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DISTINCTIVE PERSONALITY ATTRIBUTES OF
CHILD-ABUSING MOTHERS

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

BARRY MELNICK

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ABSTRACT

DISTINCTIVE PERSONALITY ATTRIBUTES OF CHILD-ABUSING MOTHERS

by Barry Melnick

Ten mothers suspected of severely beating their children, abusive mothers (AM's), and ten control mothers (CM's) matched for age, social class, and education were compared on selected psychological measures to identify potentially differentiating personality attributes. The particular psychological measures were chosen because they were best suited to test certain hypotheses offered in the literature concerning child abuse. The child-abusing mothers were obtained through The Wayne County Clinic for Child Study. All the mothers participating in the study were largely from the lowest socioeconomic level. Eighty per cent of the AM's and 100 per cent of the CM's were Negro.

The TAT was administered to measure six psychological needs, five areas of frustration, and also to obtain a general measure of pathogenicity based on both the mothers' capacity to administer to the needs of others and their perception of the environment's willingness to gratify their own needs. The Family Concept Inventory (FCI) and The Manifest Rejection Scale (MR) were used to obtain information concerning both their perception of the family situation and their attitudes toward children, respectively. Five

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California Test of Personality (CTP) subscales were also employed and included measures of self-reliance, self-esteem, sense of personal freedom, feelings of belonging, and withdrawing tendencies.

Six of the 19 measures statistically differentiated between the AM's and the CM's. These measures included three of the 12 TAT variables, one of the five CTP measures, the FCI and the MR indices. Analysis of the intercorrelational findings among the six variables which statistically differentiated between the two groups revealed that the FCI intercorrelated with more of the other measures than any other measuring instrument and accounted for the largest portion of the total variance. The TAT pathogenic index had the second largest number of significant intercorrelations and accounted for the next greatest portion of the total variance. The CTP Self-Esteem and TAT dependency frustration variables were the next most salient measures.

The high pathogenic scores of the AM's suggests that they have difficulty empathizing with or administering to their children's needs. Also, the high pathogenic index of the AMs indicates that they tend to perceive their own emotional needs as being frustrated by the environment. The AM's expressed greater frustration of their dependency needs in their TAT stories. This finding suggests that they have strong unmet dependency needs. It was speculated that the intensity of the AM's unmet dependency needs causes them to be narcissistic and consequently incapable of identifying

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with their children. Also, the AM's revealed low self-esteem on the CTP. The high intercorrelation between the CTP Self-Esteem subscale and the pathogenic index suggests that there is a relationship between self acceptance and the capacity to accept others. The FCI data revealed that the AM's feel that their present family situation is not sufficiently meeting their needs. The fact that the FCI accounted for the largest portion of the total variance reflects the importance of the present family situation in understanding child abuse.

An unexpected finding was that the AM's expressed less rejecting attitudes toward children on the MR than the CM's. Two possible explanations for this finding are that the AM's may have been defensive when responding to test questions for fear that they might be prosecuted or that they may have had rigid defenses against the expression of negative feelings.

The results did not confirm the following hypotheses concerning the dynamics of child abuse: The AM's are (a) chronically hostile and aggressive individuals (b) highly frustrated because of their feeling of being restricted by maternal responsibilities and (c) authoritative and domineering individuals who engage in a continuous power struggle with the child.

Because of the use of mainly lower class Negro Ss, the results of the study may have limited generalization.

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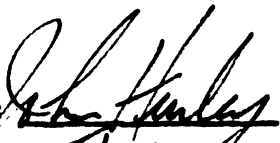

Therefore, the study should be repeated using a larger sample with a wider representation of social class.

MA Thesis Committee: Lucy C. Ferguson, John R. Hurley
(Chairman), and Arthur A. Seagull.

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DISTINCTIVE PERSONALITY ATTRIBUTES OF CHILD-ABUSING MOTHERS

By

Barry Melnick

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, there has been growing interest in the psychological and social factors involved in child abuse. The growing interest has encouraged increased investigation into the underlying psychological and social influences on the problem. Because the vast majority of these studies have employed neither quantifiable measures nor control groups, their results are somewhat questionable.

It has been frequently reported in the literature that the parents of abusive parents were neglecting, rejecting, or sadistically cruel (Komisaruk, 1966; Lazarus, 1966; Nurse, 1964; Steele, Pollock, & Davoren, 1966; Young, 1953). Komisaruk (1966) studied a predominantly lower socioeconomic class population through psychological tests and psychiatric interviews and reports that frequently there was an actual or psychological loss of a significant figure within the first five years of life. Also, at least one of the parents was often sadistic. (Nurse (1964), using social histories, compared the childhood experiences of the abusive parents with those of their spouses and discovered that the vast majority of abusive parents suffered from some form of emotional deprivation. Steele, et al., (1966), using psychiatric interviews, psychological testing, and home observation, made an intensive study of 50 families in

which child abuse occurred. He found that the parents of the abusive parent disregarded the needs of their children and that the abusive parent was forced to satisfy the needs of his own parents without being able to actually sufficiently satisfy them. DeFrancis (1963) hypothesized

"Parents who abuse their children are parents who react violently to their own unmet dependency needs (p.3)." In a study of 29 families through observation and interviews, it was discovered that the abusive parent still had intense longings for maternal nurturance (Marian & Gould, 1963).

