived on the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferris Wheel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Boy in the Off-White Hat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lottery Rose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Night, Mr. Tom</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just an Overnight Guest</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cages of Glass, Flowers of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9
Misconceptions or Myths of Child Abuse by Novel
was quite minimal even though a majority did communicate some type of myth.

If the characters in the novels are to represent real people, the authors appear to be saying that no longer do people consider child abuse to be rare and occurring only in financially poor families since neither of these myths was evident in the books. Another misconception not displayed in any of the novels was that a person naturally knows how to be a parent.

The myth most common in the young adult novels was that the abuser was abnormal, psychotic, or criminal. In reality, most abusers are normal in their actions and relationships with those other than the abused victim. In three novels a character expressed a view that the abuser was a sick, abnormal person. In Good Night, Mr. Tom, when Tom tries to explain William's mother's actions, he tells the boy, "There's another kind of sickness that some people has. It's a sort of sickness of the mind... Reckon yer mother is a bit like that."\textsuperscript{120} Abby's friend Chip in Abby, My Love also refers to her father as "sick" since he sexually abused his daughter. However, Abby explains to Chip what her recent therapy taught her: "He wasn't sick, Chip. He was wrong! He did something terribly, terribly wrong."\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{120} Magorian, p. 248.
\textsuperscript{121} Irwin, p. 138.
Two characters did not want to get involved in the families' problems though they were both aware that a child was suffering from abusive actions. This misconception that children are the property of their parents prevents many from receiving help from friends, neighbors, or relatives. When a grandmother wants to get involved and help Laurie in Don't Hurt Laurie! she is told, "Now, look, she's Annabelle's kid. You've got no right to interfere where Laurie is concerned." A family acquaintance in Fly Free also believes children belong to their parents stating that no one has the right to tell parents how to raise their children.

The school nurse in The Girl Who Lived on the Ferris Wheel also makes an assumption which was not discussed in the literature review, but seems to be a possible misconception that people might hold. After years of not telling anyone about the abuse she suffers, Til finally attempts to talk to the nurse about the beatings from her mother. Just as she is about to reveal the truth, the nurse states, "We know that your parents are divorced. And we know that your father comes to see you on Saturday--that he takes you to ride the ferris wheel. Clotilde, Clotilde, is your father beating you?" Til, who worships her father, leaves the room screaming,

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122 Roberts, p. 149.
123 Adler, p. 120.
124 Moeri, p. 74.
feeling completely hopeless knowing she lost any ground she had made. The nurse held the misconception that if Til were being abused, that abuse must be at the hands of her father.

Although a majority, 55 percent, of the novels contained a character holding a misconception about child abuse, they were not extensive. The misconceptions did not appear, in the end, to get in the way of the child's receiving help to leave the abusive environment.

All eleven characters received an offer of help to remove them from their abusive home situations. Since Hypothesis 4b states that the majority of novels will contain an element of hope for the characters who are victims of child abuse, it was accepted.

In two novels, the child abuse victims were actually receiving therapy by trained professionals through continuing sessions. The researcher notes that these novels, *Abby, My Love* and *The Boy in the Off-White Hat* were very recent publications having copyright dates of 1985 and 1984, respectively. In *Abby, My Love* the entire family undergoes therapy, and Abby learns much, including that she is not alone in suffering from sexual abuse. She also declares, "But you know what I've learned that is most important of all? This body belongs to me. Not ever, no matter what, to anyone else. It's mine." 125

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125 Irwin, p. 141.
Shane, also a victim of sexual abuse in *The Boy in the Off-White Hat*, receives help from trained professionals. As an officer explains to Shane's mother:

There are thousands of people in this country who suffer from multiple personality, such as you saw in Shane when he became John. Usually the condition is caused by a severe trauma in childhood, such as parental abuse or sexual abuse. With Shane, we're lucky. We caught it in the beginning and we know the cause. With understanding and time and therapy, he should come out of it completely.126

In two other novels, *Don't Hurt Laurie!* and *Things Are Seldom What They Seem*, the authors specifically stated that the abusers will be undergoing therapy while their victims will receive help and support from friends or other family members. As Jack explains to his stepdaughter in *Don't Hurt Laurie!*, "Your mother needs a lot of help now to learn how to handle her problems without taking them out on you. Doctors say she can be helped."127

Although the authors did not always clarify the destinies of the abusers, those of the abused children were. Hunt in *The Lottery Rose* does not reveal the fate of Georgie's abuser and his mother, but does spend a large portion of the book showing Georgie readjusting to his new life at a boy's home. Like Georgie, Ethel in *Just an Overnight Guest* also lives with her new guardians during much of the novel.

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126 Hall, p. 86.
127 Roberts, p. 163.
Other characters are not seen in their new environments, but all of the child abuse victims express or portray great feelings of relief that their ordeals have ended. Remaining silent about the abuse they have suffered is extremely difficult for the victims. Maggie shares her relief in *Things Are Seldom What They Seem* by stating how good it feels to "have the whole miserable secret out in the open and dealt with properly." Finally, after nine years of physical and emotional abuse and neglect, William in *Good Night, Mr. Tom* can say to himself for the first time that he "was warm and happy... It was good to be alive."  

Fifty-five percent of the characters who were victims of child abuse in the novels came from homes which were determined to be in the lower class. This majority, along with another 45 percent, or five characters, coming from middle-class homes, exempts the upper class from occurrences of child abuse. Because the majority of abused children were from the lower class and none were from the upper class, Hypothesis 4c, stating that there would be no predominant pattern in the socioeconomic class of abusive families, was rejected.  

The novels did appear to demonstrate that neglect seems to be more directly related to economic factors than the other

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129 Magorian, p. 307.
types of abuse. Table 4 revealed that five novels contained occurrences of neglect. Four of these five novels focused on children from the lower class, and all four of the households were headed by a single parent, the biological mother. The authors are correctly showing that the maltreatment of children, especially neglect, often results from stress or the effect of financial problems.

All of the victims of child abuse coming from middle class families were from two-parent homes, although not always two biological parents. Only one incidence of neglect came from the middle class. In *Fly Free* Shari does experience neglect; however, her mother neglects to provide her with love and support, not food, clothing, or proper shelter.

The other types of abuse were found in both of the social classes. For example, Abby, a victim of sexual abuse, came from a family of the upper middle class. Maggie, in *Things are Seldom What They Seem*, was also sexually abused; and her parents were members of the middle class. Finally, the lower class was represented as having victims of sexual abuse as was Shane from *The Boy in the Off-White Hat*.

**Hypothesis 5**: The majority of characters who are child abusers will exhibit one or more of the following characteristics: the inability to trust others, being victims of child abuse themselves, unrealistic expectations of a child, unwillingness to allow a child relationships with his/her peers, low self-image, or the inability to develop good social relationships.
According to the data in Table 10, nine of the eleven child abusers in the novels, or 82 percent, exhibited at least one of the six characteristics listed in the hypothesis.

