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### Child Abusers: Can we accurately predict them by personality?

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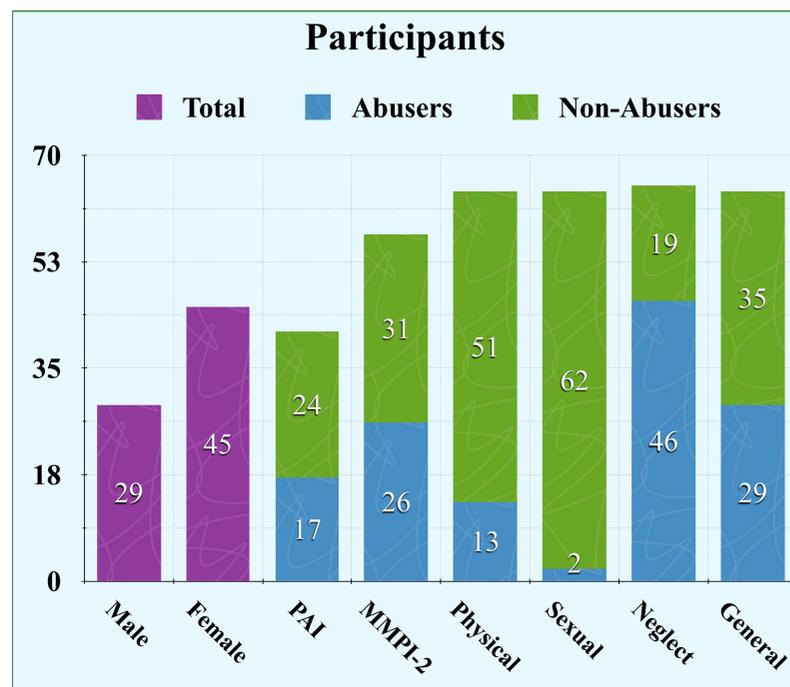
# Child abusers: Can we accurately predict them by personality?

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## Abstract

Many studies label parents with certain demographic characteristics as being more prone to abuse children than others. Many predictors such as: gender, childhood abuse history, parental satisfaction, parent's attribution style, child's age, child disruptive behaviors, parental ethnicity, parental marital status, parental socioeconomic status, parental education, family size, household disorganization, coercive caregiver-child interaction patterns, and family social support are not accounting for alternative characteristics (Begle, Dumas, & Hanson, 2010). The Minnesota Multi-phasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2), a measure of adult personality characteristics; might give us a more robust picture of what, if any, personality characteristics predict child abuse potential beyond the factors listed above. Archival evaluation records of at-risk parents have been collected, coded, and examined for abuse potential. Using a sample of 75 parental evaluations (29 abusers, 35 non-abusers, 11 excluded) personality characteristics that predict abuse will be identified. If certain personality dimensions are identified as statistically significant predictors of abuse perpetration, above and beyond other predictors, this could aid in more accurately predicting child abuse and identifying at-risk individuals to better prevent abuse and keep families whole. Meanwhile, this research may help eliminate some of the stigma associated with belonging to an "at-risk demographic."



## Materials

In this study we used three assessment tools which are: the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory 2 (MMPI-2), the Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI), and Clinical Parental Evaluations.

## Introduction

- We can use the MMPI-2 and the PAI to help identify personality traits that could predict abuse more accurately than demographics
- Certain "at risk demographics" have often been associated with abuse or abuse potential. We believe that it is likely that identifiable personality traits are more likely the cause of abusive parenting styles, with demographics being a secondary factor.
- We seek to identify personality traits that can be correlated as predictors for potentially abusive individuals above and beyond demographics
- The importance of this study will allow us to better predict abusive behavior and dispel the stigma associated with "at risk demographics"

## Results

### General Abuse

	Sample Size (n)	Significance	T-value	Std. Error
MMPI-2: Addictions Acknowledgement Scale (AAS)	57	0.020	2.401	0.013
MMPI-2: Hypochondriasis (Hy)	57	0.046	-2.049	0.013
MMPI-2: Family Problems (FAM)	57	0.009	2.717	0.013
PAI: Anxiety Related Disorders (ARD)	41	0.012	2.653	0.011
PAI: Anxiety Related Disorders- Phobia (ARD-P)	41	0.001	3.637	0.013

### Physical Abuse

	Sample Size (n)	Significance	T-value	Std. Error
PAI: Alcohol Problems (ALC)	41	0.006	-2.973	0.014
PAI: Paranoia (PAR)	41	0.045	2.090	0.016
PAI: Paranoia-Persecution (PAR-P)	41	0.044	2.097	0.014

### Sexual Abuse

	Sample Size (n)	Significance	T-value	Std. Error
MMPI-2 Hypochondriasis (Hy)	57	0.036	-2.153	0.008

### Neglect

	Sample Size (n)	Significance	T-value	Std. Error
MMPI-2: Negative Treatment Indicators (TRT)	57	0.006	2.867	0.015
MMPI-2: Social Introversion (Si)	57	0.049	2.014	0.015
PAI: Anxiety Related Disorders (ARD)	41	0.029	2.281	0.012
PAI: Anxiety Related Disorders- Phobia (ARD-P)	41	0.022	2.413	0.015

## Methods

Archival data from 105 clinical interviews were assessed. Most of these interviews were conducted as a requirement set in place by the Montana Child and Family Services division pending investigation of suspected child maltreatment. Of the 105 files assessed, only 74 were viable in the context of this research. The information contained in these files included, but was not limited to; information about this parent's family of origin, information about potential abuse in this parent's childhood, any known history of child maltreatment by this parent, clinical MMPI-2 and PAI data. Demographic information including; marital status, gender, ethnicity, age, and level of education were also included at the time of these interviews. First, an analysis was conducted comparing all of the information and searching for anything of significance, outside of demographics. Then the information was assessed using only known abusers. Finally the data was assessed against each individual type of abuse (physical, sexual, and neglect). As we have shown in the results section, there were significant predictors within this population.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Our results yielded interesting quandaries about how we predict abuse potential. The measures included in this research provided statistically significant predictors above and beyond those of the demographic characteristics commonly used to determine if a person is at risk of perpetuating abuse. Our hypothesis was supported in part by these findings. However, potential confounds may be a factor in this data set. For instance, we have a relatively small sample size. If nothing else can be determined from this data due to sample size; we can concur that future research should be done to further our findings. It is our hope that further research in this domain will yield even stronger results, and lessen the stigma associated with belonging to an "at-risk demographic". The more information that can be gained about an individual's circumstance will result in better predictions of their abuse potential. Moreover, further research may even pave the way to a more statistically valid measure of abuse potential than the standardized measures being used today.

## Literature Cited

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(images from Google)

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