Curtis (1963) suggested that insufficient love and aggression toward children were actually transferred from generation to generation. He felt that children who were treated with violence which couldn't always be anticipated learned to react with blind violence to all stress.

There has been considerable theoretical speculation and empirical research into the psychological factors underlying child abuse. A few investigators have emphasized the importance of ego insufficiency in understanding a parent's aggressive outbursts toward his children. Mental illness and mental retardation have been posited to help explain the parent's inadequate judgment and poor impulse control (Nathan, 1965). However, the more extensive psychiatric studies have failed to find a significant degree of psychosis or mental retardation (Komisaruk, 1966; Steele, et al., 1966).

Several studies have found the abusive parent to be extremely immature and characterized by impulsivity, narcissism, and strong dependency needs (DeFrancis, 1963; Kempe, Silverman, Steele, Droegemueller, & Silver, 1962; Komisaruk, 1966; Lazarus, 1966). The abusive parent was conceived as an emotionally unstable person with ungratified needs who found children a burden. The parent's narcissism prevented the establishment of any real attachment between parent and child. Thus, the abusive parent is thought to lack the capacity to tolerate the natural frustrations arising from child rearing.

The concept of role reversal has been employed to dynamically explain the act of child abuse (Marras & Gould, 1963; Steele, et al., 1966). Steele, et al., (1966) asserted that personality traits, such as immaturity, impulsivity, and dependency were too pervasive in the general population to adequately explain the cause and effect relationship of child abuse. It is felt that the abusive parent invests his child with the same reactions and attitudes which were once held by his own parents toward him during his childhood. The abusive parent was never able to please or satisfy his parents and felt continually criticized and persecuted by them. Furthermore, the abusive parent's own parents disregarded the needs of their children. In the abusive parent's present family situation, Steele, et al., (1966), using psychiatric interviews, psychological tests, and home observation on 50 families, found that the abusive parent expected the child to satisfy his unmet emotional needs in

order to make up for the deprivation he suffered as a child. The abusive parent expected the child to comply with his needs and looked to the child for approval to an exaggerated degree. When the child cried despite efforts to comfort him or was difficult to handle, the abusive parent misinterpreted this behavior as criticism, willfulness, or unresponsiveness which resembled his own parents' reactions toward him. This resemblance reawakened the hostile feelings he had had for his own parents. Thus, the concept of role reversal involves the ideas that the abusive parent has strong unmet dependency needs and that the act of battering the child is displacement of hostility.

It has also been posited that rather than being merely impulsive and immature, the abusive parent is actually sadistic. (Nurse, 1964; Young, 1953). From her study of 200 case histories and personally devised questionnaires, Young concluded:

It is not the impetuous blow of a harassed parent nor even the transitory brutality of an indifferent parent expressing with violence the frustrations of life. It is not too severe discipline . . . It is the perverse fascination with punishment as an entity in itself divorced from discipline (Young, 1953, p.44).

She also found that the aggressive parent was abusive toward all members of the family and tended to react aggressively to both intrafamilial and extrafamilial crises. Nurse (1964) confirmed Young's findings that abusive parents were brutal to all members of the family including the spouse. She reported that 13 of 20 abusive parents in her study behaved aggressively toward their spouses. She

claimed that the aggressive parent tyrannically ruled the home and used physical punishment as an outlet for hostile feelings rather than for discipline.

Instead of aggressiveness being a salient personality trait, Feinstein (1964) suggested that the abusive parent's family situation in the present awakened conflicts and resentments from his own childhood. During 80 hours of group therapy, he studied six women with thoughts of infanticide and concluded that the most prominent psychological factor underlying their infanticidal impulses was their strong resentment towards their parents and mostly toward their mothers. Thus, he conceived of child abuse as a displacement of resentment from their own childhood to their own children. This is somewhat similar to the concept of role reversal.,

Bryant (1965) contended that there was more than one personality type associated with child abuse. From his general observations, he inferred that there were really three personality types: the aggressive type, the rigid compulsive type who becomes frustrated by the child who does not fulfill their expectation, and the passively dependent type who competes with their children for attention.

The majority of research has focused on the interaction between social and psychological factors. Several studies have reported that severe marital difficulties usually accompany child abuse (Elmer, 1965; Young, 1953;

Zalba, 1966). Elmer (1965) performed one of the few controlled studies. Using 50 families in which child abuse occurred, she discovered that desertion, separation, and divorce were more common in the abusive families. Young (1953) indicated the fact that the home atmosphere was hostile and conflictual. In a study using therapy interviews to obtain information from mothers who had committed infanticide, the investigator learned that the act frequently followed the actual or psychological abandonment by husband or lover (Olive, 1965). After analyzing 80 case histories of child abuse, Delsordo (1963) concluded that more than half of the cases of abuse arose from the projection of parental conflicts on to the children.

Some investigators concluded that child abuse was a reaction to a multitude of social stresses (Elmer, 1965; Zalba, 1966). Elmer (1965) observed that besides having severe marital difficulties, these parents were exposed to the chronic stresses of insufficient income, menial jobs, and larger than average families. On the other hand, Delsordo (1963) suggested that the overflow of life frustration accounted for the abuse in less than 20% of his 80 cases. This evidence suggests that singly, this is not a major determinant of child abuse.