### Table 10

**Characteristics of the Abusers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Abusive Character</th>
<th>% of novels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Morris</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appabelle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlotte</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Carraway</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gertrude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs. Beech</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miz Mary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire's mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to trust others</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being victim of abuse</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrealistic expectations of child</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwilling to allow child relationships with peers</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-image</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to develop good social relationships</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to identify</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because the percent represented more than a majority, Hypothesis 5 was accepted.

Three of the child abusers in the novels were not extensively portrayed as characters, making it difficult to analyze their behaviors and personalities. In each case, the
abuser was not living in the victim's home, so their appearances in the novels were limited. In Things Are Seldom What They Seem, Craig Carraway is only referred to by others and really not developed as a character. Therefore, the researcher was unable to identify his characteristics. Steve in The Lottery Rose, and Burge, in The Boy in the Off-White Hat, are both boyfriends of the victims' mothers and again not described in significant detail.

The single most dominant characteristic of the abusive characters, as shown in Table 11, was their unrealistic expectations of children. Twelve instances of this occurred in the novels. William, for example, in Good Night, Mr. Tom, suffered abuse from his mother and teasings from other children because of his mother's high expectations. William recalls:

. . . if he got any dirt on his clothes he'd get a beating. His classmates had called him a sissie because he had never dared to dirty himself by climbing a wall or joining in any of their rough-and-tumble games. And, in addition, his body was often too bruised and painful for him to play, apart from the fact he didn't know how to.130

Gertrude, in The Girl Who Lived on the Ferris Wheel, also expected her daughter to be very tidy, especially in the house. No matter how hard Gertrude worked "there were signs of Til everywhere--water splashes in the sink, a half-closed

130 Ibid., p. 68.
door, a cracker crumb beside a cupboard. Lately she had taken to washing the sheets on Til's bed every day so it would look as if no one ever slept there."^{131}

The abusers in the novels were also often unwilling to allow a child to have any relationships with others their own age. Eleven incidents were evident. Laurie states in *Don't Hurt Laurie!* that whenever she became friendly enough with

^{131}Moeri, pp. 41-42.
anyone to be invited to their home, her mother found a way to end the friendship. Eventually, Laurie just stops attempting to make friends. In Fly Free, Charlotte does not want Shari to spend any time with girls her own age because she believes they were all too wild and would get Shari involved with boys and possibly pregnant. And, as a final example, Gertrude forbade Til to have any friends over: "All that dirt, her mother complained, all that mess and extra work." Almost always, the abused children would have benefited from having a friendship with someone their own age and from feeling they were truly liked by another person.

In five of the eleven novels, the abusers had been victims of child abuse themselves. Although this occurs as a characteristic in only 45 percent of the abusers, far below the 85 percent figure cited by O'Brien in the literature review, it should be remembered that three of the abusers were not portrayed extensively by the authors; therefore, the existence of abuse in their own childhoods was not dealt with at all. Of the eight abusers whose personalities were fully developed, 5 did experience abuse in their youth, accounting for 63 percent, a statistic closer to O'Brien's.

In Cages of Glass, Flowers of Time Claire's mother is still enduring abuse from own mother. Besides showing incidents of abuse to Claire, the author narrates several

\[132\text{Roberts, p. 24.}\]
\[133\text{Moeri, p. 55.}\]
episodes in which Claire's mother is beaten by her own mother. Upon one occasion, it is Claire who rescues her mother from a beating. Jack Dow from *Maddy's Song* experienced both verbal abuse and neglect by his own parents; and Gertrude in *The Girl Who Lived on the Ferris Wheel* grew up unloved, feeling like "an ugly, awkward encumbrance."\(^{134}\)

Annabelle's own abused childhood accounted somewhat for her maltreatment of Laurie in *Don't Hurt Laurie!* As her stepfather explains to Laurie, Annabelle's "own mother mistreated her very badly. She told the doctor some really terrible things that happened to her as a child, things she's never told anyone before."\(^{135}\)

Some of the characteristics falling into the 'Other' category were shared by more than one abuser. As discussed in Hypothesis 1d, three abusers were heavy drinkers. Three of the four male abusers were very respectable, well-liked citizens. Jack Dow in *Maddy's Song* was a church deacon and considered a good, strong father. Dr. Morris in *Abby, My Love* was also a prominent member of his community.

A few behaviors were exhibited by just one of the abusers, yet matched those mentioned as characteristic of actual child abusers. Quite realistically, Laurie's family is picture as moving frequently in *Don't Hurt Laurie!":

\(^{134}\)Ibid., p. 40.

\(^{135}\)Roberts, p. 163.
Partly it was because the girl at the hospital had recognized Laurie this time . . . Annabelle wouldn't dare take her back there again, not ever, for fear someone would investigate and see why an eleven-year-old girl should hurt herself so often. 136

The Boy in the Off-White Hat speaks of the need for proper counseling for the child abuser, so the cycle of abuse does not continue. After Burge is finally discovered sexually abusing Shane, the reader learns that Burge had been jailed four previous times for child molesting. 137

Overall, the characteristics exhibited by the child abusers in the novels showed much similarity to those determined as common to genuine child abusers. The authors of young adult books dealing with child abuse seem to be aware of the type of person who is abusive toward children.

Hypothesis 6: In the majority of two-parent families, one parent will be the active abuser and the other parent will be a passive observer.

Table 12 reveals that only four of the novels analyzed followed the two-parent family pattern in which at least one of the two parents was the abuser. Of the novels that applied to this hypothesis, 60 percent did demonstrate the pattern of one abusive parent and one parent acting as a passive observer of the abuse. Based on this, Hypothesis 6 was accepted.

136 Ibid., p. 23.
137 Hall, p. 80.
One victim of child abuse came from a two-parent family; however, neither of the parents was responsible for the abuse. Maggie, in *Things Are Seldom What They Seem*, was sexually molested by her drama coach, so analyzing her family pattern was not applicable.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both abusers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 abusive, 1 passive observer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 abusive, 1 unaware of abuse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Abby, My Love, Fly Free, and Maddy's Song* all followed the pattern of one abusive and one passively observing parent. In *Maddy's Song*, where the prevalent abuse is physical, not only is the mother a passive observer to the abuse Maddy suffers, but is a victim of her husband's beatings also. She often received the more severe of the abuse and does not have the courage to speak against her husband; therefore, the abuse has continued.

Although, Zeke, Shari's stepfather in *Fly Free*, is a trucker and often away from home, he is still aware of the emotional abuse Shari experienced by her mother. He had much sympathy for his wife though and tells Shari, "Don't take what
your mother says too hard. She don't mean half what she says. It's her nerves, that's all." 138 Zeke overlooks the abuse Shari undergoes partially because he is gone so often and knows his wife is left with a lot of responsibility at home.

Abby's mother in *Abby, My Love* did spend part of the novel unaware of the incest her daughter was suffering from. However, when Abby finally informed Mrs. Morris of the abuse, her mother does nothing about it, becoming a passive observer. Mrs. Morris instead warns Abby not to tell anyone about the incest, for it would ruin her father's dental practice and break up their family. 139 Her concern for what others will say and for her family's reputation were more important to Mrs. Morris than her daughter's well-being.

In *Don't Hurt Laurie!*, a two-parent family pattern was described, but the stepfather in the novel was not aware of what his wife was doing to his stepdaughter. Finally, when told of the abuse, he is apologetic, "I don't know how she could be so sick and I didn't notice anything. But I suppose it was because I was gone so much, and she was on her good behavior when I was home." 140

The authors of the novels focusing on child abuse are portraying quite realistically the situation in two-parent families. More often than not the non-abusive parent, though aware of her child's abuse, remains passive for one reason or

138 Adler, pp. 43-44.
139 Irwin, p. 122.
140 Roberts, p. 165.
another. In these families, the abused child then must receive help from outside the immediate family.
The intent of this content analysis was to determine how characters who are victims of child abuse and characters who are child abusers are portrayed in young adult novels. The research also included determining how realistic the situations involving child abuse are described in the novels. From the data gathered, the following results about the young adult novels focusing on child abuse used in this study were found by the researcher:

1. The majority of characters who are victims of child abuse are female, from a home in which only one of the biological parents resides, experience more than one type of abuse, and are from lower class families.

2. Most of the characters do not suffer from parental neglect.

3. The characters who are victims of child abuse most often exhibit passivity; the inability to express their feelings and trust others, especially adults; and have a low self-image.

4. Most incidents of physical abuse are prompted by the child's behavior or actions.

5. The novels more often than not contain a character who holds a misconception about child abuse.

6. All of the characters who experienced abuse are helped out of the abusive environment.
7. Most of the child abusers have unrealistic expectations of children and do not allow them to have relationships with their peers.

8. If the victim of child abuse comes from a home with two parents, most often one parent is abusive and the other is a passive observer to the abuse.

From the results found, the authors of the young adult novels about child abuse appear to be portraying the characters and situations quite realistically. The hypotheses were based on what should occur if child abuse were being described realistically in the novels, and only two of the hypotheses were rejected.

One of the strongest points of the novels analyzed was in the portrayals of the abused children and the abusers. Although child abusers and their victims display a variety of behaviors and traits, some common ones are shared. This is precisely what was pictured in the novels; for example, no matter what age the character was or what his/her personality was like, that individual would on occasion be shy and passive, untrusting, or feel poorly about him/herself. The type of abuse most experienced or inflicted or the home environments may have been very different, but the victims of abuse and their abusers shared specific characteristics.

The scenes in the novels depicting physical abuse were very descriptive and graphic; the authors appear to have no hesitancy in describing brutal physical actions by the abusers. This was directly in contrast to the scenes
involving sexual abuse, which were virtually only implied in the novels and left up to the reader's imagination. This may speak of a concern by the authors to make young adults aware of sexual abuse's existence; but not to become so explicit that parents, for example, would object to their child's reading about it. The three novels dealing with sexual abuse have copyright dates of 1983, 1984, and 1985, showing that only recently does it seem to have become an appropriate topic for a young adult novel.

Although data were recorded for only the abusive actions that occurred during the time covered in the novels, almost all of the books made reference to previous instances of abuse. This demonstrated well that the abused children had been suffering a lifetime of cruelty; the abuse was not an experience that began and ended with the pages of the novel. Many of the children were described physically as having scars or welts as proof of earlier abuse. The references to previous abuse provided a good portrayal by the authors to show how often and how long child abuse can go unnoticed and uncorrected.

The fact that the novels demonstrated child abuse as occurring most often in families from the lower class could be due to several factors. First, researchers themselves disagree on whether child abuse is class-related, although most agree neglect is. Only recently is it being made clearer to society that abuse can occur in any home. Secondly, the lower class parents also were often single mothers receiving
no financial support from the victims' fathers. This type of situation does lend itself to stress, which definitely correlates with child abuse. Unfortunately, the upper class was not represented in any of the novels analyzed, creating a gap in the distribution of child abuse cases. This absence could create a misconception in a young adult's mind that child abuse is nonexistent in the upper class. Hopefully, the absence will soon be corrected.

If Richard Peck, as discussed in the literature review, is correct in his assumption that young adults want hope from their novels, then the authors of books about child abuse are fulfilling that desire. Although estimates vary, at least two to fifteen children die daily in the United States from physical abuse; and many more are left handicapped in some way. None of the young characters in the novels die as a result of their abuse; quite the contrary, all receive help and are rescued from the abusive environment. Though this may not reflect what realistically happens, the novels' conclusions do provide hope for the reader. Perhaps hopeful endings are more important, especially for the young adult reading the novel who finds himself in a situation similar to the abused character's in the book.

Although a majority of books did contain at least one character who held a misconception about child abuse, this was not extensive. All the characters revealed their misconception only once in the novel, which may possibly be a conscious effort on the part of the young adult novelists to
avoid filling their books with faulty ideas concerning child abuse in order for a realistic portrayal to emerge.

A majority, 55 percent, of the books' abusers were female. The researcher found no data to support that females are more abusive to children than males. In only two of the five novels which contained an abusive male was that abuser the victim's father. This seems to be an underestimation of the number of fathers who are abusive to their children. Also, none of the analyzed novels focused on a child who was abused by a foster parent or stepparent, which ignores the abuse that results from that group of perpetrators. Stepparents and foster parents abuse their children in reality, and authors should address that in young adult novels.

Much literature is currently being published on the topic of child abuse; only recently has it finally been brought out into the open and discussed. Fortunately, it is no longer considered a taboo subject for a young adult novel; even sexual abuse has at last broken that barrier. Certainly, as more is learned about the various types of abuse and their effects, similar content analyses could be done using researchers' latest findings as the elements to be examined in young adult novels.

Additional studies of novels dealing with child abuse would be valuable to determine if the results from this content analysis were valid. These additional studies could involve novels about child abuse that were not used in this
analysis, or books that are certain to be published in the future since this is a popular concern currently.

Other possibilities exist for further studies about the portrayal of child abuse in young adult novels. The inventory or checklist utilized in this study could be used to analyze the same novels or a different sampling by recommended age or grade level. The novels could be categorized according to the upper, middle, or lower age levels within the young adult twelve to eighteen age range for which they were intended. A researcher could then determine, for example, if those for the lower age range focused more on a particular type of abuse than those for the upper age range. A researcher could determine if the intended audience affected the authors' portrayals of child abuse victims, abusers, and situations.

The novels might also be categorized by age of the protagonist. This would be particularly valuable in studying the characteristics of the abused children. One could determine, for example, if younger victims of child abuse react with passivity or compliance more than older victims who may react more aggressively. Some research concerning the behavior of abused adolescents has been categorized this way, and including age as an element in the checklist or categorization of the novels by the protagonist's age could result in interesting data.

Another method of obtaining the sample of novels to be used for this type of study could also be developed. The researcher used novels about child abuse that are available to
be read by young adults; however, it is not known if young people are reading them. In order to obtain a sample of books on child abuse that are currently being read by young adults, one could secure titles from media specialists who work with students or from the students themselves.