The rejection of the maternal role has also been considered an important area in the understanding of abuse. Elmer (1965) compared 50 abusive mothers with a control group. Using the PARI, he found that the abusive mothers

demonstrated significantly greater rejection of the maternal role. The abusive mothers were also more rejecting of children in general. In his group therapy with women who had infanticidal impulses, Feinstein (1964) discovered that these women married passive effeminate men with hopes of relinquishing the maternal obligations to them and of expecting these men to mother them. However, these implicit arrangements were not accepted by the husbands, and the women were forced into the maternal role. Similarly, Gladston (1964) was impressed by the abusive mother's masculinity and apparent distaste for rearing children.

Reinhart (1967) contended that abusive mothers actually did not differ from other mothers. He suggested that child rearing was fraught with frustrations. Child abuse occurred where there was a momentary lapse in the mother's capacity for tolerating stress. He commented that "Perhaps we should be amazed that more children do not suffer assault by parents who have come to their wit's end. (p.14)."

Blumberg (1964) attributed the mother's brutality with her child to the lack of opportunity for self-expression or distraction which results from restrictions of the maternal role. They vent their frustration toward the children and rationalize their aggressiveness by assigning physical punishment as part of their parental prerogative.

Another point of view conceives of child abuse as the product of a power struggle between parent and child.

Newson wrote "We find one important thing involved is self-esteem between parent and child . . . The mother decides she has got to show who's boss. Both she and the child are afraid of losing face and in the end brute force settles it (quoted in Blumberg, 1964, p.40)." Delsordo (1963) found that this type of situation was rare in his sample and was usually restricted to cases in which the child was at least seven years of age.

Several other factors have been examined in relation to child abuse. Zalba (1966), in his review of the literature, stated that none of the studies have found child abuse to be related to any particular socioeconomic, ethnic, racial, or religious group. Another frequently encountered finding reported in the literature was the abusive parent's social isolation (Elmer, 1965; Maffar & Gould, 1963; Nurse, 1964; Young, 1953, 1963; Zalba, 1966). Membership in outside organizations and recreational activities was virtually nonexistent. Because of their uneasiness with people, they were known to have no close friendships and little contact with relatives. The lack of emotional contact with people made it more difficult to adjust to the stresses of life.

Thus, there are various hypotheses for child abuse presented in the literature. Unfortunately, many of them were derived from poorly designed, uncontrolled studies. The purpose of the present investigation was to study the psychological needs and frustrations of abusive mothers,

their perception of family life, their general attitudes toward children, their sense of environmental restriction, their feelings of self-reliance, their feelings of belonging, and their capacity to nurture and administer to their child's needs.

METHOD

Ss consisted of 10 abusive mothers (AM's), those women who severely abused their children, and 10 control mothers (CM's). The latter were selected on the basis of their similarity to the AM's in regard to socioeconomic class, age, and education. The AM's were referred to Wayne County Clinic for Child Study by physicians who from medical evidence suspected abuse. Evidence of repeated abuse can be detected by physicians through the use of X-rays and by the observation of bodily injuries (Caffey, 1946; Elmer, 1963; Fisher, 1958; Kempe, et.al.,1962). Fractures at different stages of healing, subdural hematomas, soft tissue swellings, and skin bruising are some of the physical indicators of abuse. The diagnosis is strengthened when the type of injury is incongruent with the parent's description of the accident and when observations of the child reveal emotional unresponsiveness. Because of the careful screening of the AM's by the clinic's staff before they were referred for testing, the probability is high that the vast majority of them were guilty of child abuse. Nevertheless, at the time of testing, the guilt or innocence of the parent could not definitely be established. The sample of abusive parents was limited by the criteria that the mother, not

the father, committed the abuse and that the child abused was three years of age or less. These criteria may have led to the selection of a greater number of separated, divorced, and unmarried women than would have been found in the general population of AM's. Four of the AM's and two CM's were either not married or separated from their husbands at the time of testing.

The CM's were obtained through the cooperation of a neighborhood social service organization at the Brewster Housing Project in Detroit. The investigator was presented with a list of mothers who lived in the Brewster Housing Project. Those women who most nearly resembled the AM's in regard to age, education, and socioeconomic class were selected for the study.

The majority of both groups was comprised of lower socioeconomic class Negroes. There were eight Negroes among the AM's and ten among the CM's. The social class groupings were based on an adaption of the system of Hollingshead and Redlich (1958). Instead of using residence, total income was divided into seven categories and served as one of the determinants of social class. (Refer to Appendix A for exact income divisions). Data comparing the AM's and CM's are summarized in Table 1.

Half of the AM's were tested at the Wayne County Clinic for Child Study and the other half in their homes. All CM's were tested in their own homes. Before testing, the AM's were told only that the clinic would like to have

Table 1. Data on both abusive and control groups

<u>Ss</u>	Age	Years Married	Age When First Married	Total Weekly Income	Mother's Education	Husband's Education	No. of Children	Social Class
E-1	24	11	17	128	11	11	5	V
C-1	28	17	17	100	12	11	5	V
E-2	19	2	17	130	12	12	1	IV
C-2	25	8	17	140	12	HG**	2	IV
E-3	25	3	22	65	11	12	2	V
C-3	29	4	20	50	12	9	3	V
E-4	28	5	23	130	11	9	1	IV
C-4	26	6	20	96	12	10	2	IV
E-5	25	9	17	60	12	12	3	V
C-5	25	9	15	75	12	13	2	V
E-6	27	5	22	88	0	12	8	V
C-6	29	8	22	70	12	12	5	V
E-7	21	NM*	--	150	9	--	1	V
C-7	24	10	14	96	12	0	6	V
E-8	24	7	16	80	9	9	2	V
C-8	28	12	16	75	10	6	1	V
E-9	20	NM*	--	50	12	--	1	V
C-9	18	NM*	--	ADC	11	--	1	V
E-10	25	NM*	--	47	HG**	--	1	V
C-10	24	NM*	--	138	11	--	1	V

*NM Not married.