As more research about child abuse provides a growing wealth of information, a future content analysis could study various other elements, thus supplying a broader overview of the young adult fiction centering on this theme. A further study might analyze the relationship of the abused to his/her siblings. For example, Abby in **Abby, My Love** remains silent for years about her abuse for a variety of reasons; however, part of this silence is due to her desire to protect her younger sister from being sexually abused also. Analyzing how extensive one's desire is to protect siblings from abuse could be an element for a future study.

Some of the abused characters in the novels were at times on the brink of a beating or another form of abusive action, but managed to avoid it. A future content analysis could include tabulating the number of times a victim just missed being physically abused and by what method that character escaped the cruelty. Many of the abused characters had learned what certain look on their parent's face preceded the abuse and forewarned them of what was about to unfold, and they were frequently quite ingenious in preventing further incidents of abuse toward themselves.
Just as this analysis determined whose action, the abuser's or the victim's, prompted the incidents of physical abuse, a future study could examine what and who incites the instances of verbal abuse. Since the acts of sexual abuse were not specifically described and the neglectful actions were often continuous, it would be difficult to analyze what prompted the occurrences of these types of abuse. The verbal abuse was usually very evident, however, and could be studied in terms of why it occurred.

The checklist used in this content analysis worked well for the majority of the novels analyzed. Since most of the abusers and the abused exhibited more than one of the characteristics listed on the inventory, the researcher recommends that a future content analysis, as this one did, determine which of the characteristics were most dominant by tabulating the number of times each behavior was displayed. This provides a truer picture of the characters. Another recommendation is that all of the characteristics be easily distinguishable from each other; for example, the researcher found two of the abused's behaviors, the inability to trust others and the inability to express their feelings, quite similar. The similarity made it necessary to make a subjective decision as to which characteristic was being exhibited.
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APPENDICES
Appendix A

Titles Analyzed and Checklists


Novel: Fly Free

Victim(s) of abuse: Shari

1. Sex:
   Male: ___ Female: X

2. Family pattern:
   Both biological parents at home: ___
   One biological parent at home: X
   Neither biological parent at home: ___

3. Type(s) of abuse:
   Physical: 1 Sexual: ___ Emotional: ___ Neglect: 3

4. Characteristics of the abused:
   Passivity: 4 Aggression: ___
   Inability to trust others: 1 (Ex: adults)
   Low self-image: ___
   Inability to express feelings: ___
   Guilt: ___ Other: 2 (Alone)
   Unable to identify: ___

5. Event prompting physical abuse:
   Child's behavior/action: ___
   Abuser's behavior/action: ___
   Unable to identify: ___
   Not applicable: ___

6. Misconceptions/myths:
   Family is financially poor: ___
   Abuser is abnormal or psychotic: ___
   Children are property of parents: ___
   Child abuse is rare: ___
   One naturally knows how to be a parent: ___
   Other: ___ None: ___

7. Hope for abused victim(s):
   Offer of help: X No offer of help: ___

8. Social class:
   Upper: ___ Middle: X Lower: ___

9. Characteristics of the abuser:
   Inability to trust others: ___
   Being victim of abuse him/herself: ___
   Unrealistic expectations of child: 2
   Unwilling to allow child peer relat.: ___
   Low self-image: ___
   Inability to develop social relat.: ___
   Other: 3 (Concerned w/own life, pessimistic)
   Unable to identify: ___

10. Two parent patterns:
   Both abusers: ___
   One parent abusive, one passive observer: X
   One parent abusive, one unaware of abuse: ___
   Other: ___ Not applicable: ___

NOTES:
Victim denies being abused to protect brothers, father, and herself from shame. References to past abuse. Good examples of verbal abuse.
**Novel:** Things Are Seldom What They Seem

**Author:** Sandy Asher

**Abuser(s):** Mr. Carroway (drama teacher of Maggie)

---

1. **Sex:**
   - Male: ___ Female: **X**

2. **Family pattern:**
   - Both biological parents at home: **X**
   - One biological parent at home: ___
   - Neither biological parent at home: ___

3. **Type(s) of abuse:**
   - Physical: ___ Sexual: **X**
   - Emotional: **X** Neglect: ___

4. **Characteristics of the abused:**
   - Passivity: **2** Aggression: ___
   - Inability to trust others: **2**
   - Low self-image: **2**
   - Inability to express feelings: **2**
   - Guilt: **2** Other: **1** (Social prob.)
   - Unable to identify: ___

5. **Event prompting physical abuse:**
   - Child's behavior/action:
   - Abuser's behavior/action:
   - Unable to identify: ___
   - Not applicable: **X**

---

**NOTES:**
- Abuser receives professional therapy and loses job at school.

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6. **Misconceptions/myths:**
   - Family is financially poor: ___
   - Abuser is abnormal or psychotic: **1**
   - Children are property of parents: ___
   - Child abuse is rare: ___
   - One naturally knows how to be a parent: ___
   - Other: ___ None: ___

7. **Hope for abused victim(s):**
   - Offer of help: **X** No offer of help: ___

8. **Social class:**
   - Upper: ___ Middle: **X** Lower: ___

9. **Characteristics of the abuser:**
   - Inability to trust others:
   - Being victim of abuse him/herself:
   - Unrealistic expectations of child:
   - Unwilling to allow child peer relat.:
   - Low self-image:
   - Inability to develop social relat.:
   - Other: ___
   - Unable to identify: **X**

10. **Two parent patterns:**
    - Both abusers: ___
    - One parent abusive, one passive observer: ___
    - One parent abusive, one unaware of abuse: ___
    - Other: ___ Not applicable: **X**
      (Abuser is not a parent)
Novel: Cages of Glass, Flowers of Time

Author: Charlotte Culin

Victim(s) of abuse: Claire

Abuser(s): Claire's mother

1. Sex:
   Male: _____ Female: X

2. Family pattern:
   Both biological parents at home: _____
   One biological parent at home: X
   Neither biological parent at home: _____

3. Type(s) of abuse:
   Physical: 2  Sexual: 2
   Emotional: 4  Neglect: 2

4. Characteristics of the abused:
   Passivity: _____ Aggression: _____
   Inability to trust others: 3
   Low self-image: 2
   Inability to express feelings: 1
   Guilt: 2 Other: 2 (Ashamed of mother)
   Unable to identify: _____

5. Event prompting physical abuse:
   Child's behavior/action: 1
   Abuser's behavior/action: 1
   Unable to identify: _____
   Not applicable: _____

6. Misconceptions/myths:
   Family is financially poor: _____
   Abuser is abnormal or psychotic: _____
   Children are property of parents: _____
   Child abuse is rare: _____
   One naturally knows how to be a parent: _____
   Other: 1 None: 1

7. Hope for abused victim(s):
   Offer of help: X  No offer of help: _____

8. Social class:
   Upper: 1  Middle: 1  Lower: X

9. Characteristics of the abuser:
   Inability to trust others:
   Being victim of abuse him/herself: 1
   Unrealistic expectations of child: 2
   Unwilling to allow child peer relat.: 1
   Low self-image: 2
   Inability to develop social relat.: 1
   Other: 4 (Heavy drinker)
   Unable to identify: _____