**HG High school graduate.

Note.- 12 signifies that individual terminated school before graduation.

some additional information from them in order to be able to best help them. The CM's were contacted directly by the investigator and asked if they would participate in a research project on attitudes and feelings of young mothers. All those women who were contacted agreed to participate in the research. The total time required for testing varied between one and a half to two and a half hours for each person.

Each S was presented with four different tests. Firstly, they were presented with selected subscales from The California Test of Personality (CTP) (Thorpe, et.al., 1953). The five subscales used were Self-Reliance, Self-Esteem, Sense of Personal Freedom, Feelings of Belonging, and Withdrawing Tendencies. They were then administered the Family Concept Inventory (FCI) (Palonen, 1966) and next the Manifest Rejection Scale (MR) (Hurley, 1965). Lastly, the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) was given. The TAT cards used were 1, 2, 3BM, 4, 6BM, 7BM, 7GF, 8BM, 9GF, 12M, 12F, 13B, 13MF, 17GF, 18GF. The TAT cards were presented in the preceding order.

(The CTP was selected for use in this study because its subscales corresponded to certain personality attributes thought, by some investigators, to be significantly related to the dynamics of child abuse. Tindall (1955) found that the CTP correlated beyond the .01 level of significance with each of the scales of the Heston Personal Adjustment Inventory, global ratings of adjustment of teachers and

psychologists, sociometric ratings, The Rotter Incomplete Sentence Test, and natural setting observations. Using the CTP, Peak (1963) differentiated a group of children in the ninth grade who were undergoing psychotherapy from a control group. Each of the subscales of the CTP consists of 15 Yes-No forced choice items. The main defect of the instrument appears to be its susceptibility to faking (Mathis, 1959).

The FCI (Palonen, 1966) is a paper and pencil format adaption of the Family Concept Q-Sort (Van Der Veen, Huber, Jorgens, and Neja, 1964). The FCI requires the endorsement of one of the following five response categories: strongly agree, tend to agree, neither agree nor disagree, tend to disagree, strongly disagree. Van Der Veen, et.al. (1964) successfully differentiated predetermined high and low adjustment families with the Family Concept Q-Sort. This investigator also found that the Family Concept Q-Sort correlated significantly with a 23 item adaption of Locke's Test of Marital Adjustment. Using the FCI, Palonen (1966) confirmed the latter finding.

The MR (Hurley, 1965) consists of 30 items which deal with the parent's general disciplinary policies. The response categories are identical to those of the FCI. Hurley (1965) found that the MR correlated substantially with Eron's 24 item Punishment Index. The Punishment Index focuses on the parent's responses to their children's aggression. Also, Hurley found that the parent's MR scores

were significantly, but negatively, associated with their children's IQ scores.

The TAT was introduced to the S with the following statements. "I am going to show you some pictures one at a time. Using your imagination, make up a story by getting an idea from the picture. Elaborate on your story as much as possible. Each story you tell should have an ending," If the S neglected to include an outcome to the story, the examiner would inquire "How does the story end?".

Pathogenic Scoring of the TAT

The TAT was analyzed by two different scoring systems. The first scoring system was developed by Meyer (1964, 1967) and elaborated upon by Mitchell (1965). This system successfully differentiated between groups of mothers of schizophrenic and non schizophrenic children. The purpose of the scoring system was to help determine if these mothers were able to satisfy their children's needs or if their own needs took precedence over the needs of the child. The general criteria for scoring was twofold. Firstly, if there was an interaction between a dominant and dependent individual with conflicting needs, the story was scorable, and, if not, the story was unscorable. Secondly, if such an interaction took place in a story and the dominant individual took the dependent individual's needs into account, the story was scored benign. If, on the other hand, the dominant individual either did not meet the specified needs of the dependent individual or met his own needs at the

expense of the other person, the story was pathogenic. Mitchell (1965) empirically found that the predictive power of the scoring system could be increased by considering both pathogenic stories with benign outcomes and stories in which the main character was permitted to escape a pathogenic situation as benign. Each story was designated as benign, pathogenic, or neutral. For each person, a total ratio was computed: $\frac{\text{Pathogenic}}{\text{Pathogenic} + \text{Benign}}$.

The assumption underlying this analysis of the TAT was that pathogenic stories reflect an inability of the parent to meet the needs of his children or empathize with them. Pathogenic stories also tended to reveal a lack of basic trust in the environment's capacity to emotionally satisfy one's needs. Thus, individual's with high pathogenic ratings are probably people who feel that the environment is cold and ungiving. Because of their felt deprivation, they are unable to satisfy others.

Need and Need Frustration Scorings for the TAT

The second scoring system attempted to evaluate the individual's needs and frustrations. The needs scored were dependency, independence, dominance, aggression, nurturance, and affiliation.

Dependency was scored when the main character revealed a need for sympathy, consoling, guidance, or help from another character in the story, or when the main character performed some action or sought a goal for the stated purpose of earning praise, approval, or recognition.

Frustrated dependency was scored when the main character expressed a need for help which was not given but was still hoped for in the future, when the main character expressed a need for affection or attention or bemoaned the fact that he had been emotionally deprived, when the main character mentioned being lonely, insecure, or depressed because of the psychological or actual loss of some other figure in the story, or when the main character did not carry on after personal loss.

Independence was scored when the main character expressed a desire for less imposed restrictions or for escaping, when the main character acted independently in his actions, such as complying with his own ideas or wishes instead of following the wishes of another character, when he acted contrary to orders, or when he carried on after some personal loss. Frustrated independence consisted of actions, such as the main character complying with the demands of another character although he expressed the desire to do the contrary, being placed in a situation where he was unable to escape, having to act negatively to his own wishes, being punished for independence, or being placed in conflict concerning a wish to fulfill his own desires or follow the wishes of another.

Dominance was scored when the main character attempted to influence, persuade, or control other characters in the story. It was also scored when other characters in

the story looked to the main character for leadership. Frustrated dominance occurred whenever the main character's attempts for dominance were unsuccessful.

Nurturance occurred when the main character consoled, sympathized, advised, protected, or helped others. It was also scored when the main character expressed a desire to help although he actually did not assist anyone in the story, or when other characters in the story looked to the main character for succor, support, or help. There was no nurturance frustration score.

Positive affiliation was scored when a pleasant interaction occurred between people of equal status, such as friends or lovers, or when there was an expressed wish for this type of positive interaction. Frustrated affiliation concerned itself with negative interactions between people in equal status relationships. A boyfriend deserting his girlfriend, quarreling between husband and wife, or stating that the main character had no friends were examples of frustrated affiliation.

Aggression, unlike the previous needs, was scored regardless of whether or not the main character was the instigator. It was scored whenever there was verbal or physical aggression. This included criticism, scorn, blame, hate, punishment, etc. Aggression also occurred both when there was actual violence between the characters in a story and when one of the characters was said to be angry without acting out this emotion.)

(All needs, except aggression, are thus interpreted from the point of view of the main character. If the main character was passively acted upon by various environmental presses, the need scored would be the complement of the environmental press. For example, if the main character was dominated by another character, frustrated independence would be scored. If the environment nurtured or helped the main character, this would be scored as dependency. Conversely, if the main character interacted with the environment, only the actions of the main character would be scored. The reactions of the social environment, however, will help determine whether the needs are frustrated or not.

The scoring system was quantified by the following criteria: One point was given for the expression of a need. Another point was added to the score if the need was elaborated upon to a considerable degree or was involved in the main theme of the story. A point was given if the need was expressed in the outcome of the story. No one need was given more than three points per story.

Total frustration scores for each individual were derived by the following alternative methods. If the need was said to be frustrated in one part of the story but satisfied in another part, the various independent expressions of the need were separately scored as frustrated and not frustrated. For example, if the main character was forced to play the violin in the main part of the story but independently decided not to play it in the conclusion, the

need in the main body of the story was scored as frustrated independence but the independence need expressed in the conclusion would not have been given a frustrated scoring. On the other hand, if a need was expressed in the main body of the story without any initial indication of whether or not it would be frustrated until the outcome of the story, then the need frustration scorings of the initial expression of the need would depend on whether that need was frustrated later in the story. All needs were not considered frustrated unless there was definite evidence that this was the case.

A total accumulative score was derived for each need and converted into percentages which were based upon the total numerical equivalent of all the needs for that S.) For example, if there were two dependency points and the total for all the needs was 10 for a particular S, then his total dependency score was $\frac{2}{10}$ or .20. Aggression was excluded from the calculation of the frustration score percentages because it had no frustration scoring. Greater expression of aggression in the stories would tend to decrease the frustration percentages and this would suggest a contradiction to the notion that aggression and frustration were positively correlated to some degree.

All of the TAT stories were evaluated without prior knowledge of whether the S was an AM or a CM. A second judge was given the TAT stories of eight Ss to re-evaluate, four AM's and four CM's, and also without any

knowledge of the group status of the S, he scored the TAT stories according to both scoring systems. The second judge provided an indication of the relative objectivity and reliability of the scoring systems.

RESULTS

The inter-scorer reliabilities for various analyses of the TAT were obtained by means of product-moment correlations. The S's total score for each need was used in the computations of the correlations. Each of the reliabilities for the separate TAT need and need frustration ratings was above .80. The average inter-scorer reliability coefficient for the need ratings was .85 and for the need frustration ratings .83. The reliability for the TAT pathogenic index ratings was derived from each S's total pathogenic score. The inter-scorer reliability for the pathogenic index was .94.

The t-test for small samples (Hays, 1963) was used to compute the significance of all the between groups statistics in the study. The small sample size, the heterogeneity of the sample, and the crudeness of the measuring instruments were viewed as sufficient justification for the use of the .10 level of significance in interpreting the results.