10. Two parent patterns:
    Both abusers: _____
    One parent abusive, one passive observer: _____
    One parent abusive, one unaware of abuse: _____
    Other: 1 Not applicable: X

NOTES:
Victim lies for the abuser; abuser is abused by her own mother several times during the novel.
Novel: **Maddy's Song**

**Victim(s) of abuse:** Maddy

**Author:** Margaret Dickson

**Abuser(s):** Jack (father)

1. **Sex:**
   - Male: __
   - Female: X

2. **Family pattern:**
   - Both biological parents at home: X
   - One biological parent at home: ___
   - Neither biological parent at home: ___

3. **Type(s) of abuse:**
   - Physical: 6
   - Emotional: 1
   - Sexual: ___
   - Neglect: ___

4. **Characteristics of the abused:**
   - Passivity: 1
   - Aggression: 1
   - Inability to trust others: 2
   - Low self-image: ___
   - Inability to express feelings: 3
   - Guilt: 2
   - Other: 2 (Fear, blocks abuse)
   - Unable to identify: ___ from mind

5. **Event prompting physical abuse:**
   - Child's behavior/action: 6
   - Abuser's behavior/action:  ___
   - Unable to identify: ___
   - Not applicable: ___

**Notes:**
Mother observes victim's abuse and suffers abuse herself; she is disabled. Abuser MUST be in control of his family.

6. **Misconceptions/myths:**
   - Family is financially poor: ___
   - Abuser is abnormal or psychotic: ___
   - Children are property of parents: ___
   - Child abuse is rare: ___
   - One naturally knows how to be a parent: ___
   - Other: ___ None: X

7. **Hope for abused victim(s):**
   - Offer of help: X
   - No offer of help: ___

8. **Social class:**
   - Upper: ___
   - Middle: X
   - Lower: ___

9. **Characteristics of the abuser:**
   - Inability to trust others: 2
   - Being victim of abuse him/herself: 1
   - Unrealistic expectations of child: 1
   - Unwilling to allow child peer relat.: ___
   - Low self-image: ___
   - Inability to develop social relat.: 1
   - Other: 6 (Abusive to wife, respectable, church-going)
   - Unable to identify: ___

10. **Two parent patterns:**
    - Both abusers: ___
    - One parent abusive, one passive observer: X
    - One parent abusive, one unaware of abuse: ___
    - Other: ___ Not applicable: ___
Novel: *The Boy in the Off-White Hat*

Author: Lynn Hall

Abuser(s): Burg (boyfriend of victim's mother)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victim(s) of abuse:</th>
<th>Shane</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male: X</td>
<td>Female:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family pattern:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both biological parents at home:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One biological parent at home:</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither biological parent at home:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type(s) of abuse:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical:</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional:</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual:</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of the abused:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passivity:</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to trust others:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-image:</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to express feelings:</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt:</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: 3 (Fear, new ident.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to identify:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event prompting physical abuse:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child's behavior/action:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuser's behavior/action:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to identify:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable:</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misconceptions/myths:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family is financially poor:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuser is abnormal or psychotic:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Children are property of parents:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Child abuse is rare:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>One naturally knows how to be a parent:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None:</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope for abused victim(s):</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer of help:</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No offer of help:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social class:</td>
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<td>Upper:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lower:</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics of the abuser:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to trust others:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being victim of abuse him/herself:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrealistic expectations of child:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwilling to allow child peer relat.:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-image:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to develop social relat.:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: 2 (Former child molester, deceptive)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to identify:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two parent patterns:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both abusers:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One parent abusive, one passive observer:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One parent abusive, one unaware of abuse:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable:</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTES:
Victim takes on a new identity; receives professional therapy and counseling.
**Novel:** The Lottery Rose

**Author:** Irene Hunt

**Victim(s) of abuse:** Georgie

**Abuser(s):** Steve (boyfriend of victim's mother)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Sex:</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male: X</td>
<td>Female:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Family pattern:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both biological parents at home:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One biological parent at home: X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither biological parent at home:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. Type(s) of abuse:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical: X</td>
<td>Sexual:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional:</td>
<td>Neglect:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Characteristics of the abused:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passivity: 3</td>
<td>Aggression:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to trust others: 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-image: 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to express feelings:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guilt:</td>
<td>Other: 5 (Fear, lies for)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to identify: abuser:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Event prompting physical abuse:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child's behavior/action: 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuser's behavior/action:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to identify:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**NOTES:**
- Many references to past abuse; victim's mother is a heavy drinker

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Misconceptions/myths:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family is financially poor:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abuser is abnormal or psychotic:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children are property of parents:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child abuse is rare:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One naturally knows how to be a parent:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>None: X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Hope for abused victim(s):</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offer of help: X</td>
<td>No offer of help:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8. Social class:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper:</td>
<td>Middle:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower: X</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9. Characteristics of the abuser:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inability to trust others:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being victim of abuse him/herself:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrealistic expectations of child: 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unwilling to allow child peer relat.:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-image:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to develop social relat.:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: 1 (Quick-tempered)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to identify:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10. Two parent patterns:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both abusers:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One parent abusive, one passive observer:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One parent abusive, one unaware of abuse:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
<td>Not applicable: X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Novel: *Abby, My Love*

Victim(s) of abuse: Abby

1. Sex:
   Male: ___ Female: __

2. Family pattern:
   Both biological parents at home: __
   One biological parent at home: ___
   Neither biological parent at home: ___

3. Type(s) of abuse:
   Physical: _______ Sexual: ___
   Emotional: _______ Neglect: ______

4. Characteristics of the abused:
   Passivity: ___ Aggression: ___
   Inability to trust others: ___
   Low self-image: ___
   Inability to express feelings: ___
   Guilt: ___ Other: ___ (Fear, hopeless, Unable to identify: ___ too grown-up)

5. Event prompting physical abuse:
   Child's behavior/action: ___
   Abuser's behavior/action: ___
   Unable to identify: ___
   Not applicable: ___

NOTES:
Victim receives professional therapy and counseling, as well as her entire family.