Table 2 shows that (the AM's were differentiated by their amount of self-esteem according to the CTP. The AM's were significantly lower ($p < .02$) on self-esteem. Self-reliance, sense of personal freedom, feelings of belonging, and withdrawing tendencies did not significantly

Table 2. Personality measure comparisons of the abusive and control mothers

	Means		Standard Deviations		t values
	Abu- sive	Con- trol	Abu- sive	Con- trol	
California Test of Personality					
Self-Reliance	9.2	11.0	3.52	2.36	1.24
Self-Esteem	8.7	12.0	3.77	1.91	2.56**
Sense of Personal Freedom	9.5	11.1	3.34	2.18	1.21
Sense of Belonging	10.5	12.4	4.00	1.22	1.27
Withdrawing Tendencies	8.8	10.6	4.64	2.45	1.05
Family Concept Inventory	91.4	130.5	49.20	26.90	2.09*
Manifest Rejection Scale	54.0	66.0	11.20	10.90	2.12**
TAT Ratings					
Pathogenic	70.7	39.3	17.24	19.44	3.63***
Dependency Needs	.27	.23	.18	.14	.59
Independence Needs	.24	.26	.10	.09	.24
Affiliation Needs	.11	.11	.06	.07	1.07
Aggression Needs	.19	.13	.11	.13	.22
Dominance Needs	.07	.08	.05	.02	.42
Nurturance Needs	.05	.16	.04	.15	2.36**
Dependency Frustration	.18	.07	.12	.09	2.17**
Independence Frustration	.18	.15	.14	.08	.68
Affiliation Frustration	.12	.09	.08	.08	.66
Dominance Frustration	.06	.05	.05	.07	.31
Total Frustration	.56	.38	.13	.15	2.73**

* $p \leq .10$ Using two tailed test of significance.

** $p < .05$ Using two tailed test of significance.

*** $p < .002$ Using two tailed test of significance.

differentiate the groups. The results reveal that the AM's had significantly ($p < .10$) poorer attitudes toward their families. The obtained t value (2.09) fell just short of the .05 significance level ($t_{.05} = 2.10$). The CM's, on the other hand, were significantly higher than the AM's on the MR ($p < .05$). Thus, the AM's registered less overtly rejecting attitudes toward their children than did the CM's. The AM's showed a significantly higher ($p < .002$) pathogenic index than the CM's. There was high inter-scorer reliability for the pathogenic ratings. The inter-scorer reliability, using the product-moment correlation, was .94. The Table 2 results reveal that the groups could not be differentiated on their dependency need scores, need for independence scores, aggression, need for affiliation scores, or need for dominance scores. The significant finding for the need scorings was that the AM's showed a lesser ($p < .05$) need to nurture. The AM's also differed reliably from the CM's on dependency frustration ($p < .05$) and total need frustration ($p < .02$). Both of these measures had reasonably high inter-scorer reliabilities. The product-moment correlation for the TAT need ratings was .83 and for the need frustration ratings was .85.)

Pearson product-moment correlations were determined among all the measures which significantly differentiated the two groups (Table 3). (Significant inter-correlations among the measures which differentiated the two groups were the FCI and CTP Self-Esteem subscale ($r = .78$), TAT pathogenic

Table 3. Product-moment correlations among statistically significant measures

	MR	Pathogenic	Self-Esteem	Nurturance	Dependency Frustration
FCI	-.12	-.58**	.78**	.25	-.39
MR		-.24	.09	.26	-.40
Pathogenic			-.43	-.62**	.25
Self-Esteem				.15	-.32
Nurturance					.19

**p .05 Using two-tailed test of significance.

index and FCI ($r = -.58$), and TAT pathogenic index and the TAT nurturance scoring ($r = -.62$). These findings provide some confirmation of the underlying assumptions which were stated concerning the psychological significance of the pathogenic story.) Meyer (1964) and Mitchell (1965) assumed that the pathogenic story revealed both the individual's inability to administer to the needs of others and his perception of the environment's unwillingness to meet his own needs. The high negative correlation between pathogenic ratings and nurturance supports the assumption that the pathogenic story reflects an inability to nurture others. The second assumption is confirmed by the significant negative correlation between the FCI and the pathogenic ratings. The FCI obtains information concerning the individual's satisfaction with his family. Thus, (the FCI measures the individual's perception of how well the family is

meeting his personal needs. The negative FCI-pathogenic ratings correlation supports the assumption that the pathogenic story reveals the perception of an ungiving environment.)

(The high correlations between both the FCI and CTP Self-Esteem subscale and the pathogenic ratings and CTP Self-Esteem subscale (nearly significant at the .05 level) suggests that self-esteem is associated with the perception of the environment's unwillingness to gratify one's needs) and with the capacity to give of one's self to others.

A McQuitty Typal Analysis (1961) was performed on the correlations in Table 3. The Typal Analysis is an elementary type of factor analysis. Figure 1 shows the three sets of factors analyzed by the McQuitty Typal Analysis method. The three clusters were: 1) FCI-CTP Self-Esteem subscale, 2) TAT pathogenic index-TAT nurturance rating, 3) TAT dependency frustration ratings-MR. The Typal Analysis revealed a fair degree of independence between the various measuring instruments. Also, the FCI was found to intercorrelate significantly with a greater number of the other test measures than any other single measuring instrument, and it accounted for the largest proportion of the total variance. The pathogenic index had the second largest number of significant intercorrelations and also accounted for the next largest proportion of the total variance. Therefore, the FCI and pathogenic index appear to be the most salient measures followed by the CTP Self-Esteem subscale and the TAT dependency frustration ratings, respectively.