Author: Hadley Irwin

Abuser(s): Dr. Morris (father)

6. Misconceptions/myths:
   Family is financially poor: ___
   Abuser is abnormal or psychotic: ___
   Children are property of parents: ___
   Child abuse is rare: ___
   One naturally knows how to be a parent: ___
   Other: ___ None: ___

7. Hope for abused victim(s):
   Offer of help: ___ No offer of help: ___

8. Social class:
   Upper: ___ Middle: ___ Lower: ___

9. Characteristics of the abuser:
   Inability to trust others: ___
   Being victim of abuse him/herself: ___
   Unrealistic expectations of child: ___
   Unwilling to allow child peer relat.: ___
   Low self-image: ___
   Inability to develop social relat.: ___
   Other: ___ (Possessive, respectable citizen)
   Unable to identify: ___

10. Two parent patterns:
    Both abusers: ___
    One parent abusive, one passive observer: ___
    One parent abusive, one unaware of abuse: ___
    Other: ___ Not applicable: ___
Novel: Good Night, Mr. Tom

Victim(s) of abuse: William

Author: Michelle Magorian

Abuser(s): Mrs. Beech (mother)

1. Sex:
   Male: X  Female:

2. Family pattern:
   Both biological parents at home:
   One biological parent at home: X
   Neither biological parent at home:

3. Type(s) of abuse:
   Physical: 2  Sexual: 
   Emotional: 3  Neglect: 2

4. Characteristics of the abused:
   Passivity: 3  Aggression:
   Inability to trust others: 1
   Low self-image: 2
   Inability to express feelings:
   Guilt: 2  Other: 2 (Fear)
   Unable to identify:

5. Event prompting physical abuse:
   Child's behavior/action: 1
   Abuser's behavior/action:
   Unable to identify: 1
   Not applicable:

6. Misconceptions/myths:
   Family is financially poor:
   Abuser is abnormal or psychotic: 1
   Children are property of parents:
   Child abuse is rare:
   One naturally knows how to be a parent:
   Other: 1  None:

7. Hope for abused victim(s):
   Physical:
   Sexual: No offer of help:
   Emotional: Neglect:

8. Social class:
   Upper:  Middle:  Lower: X

9. Characteristics of the abuser:
   Inability to trust others: 1
   Being victim of abuse him/herself:
   Unrealistic expectations of child: 2
   Unwilling to allow child peer relat.:
   Low self-image:
   Inability to develop social relat.:
   Other: 1 (Suicidal)
   Unable to identify:

10. Two parent patterns:
    Both abusers:
    One parent abusive, one passive observer:
    One parent abusive, one unaware of abuse:
    Other:  Not applicable: X

NOTES:
Abuser won't allow any questions from the victim--
unrealistic expectations.
Novel: The Girl Who Lived on the Ferris Wheel

Victim(s) of abuse: Til

1. Sex:
   Male: ______ Female: X

2. Family pattern:
   Both biological parents at home: ______
   One biological parent at home: X
   Neither biological parent at home: ______

3. Type(s) of abuse:
   Physical: 4 ______ Sexual: ______
   Emotional: 4 ______ Neglect: ______

4. Characteristics of the abused:
   Passivity: ______ Aggression: ______
   Inability to trust others: 1 ______
   Low self-image: 1 ______
   Inability to express feelings: 2 ______
   Guilt: 2 ______ Other: 2 (Feels punishment is normal)
   Unable to identify: ______

5. Event prompting physical abuse:
   Child's behavior/action: 3 ______
   Abuser's behavior/action: 1 ______
   Unable to identify: ______
   Not applicable: ______

6. Misconceptions/myths:
   Family is financially poor:
   Abuser is abnormal or psychotic:
   Children are property of parents:
   Child abuse is rare:
   One naturally knows how to be a parent:
   Other: 1 (Abuser is None: Father)

7. Hope for abused victim(s):
   Offer of help: X No offer of help: ______

8. Social class:
   Upper: ______ Middle: ______ Lower: X

9. Characteristics of the abuser:
   Inability to trust others:
   Being victim of abuse him/herself: 1 ______
   Unrealistic expectations of child: 2 ______
   Unwilling to allow child peer relat.: 1 ______
   Low self-image: 2 ______
   Inability to develop social relat.: ______
   Other: 3 (Perfectionist, concerned w/outward appear.)
   Unable to identify: ______

10. Two parent patterns:
    Both abusers: ______
    One parent abusive, one passive observer: ______
    One parent abusive, one unaware of abuse: ______
    Other: ______ Not applicable: X ______

NOTES:
Many references to past abuse; good examples of unrealistic expectations by the abuser.
Novel: Don't Hurt Laurie!

Victim(s) of abuse: Laurie

1. Sex:
   Male: ______ Female: X

2. Family pattern:
   Both biological parents at home: ______
   One biological parent at home: X
   Neither biological parent at home: ______

3. Type(s) of abuse:
   Physical: 4 Sexual: X
   Emotional: 1 Neglect: ______

4. Characteristics of the abused:
   Passivity: 3 Aggression: 2
   Inability to trust others: 1
   Low self-image: ______
   Inability to express feelings: 1
   Guilt: 1 Other: 3 (Hopeless, alone)
   Unable to identify: ______

5. Event prompting physical abuse:
   Child's behavior/action: 3
   Abuser's behavior/action: ______
   Unable to identify: ______
   Not applicable: ______

6. Misconceptions/myths:
   Family is financially poor: ______
   Abuser is abnormal or psychotic: ______
   Children are property of parents: 1
   Child abuse is rare: ______
   One naturally knows how to be a parent: ______
   Other: ______ None: ______

7. Hope for abused victim(s):
   Offer of help: X No offer of help: ______

8. Social class:
   Upper: ______ Middle: X Lower: ______

9. Characteristics of the abuser:
   Inability to trust others: ______
   Being victim of abuse him/herself: 1
   Unrealistic expectations of child: ______
   Unwilling to allow child peer relat.: 4
   Low self-image: ______
   Inability to develop social relat.: ______
   Other: ______
   Unable to identify: ______
   Not applicable: ______

10. Two parent patterns:
    Both abusers: ______
    One parent abusive, one passive observer: ______
    One parent abusive, one unaware of abuse: X
    Other: ______ Not applicable: ______

Notes:
Abuser receives professional therapy.
Victim lies about how injuries were received.
**Novel:** Just an Overnight Guest

**Author:** Eleanora E. Tate

**Victim(s) of abuse:** Ethel

**Abuser(s):** Miz Mary (mother)

1. **Sex:**
   - Male:_____
   - Female: **X**

2. **Family pattern:**
   - Both biological parents at home:_____
   - One biological parent at home: **X**
   - Neither biological parent at home:_____

3. **Type(s) of abuse:**
   - Physical: 1
   - Sexual:_____
   - Emotional: 2
   - Neglect: 3

4. **Characteristics of the abused:**
   - Passivity:_____
   - Aggression: 7
   - Inability to trust others:_____
   - Low self-image:_____
   - Inability to express feelings:_____
   - Guilt:_____
   - Unable to identify:_____

5. **Event prompting physical abuse:**
   - Child's behavior/action:_____
   - Abuser's behavior/action: 1
   - Unable to identify:_____
   - Not applicable:_____

6. **Misconceptions/myths:**
   - Family is financially poor:_____
   - Abuser is abnormal or psychotic:_____
   - Children are property of parents:_____
   - Child abuse is rare:_____
   - One naturally knows how to be a parent:_____
   - Other:__________
   - None: **X**

7. **Hope for abused victim(s):**
   - Offer of help: **X**
   - No offer of help:_____

8. **Social class:**
   - Upper:_____
   - Middle:_____
   - Lower: **X**

9. **Characteristics of the abuser:**
   - Inability to trust others:_____
   - Being victim of abuse him/herself:_____
   - Unrealistic expectations of child: 1
   - Unwilling to allow child peer relat.:_____
   - Low self-image:_____
   - Inability to develop social relat.:_____
   - Other: 2 (heavy drinker)
   - Unable to identify:_____

10. **Two parent patterns:**
    - Both abusers:_____
    - One parent abusive, one passive observer:_____
    - One parent abusive, one unaware of abuse:_____
    - Other:__________
    - Not applicable: **X**

**NOTES:**
Appendix B

Bibliography of Review Sources


3. Elleman, Barbara. Rev. of Don't Hurt Laurie!, by Willo Davis Roberts, Booklist, 73 (15 April 1977), 1269.

4. Goldberger, Judith. Rev. of Just an Overnight Guest, by Eleanora Tate, Booklist, 77 (1 November 1980), 408.

5. Harris, Ken. Rev. of Good Night, Mr. Tom, by Michelle Magorian, SLJ School Library Journal, 28 (April 1982), 73.

6. Hearne, Betsy. Rev. of The Lottery Rose, by Irene Hunt, Booklist, 72 (1 May 1976), 1265.


8. Quinn, Mary Ellen. Rev. of Maddy's Song, by Margaret Dickson, Booklist, 81 (1 February 1985), 757.


Appendix C

Reviews of Titles Analyzed

Culin, Charlotte.
Cages of glass, flowers of time. 1979.

Child of a failed marriage of convenience, 14-year-old Claire Burden has been livingly reared in her early years by her father's wealthy mother, but after her grandmother's death, the court places her in the custody of her sometimes abusive, alcoholic mother. Claire's natural artistic ability, her only solace, which has been helped along by her weak artist-father, is seen as a threat by her mother, who absolutely forbids her to draw. The story is developed on two levels—one, Claire's first-person narrative relating exterior events and the second, in italics, Claire's inner thoughts and fears. Although the beginning is confusing because of hazy motivations, the reader quickly becomes caught up in Claire's life, her struggle to survive (luckily with the help of several caring friends), and the ugly family relationships resulting in child abuse and alienation that have repeated themselves from one generation to the next. A compelling, though unnecessarily complex junior novel with a very strong and real protagonist and an upbeat ending. Junior high and high school.

Roberts, Willo Davis.

Laurie's continual burns, bruises, broken bones, and knife cuts are not the result of her clumsiness, as her mother Annabelle claims, but of her mother's physical abuse. Discouraged from having friends, wary of her mother's temper, and constantly forced to change schools to resist prying questions, Laurie lives a lonely, fearful life. Afraid of not being believed and further incurring her mother's wrath, she has never dared tell anyone about her troubles. Now, with Annabelle's second marriage, things seem better for Laurie as she finds understanding in her eight-year-old stepbrother Tim, a friend in a boy next door, and even a potential confidante in her new teacher. Then Annabelle's temper erupts again, resulting in Laurie's being beaten unconscious with a poker. This time Tim defends her, suffering a bruise himself; they escape to his grandmother, where Laurie finally finds someone who believes her. The book ends on an upbeat note (Annabelle is hospitalized), with Laurie fearing her mother may never change but confident that help is nearby. Roberts, author of The View from the Cherry Tree (Booklist 72:167 S 15 75), handles this difficult subject more realistically than does Hunt in The Lottery Rose (Booklist 72:1265 My 1 76), gives more depth to her characters than does Byars in The Pinballs (Booklist 73:1010 Mr 1 77), but still offers a brighter ending than many a child is likely to find in suffering a similar situation. Gr. 5-7. BE.


Gr. 5-9—Hall's novel deals with the sensitive subject of a young boy who is sexually abused. Skeeter has been hired for the summer as a mother's helper to Maxine Bates, a single parent who works at two jobs. Shame, her charge, is a shy and lonely boy, who at first enjoys the attention that Burke Franklin, a man who is daung his mother, shows him. When he abruptly begins disliking Franklin, Skeeter is puzzled, but when he completely withdraws into another personality, she learns the truth. This is not a sensation al or exploitative book, but a realistic picture of a family and its vulnerability. Set in the Ozarks, Hall's book incorporates local vernacular and scenery into the story. While the abuse is implied rather than graphically described, the emotional impact and consequences have been stressed. Students interested in this topic may want to follow this book up with No Language But a Cry (Del. 1971) by Richard D'Ambruso or Good Night Mr. Tom (Harper, 1982) by Michelle Magorian, both of which are longer and more detailed.—Gayle W. Berge, Creswell High Sch. Lib., Ore.
Tate, Eleanora. _Lust an overnight guest._ 1980. Dial, $8.95 (0-8037-4225-8); lib. ed., $8.44 (0-8037-4223-1). Galley.

For nine-year-old Margie Carson things go from bad to worse when her mother takes in a neglected, half-white four-year-old named Ethel. Ethel is monstrous, not only to Margie but to everyone in their small town. And Ethel, whose white mother keeps calling from St. Louis to postpone her return, seems determined to become a fixture in the Carson household. Jealousy, hatred of the gossip in town, and fear of Ethel's permanent position create tensions nearly unbearable to Margie, who seems regarded by her older sister and mother as just the right person to keep watch over the child. Ethel, who is in fact a cousin, mellows considerably under Margie's mother's warm rule, but it is not until Margie's long-distance truck-driving father comes home that Margie finds sufficient inner resources to cope on a lasting basis. A lengthy book, but filled with solid, realistic detail and convincing manifestations of a family's strengths, trials, and caring. Gr. 4-6. JC.


Georgie's library book on flowers provides fantasy escape from an ugly life of beatings by his mother and her boy friend, taunts from classmates over his appearance, and "retarded/destructive" labels by school authorities. A stunning bit of luck—winning a rosebush at the local grocery store lottery—leads the boy from his last and worst beating to a new life in a Catholic boys' home and to the heart of a tragedy-struck family nearby, where Georgie eventually loves a mother who has lost both her sons. Despite a few too many plot coincidences, this is a deeply affecting, affirmative story in which Hunt manages to lift a battered-child case into a convincingly developed character. Gr. 6-9. YA


Gr 3-8—Eight-year-old William Beech is one of the London children evacuated during World War II and sent to live in the English countryside. He is placed in the care of Tom Oakley, a recluse but kindly widower who is initially unenthusiastic about this new responsibility. The boy's undernourished body, inadequate clothing, extensive bruises and almost paralyzing fearfulness are evidence of an abused childhood. Under the gentle, loving care of Mr. Tom, the boy flourishes, growing stronger, learning to trust others and gaining confidence in himself. He becomes friends with Zach, a flamboyant evacuee whose exuberance and enthusiasm at first overwhelm, then energize William. Mrs. Beech writes, claiming she is ill and demanding her son return home. He arrives to discover a new infant in the house and his mother's behavior more bizarre than ever. When Tom's letters to William are unanswered, the man is unable to suppress his anxiety and determines to see for himself if the boy is in need. His journey to London, locates the correct address and, when there is no response to his knocking, enlists the aid of a policeman in forcing entry. They discover William imprisoned in a tiny alcove cradling the dead baby in his arms. The sick and emaciated child is hospitalized where, despite Tom's protests, arrangements are made to send him to a residential therapeutic center. Realizing the potentially damaging effects of such a placement, the desperate man kidnaps William, returns home with him and begins the process of restoring the boy to health once again. Zach's death in a bombing raid is a further blow, but with Tom's patient care and the support of friends and neighbors, the youngster learns to adjust to this latest tragedy. When the authorities catch up with Tom, they realize he can provide the best home for his charge and permit the adoption that officially sanctions the loving relationship that has developed between the two. This contains some marvelous vignettes, but also some terribly overblown scenes. It is part irresistible traditional English juvenile adventure and part unstrained and unabashed melodrama.—Karen Harris, Department of Library Science, University of New Orleans.