Typal Analysis of personality measures which discriminated abusive from control mothers

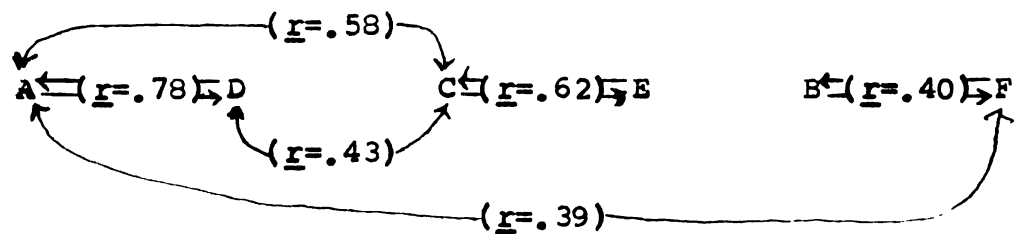


Fig. 1. Factors are represented by pairs of letters with double arrows. The capital letters signify the measuring instruments: A=FCI, B=MR, C=pathogenic index, D=CTP Self-Esteem subscale, E=TAT nurturance rating, F=TAT dependency frustration rating.

DISCUSSION

Interpretation of Findings

The high pathogenic scores of the AM's suggest that they have difficulty empathizing with or administering to their children's needs. Also, the high pathogenic index of the AM's indicates that they tend to perceive their own emotional needs as being frustrated by the environment. The AM's expressed greater frustration of their dependency needs in their TAT stories. This fact suggests that these women have strong unmet dependency needs which probably originated from feelings of neglect or rejection during their childhood. This finding is congruent with DeFrancis's hypothesis that "Parents who abuse their children are parents who react violently to their own unmet dependency needs." (DeFrancis, 1963, p.3). It can be speculated that the intensity of the unmet dependency needs of the AM's causes them to be extremely narcissistic and consequently incapable of identifying with their children. Administering to their children's needs is probably felt to be a tremendous burden because it conflicts with the parent's narcissism.

The AM's also have low self-esteem. The low esteem appears to be related to their perception of the environment's unwillingness to meet their needs and the inability of administering to the needs of others. This finding was

indicated by the high correlation between the pathogenic index and CTP Self-Esteem. Thus lack of self acceptance seems related to difficulty in accepting others. In general, child acceptance has been found to correlate highly with self acceptance (Mendinnus, 1963). These prior reports were substantiated by the difference in self-esteem between the AM's and the CM's in the present study.

The FCI data showed that the AM's have a negative view of their families. This finding suggests that the current family relationships are perceived as not sufficiently meeting their emotional needs. Therefore, the adequacy of the present family situation seems to be an important factor in understanding the immediate stresses involved in child abuse. This was indicated by the fact that the FCI accounted for the largest proportion of the total variance.

The hypothesis that child abuse is a reaction to a multitude of social stresses (Elmer, 1966; Zalba, 1966) was not supported by the present study. Some investigators have felt that insufficient income, menial jobs, larger than average families, and early marriages create the major sources of social stress which result in the displacement of frustration to the child. (In the present investigation, however, reliable personality differences were found between the AM and CM groups despite the fact that the study controlled for social class, income, size of family, and age

when first married. Since the AM's showed distinctive personality features, it would appear that child abuse is not solely produced by social stress.)

(The higher MR scores of the CM's over the AM's was unexpected. This finding might be accounted for by a defensive stance of the AM's.) They had been requested by The Wayne County Juvenile Court to come to The Wayne County Clinic and undoubtedly were concerned about possibly divulging information which might conceivably be used in criminal proceedings against them. (Another possible explanation of the MR finding is that the AM's may have considerable difficulty expressing their hostility toward their children and may have consequently developed the defense mechanisms of reaction formation and denial to help control their aggressive impulses.) This interpretation receives some support from Megargee's study of murderers (1967). He distinguished two types of assaultive murderers on the basis of their inhibition level. The first is the undercontrolled aggressive type who has low inhibitions for aggressive behavior. The second type, the chronically overcontrolled type, is characterized by massive defenses against the expression, or even the awareness, of hostility. Thus, the dynamics of the parents who abuse their children may, according to the findings of the present study, correspond to those of the latter type. This possibility is also consistent with Komisaruk's view (1966) that the abusive

parents usually conceived themselves as ideal parents. He interpreted this perception as a reaction formation against their hostile feelings.

Unconfirmed Alternate Hypotheses Concerning Child Abuse

(The hypothesis that the abusive parent is generally an overtly hostile, aggressive person was not supported by this investigation. The AM's, as a group, did not express more hostility in their TAT stories. However, it should be pointed out that two of the ten AM's revealed a greater amount of aggression in their stories than the other Ss.) Probably, these two mothers were aggressive individuals. Probably, AM's are not a homogenous group and, as suggested by Megargee (1967), subtypes may be profitably identified. Generally, however, the AM's are not typified by aggressive assaultive women.

Also unsubstantiated by the present data was the hypothesis that child abuse arises from the frustrations of being restricted by maternal responsibilities. No reliable between-groups differences were found on either the CTP Sense of Personal Freedom subscale or on TAT ratings of the need for independence and independence frustration. The TAT need for independence index was defined as a desire for fewer imposed restrictions, for escaping from a situation, or an expressed desire for acting independently. Frustrated independence included situations in which the main character felt trapped by circumstances, dominated by external authority, in conflict about whether to act independently, or tied down to an undesirable situation.

Since these indices did not differentiate between the two groups of mothers, it appears that frustrated independence is not a major determinant of child abuse.

Child abuse has been viewed as the product of a power struggle between parent and child. Newson (in Blumberg, 1964) suggested that the mother feels compelled to show the child who is boss and to use brute force to settle conflicts. In the present study, in order to indirectly determine if the AM is overly authoritarian and becomes overly frustrated by the child's willfulness, the investigator scored the TAT for need for dominance and dominance frustration. The present results indicate, however, that the need to dominate was not a differentiating attribute of the AM's.

Further Research

Needs -

Because of the use of mainly lower class Negro ss, the results of this study may not be widely generalizable. It would appear desirable to confirm the present findings by employing a larger sample size and a wider distribution of social class. Since the AM's would be facing criminal proceedings and might be defensive about answering questions, it would be advisable to include a measure of defensiveness. Also, the present study demonstrated that family life is an important variable in the dynamics of child abuse. Future studies might also objectively assess the functioning of the family by means of interview ratings or

observational studies rather than being limited to only the mother's perception of the family. This perception may have been distorted to coincide with her own pessimistic perception of the environment.

Further research is needed to determine the AM's defenses and dynamics in dealing with aggressive impulses. Megargee (1967) suggests that while one type of assaultive offender possesses massive defenses against the awareness or expression of hostility, he may become momentarily overwhelmed by his aggressive feelings. One possible method of investigating the ability to express hostility would be to instruct the Ss to relate aggressive stories to the TAT cards.

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APPENDIX A

The Seven Income Categories Used to Derive Social Class

Social Class	Weekly Income Range in Dollars
I	Over 500
II	301-500
III	201-300
IV	161-200
V	101-160
VI	60-100
VII	Under 60

APPENDIX B

Raw Scores for Individual Ss on CTP, FCI, MR, and TAT Pathogenic Ratings

Measuring Instruments	Abusive Mothers										Control Mothers									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
CTP																				
Self- Reliance	5	9	9	5	14	13	11	12	4	10	14	14	10	9	11	13	10	9	8	12
Self-Esteem	5	3	12	5	12	13	5	15	7	10	13	12	11	7	12	14	15	14	13	9
Sense of Personal Freedom	7	8	11	3	10	15	8	13	11	9	14	12	12	6	12	11	13	10	11	10
Feelings of Belonging	11	2	11	5	12	15	10	13	13	13	13	12	11	13	13	14	11	13	13	11
Withdrawing Tendencies	2	2	10	4	12	15	9	12	9	13	14	10	7	10	11	12	13	13	9	7
FCI	46	42	127	44	174	127	58	106	44	151	159	117	130	81	154	155	143	129	95	142
MR	60	56	57	47	40	36	62	74	49	54	57	63	73	84	48	64	58	75	71	67
Pathogenic Index	89	86	57	81	42	58	73	100	64	57	60	64	10	54	56	44	33	21	36	15

APPENDIX C

Comparison of Psychological Need Percentages

Derived from the TAT

Ss	Dependency		Independence		Aggression		Affiliation		Dominance		Nurturance	
	Abus.	Con.	Abus.	Con.	Abus.	Con.	Abus.	Con.	Abus.	Con.	Abus.	Con.
1	.10	.17	.23	.29	.33	.21	.14	.04	.10	.13	0	.04
2	.33	.22	.28	.15	.14	.22	.08	0	.03	.15	.08	.15
3	.48	.43	.08	.25	.08	0	.12	.06	.08	0	.08	.25
4	.30	.16	.19	.23	.22	.32	.19	.23	0	0	.07	.03
5	.53	.33	.15	.28	.19	.06	.04	.17	.08	0	0	.11
6	.33	.13	.30	.39	.11	.17	.07	.13	.03	.04	.11	.08
7	.15	.43	.49	.21	.12	0	.15	.14	.09	.14	0	.07
8	.10	.15	.33	.15	.37	.15	.17	.15	0	.08	0	.37
9	.28	.23	.19	.37	.25	.17	0	.07	.14	.07	.11	.07
10	.32	0	.22	.23	.06	.04	.18	.08	.16	.23	.08	.42
Mean	.27	.23	.24	.26	.19	.13	.12	.11	.08	.08	.05	.16
Standard Devia- tion	.19	.14	.10	.08	.11	.13	.06	.07	.05	.02	.04	.15
t Value	.59		.24		1.07		.22		.42		2.36	

APPENDIX D

Comparison of Need Frustration Percentages

Derived from the TAT

Ss	Dependency Frustration		Independence Frustration		Affiliation Frustration		Dominance Frustration		Total Frustration	
	Abu.	Con.	Abu.	Con.	Abu.	Con.	Abu.	Con.	Abu.	Con.
1	0	0	.29	.25	.14	.06	.14	.13	.57	.43
2	.38	.28	.14	.11	.10	0	.04	.17	.62	.56
3	.24	.06	.10	0	.09	0	.10	0	.61	.13
4	.15	.05	.15	.25	.20	.20	0	0	.55	.55
5	.24	.13	.10	.19	.05	.19	.05	0	.35	.50
6	.17	0	.26	.22	.09	.17	0	.06	.57	.44
7	.14	0	.52	.14	.14	.14	.07	.14	.76	.43
8	.11	.05	.06	.05	.28	.09	.10	.05	.42	.23
9	.35	.17	.15	.13	0	.04	.12	0	.65	.33
10	.07	0	.07	.12	.08	.04	.11	0	.44	.24
Mean	.18	.07	.18	.15	.12	.09	.06	.05	.56	.38
Standard Deviation	.12	.09	.14	.08	.08	.08	.05	.07	.13	.15
t Value	2.17		.68		.66		.31		2.73	

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