Cruelty to children—Fiction 75-35005

Family problems—Fiction [CIP] 80-12970


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Gr 6-8—Debbie’s sister, Maggie, has been behaving haughty and aloof since she joined her high-school theatrical group. Debbie’s friend, Karen, also joins the club, and soon she begins acting differently, too. Eventually, Debbie elicits the truth from both Karen and Maggie: Mr. Carraway, the charismatic drama coach, has been making sexual advances to both. Asher manages to handle this touchy topic with delicacy, but without skirting the issue. The novel is tightly written, with good believable dialogue and interesting well-rounded characters. Debbie’s relationship with likable nonconformist Murray frequently offers some amusing moments which lighten the tension in the story. The author’s skillful narrative rescues the work from the traps of the mundane problem novel, and presents a realistic exploration of a probably not uncommon situation.—Marilyn Kaye, Division of Library and Information Science, St. John’s University, Jamaica, N.Y.


The Dows—Jack, a respected minister and church deacon; his wife, Vinnie; and their five children—live in the small town of Freedom, Maine. The family’s aura of normality hides their nightmarish life at home, where the children are at the mercy of a father who is not merely abusive but psychotic and a mother who is emotionally as well as physically crippled. But Maddy, the eldest child, has a gift for music that is discovered and developed by a professor who arrives in town to prepare the church choir for a competition. In a more nurturing environment, surrounded by kind people, Maddy finds an independence that her father sees as a threat. The novel’s climax is tragic but also brings hope and healing. This is a compelling story with several well-drawn characters and a convincing portrayal of Maddy’s gift for music. The descriptions of the Dows’ home life are harrowing, almost verging on gothic horror.

MEQ.


Gr 5-8—In this emotionally draining story, 13-year-old Shari keeps her hurt and resentment locked inside, her only way of defending herself from her unhappy, abusive mother. When she learns that her real father ran away before she was born, she is shattered, and the emotional strength she has built up begins to crumble. She seriously considers an offer from an adult friend and fellow bird-watching enthusiast to live with her, but her love for her stepfather and younger brother and her hope for a better future with her mother convince her to remain at home. Solid, realistic incidents remove the topic of physical and emotional abuse from the realm of the sensational and into the sadly commonplace. The characters’ actions and feelings further this believability. Shari wants to leave the hurt behind, but she can’t leave her family. Her mother is given another chance, but she is neither forgiven nor excused by Shari or the author.—Karen K. Radtke, Milwaukee Public Library
Macri, Louise.
The girl who lived on the Ferris wheel.
1979. 117p. Dutton, $7.95
(0-525-30659-5).

Til's mother, Gertrude, is deranged, though Til, her divorced father, and her
teachers (and perhaps young readers) don't at first grasp the full depth of the
woman's insanities. Til, effectively insulated
from other standards of family life, has no
yardstick by which to gauge the oddness
of her mother's mania for cleanliness and
her tirades and beatings in response to
something as innocuous as Til's setting
down a piece of toast on the living room
windowsill. Dimly at first, and then with
growing clarity, Til perceives the full
depth of her mother's hatred for her and
realizes her mother will eventually kill her.
In a tense final scene she saves herself by
prodding Gertrude into pulling out her
concealed butcher knife in front of the
police. The story is one of thoroughly
chilling suspense, effective because of
the realistic elements with which the psychological
and suspense elements turn generates
horror that makes the tale disturbing, perh-
haps profoundly so. Crucial scenes such as
Til's mother stalking her room at night or
Til's walking in to see knives laid out on
the dinner table leave powerful reverbera-
tions. Though Til manages to take control
and save herself—and, indeed, is remark-
ably perceptive throughout the novel—
the specter of a mother stalking her
daughter out of madness is undeniably un-
settling. There may be some question
whether younger, more impressionable
members of the book's audience will be
with the required distance for de-
aling with it as fiction. Gr. 3-8. OMW.

[148p.] Atheneum, $11.95 (0-689-50323-1).

Galley. CH

Chip knew Abby Morris was different from the
moment he met her—intelligent, imaginative,
and outgoing one moment, withdrawn the
next. Her father was a puzzle too, pleasant and
polite but very protective of Abby. It's only
much later, after Chip and Abby have become
trusting friends, stealing time together after
school over a period of years (her dad doesn't al-
low dates), that the explanation for Mr. Morris'
behavior and Abby's strange moods becomes
clear—Abby's father is a child abuser who has
been sexually victimizing his daughter for a
long time, and she can no longer cope alone. Us-
ing Chip as narrator, Irwin telescopes Chip's
long-running romance with Abby into a series
of insightful growing-up anecdotes that deliber-
ately foreshadow Abby's revelation and jux-
tapose Chip's honest, caring love for his mother
with Abby's disturbed yet outwardly unblem-
ished family life. Chip's obsession with change-
able Abby is hard to accept, but Irwin's por-
trayal of child abuse and its consequences set
within the boundaries of middle-class normal-
ity is handled with admirable restraint and sen-
sitivity. Gr. 8-12. SZ.

Child abuse—Fiction | Incest—Fiction (CIP)
14-24571
Abstract

The purpose of this content analysis was to determine how characters who are victims of child abuse and characters who are child abusers are portrayed in young adult novels. The research also included determining how realistic the situations involving child abuse are described in the novels.

Eleven novels, published in 1975 or later, were analyzed. All of the titles selected were listed either in a selective, retrospective bibliography or, for the most recent titles, positively reviewed in Booklist or SLJ School Library Journal. Selected novels focused on victims of child abuse who were major characters and spent at least part, if not all, of the book in the abusive environment.

Physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and neglect were all evident in the young adult novels, with acts of physical abuse being described most graphically by the authors. Overall, the picture drawn by these writers for young adults was quite realistic. Most victims of abuse realistically exhibited the inability to trust others and express their feelings and had a low self-image while most abusers held unrealistic expectations of children and would not allow them to have close relationships with their peers.

The novels analyzed, however, did not demonstrate that child abuse crosses all socioeconomic levels. All the victims of child abuse in the novels analyzed were from lower and middle class families, omitting the upper class from
involvement with child abuse. Since the majority of characters did not suffer from neglect, the novels also did not stress that it is the most prevalent type of abuse today.