An investigation into parental perceptions of aspects of development and temperament in abused children.

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Dedication

To Professor Vera M. Grover
in humble appreciation of
her skill as a teacher
and her untiring devotion
to the well-being of
young children

"Oh you little wretch! " screamed Charlotte: seizing Oliver with her utmost force, "Oh, you un-grate-ful, mur-de-rous, horrid villian!" And between every syllable, Charlotte gave Oliver a blow with all her might: accompanying it with a scream, for the benefit of society.

Charles Dickens

Oliver Twist

Our system gives the prize to all
Who trample on the weak and small

Peggy Seeger

Reclaim the Night

statistical problems in this research.

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ABSTRACT

This investigation focussed on child-related and parent-related characteristics in the area of child abuse. Specifically, developmental and temperament factors were stressed in non- CNS impaired abused children. Suggestions in the literature have pointed to the possible importance of studying temperament factors in these children, especially in the light of features in the developmental and medical histories which may place them at increased risk for abuse. Levels of development in abused children have been explored in other studies, but their findings with respect to the non-CNS impaired sub-group have not yielded clarity on their developmental status. The perceptions of the childrens' temperaments and levels of development by the mother was also investigated in the light of theoretical models of child abuse which have claimed that abusing parents place unrealistic demands on their children, who are not capable of complying.

The performance of ten abused children was compared with normal controls (matched for age and sex and from the same social class) on the Grover Developmental Charts. The same two groups of children were observed in a free-play situation during which time their behaviour was rated on six categories of temperament, and in three areas of development, viz. gross-motor functioning, receptive language and socialization skills. Temperament categories and scoring methods for both parents and children were adapted for use in this research from the work of Alexander Thomas and his co-workers.

Results suggested that the abused children performed at significantly lower levels in the areas of gross-motor functioning and language. Their performance in the language area was characterised

by a tendency to fail in items having a "social" component. No significant differences were found in the other areas of development studied (socialization skills and cognitive development). However, these results suggested a trend towards lower levels of functioning which was in keeping with the significant findings in the gross-motor and language areas. The temperament comparisons did not yield significant findings. Analysis of the data obtained from mothers suggested that they tended to rate their childrens' language development significantly lower than controls. The other perceptual comparisons were not significant.

The findings are considered in the light of relevant theoretical models in the area of child abuse. Implications of the findings for future research, the limitations of the methodology employed, and the usefulness of the findings for clinical practice are discussed.

CHAPTER I

The Problem

In general, this study is concerned with developmental and temperament characteristics of physically abused children as factors in the occurrence of child abuse. In addition, it focuses on the related issue of how the abusing parent perceives these characteristics. What is being looked at are certain specific aspects of the child's psychological functioning, which have been thought to bear a relationship to aspects of the parents' functioning. Study of these "child-related" characteristics and parental modes of perceiving may help to shed some light on the highly complex nature of parent-child interaction in child abuse. It should be also stressed that this investigation is concerned with a very specific set of characteristics in the post-abuse situation, and thus, speculation about these elements prior to the occurrence of abuse would have to be very tentative.

The phenomenon of child abuse has been a feature of human society since at least the beginnings of recorded history (Radbill, 1974; Smith, 1975); however, it is only comparatively recently that mental health workers have given it attention. Over the past fifteen years, there have been numerous attempts to develop a theoretical understanding of abuse and various approaches have been utilised. Gil (1969) conducted a nationwide (U.S.A.) survey, and concluded that abuse is more fruitfully understood as a socio-cultural phenomenon which permits the use of physical force in child rearing. This socially-oriented approach has found increasing acceptance (e.g., Garbarino, 1976; Gelles, 1973) but should be seen against the background of a much larger body of literature which has studied child abuse mainly in psychological terms. For example, writers such as Steele and Pollock (1974) see the problem

as intimately related to child-rearing attitudes and practices. In this view,the early negative life-experience of the parents finds expression in the way they rear their children viz. through inappropriately high expectations and demand, and harsh, violent disciplinary measures.

There seems to be general agreeement among most authors that the early life experience of the parents and its effect on present psychological functioning is of particular significance in the aetiology of child abuse. Atypical patterns of relating between parent and child suggest that the child is perceived in a particular way by the parent. Investigation into these perceptions might help to clarify the patterning of interactions between parent and child and might have implications for helpers involved in therapeutic relationships with these families. Study of these factors constitutes a major focus of this research.

Most of the interest in child abuse has centred on the types of parents who abuse their children, yet relatively little work has been done on the abused child. Martin (1976b) listed a number of child-related characteristics which could play a part in the occurrence of abuse, for example:

- "attributes of the child making him more difficult to care for and/or less capable of reinforcing good mothering from parents" (Martin, 1976a, p.28).
- The stage of the child's development being difficult for the parent to cope with.
- The child inviting abuse through deliberate or unconscious provocation.

However, he points out that the whole issue of exactly what part the

child plays in abuse is poorly understood, and that too little is known about the characteristics of these children. There are very few studies that adequately explore the developmental status of these children, but those that do (e.g. Elmer and Gregg, 1967; Smith, 1975), agree that abused children are often found to be developmentally retarded. However, an issue which is still not clear is whether any degree of developmental lag exists prior to abuse. Smith states that 38% of his sample of 134 children were without head injury or neurological impairment but tested significantly lower than controls on measures of intellectual functioning. Smith suggests that previous head trauma or genetic endowment may account for these results.

A similar argument can be made for the issue of temperament. Temperament refers to inherent features in the style and quality of a child's behaviour (Thomas, Chess and Birch, 1968) which are present from birth. Martin (1976b) has suggested that inherent differences in "bio-psychological equipment" (p.141) such as temperament might be important features in the psychological functioning of abused children. To date no attempts have been made to study temperament in abused children although Johnson and Morse's study (1968) described the abused children in their research sample in terms such as "difficult to care for", "negativistic", "whiny", while Smith (1975) reported clinging and crying behaviour which he maintains may have precipitated battering. These pointers suggest that the study of temperament factors may contribute to a fuller understanding of the child's role in child abuse.

In summary, it would seem that the characteristics of abused children are as yet a relatively unknown factor in child abuse and that the study of developmental and temperament aspects may shed some light on patterns of interaction which are characteristic of abusing families. In addition,

the way in which these children are perceived by abusing parents needs further investigation.

CHAPTER II

The Parents

In this chapter, it is intended to review authors who have attempted to understand child abuse by looking at characteristic patterns of interaction in abusing families. The approach of these writers constitutes what is essentially a psychopathological model of child abuse. It is also intended to review authors who have concentrated their efforts in constructing profiles of the characteristics of abusing parents. Whereas such studies are not directly relevant in conceptualising the issues in this study, they nevertheless constitute one of the major approaches to the study of child abuse. In addition, authors using psychopathologically oriented models frequently draw on this body of literature. A review of the main findings in these studies will thus serve to provide relevant background information. Both the 'psychopathological' and 'characteristics' approach to studying child abuse may be subsumed under the general heading of the Psychiatric Model of abuse. According to Burgess (1979) the basic assumption of the Psychiatric Model (and therefore of the 'characteristics' and 'psychopathological' approaches) is that the causes of child abuse are to be located within the parents who possess distinctive and essentially pathological personality traits.

It is also intended to look at recent criticisms of the Psychiatric Model by authors favouring socially oriented analyses, as the contrasting of these two models will highlight contemporary theoretical debates and may have a bearing on the interpretation of results.

1. CHARACTERISTICS

1.1. Psychiatric Diagnosis

The first attempts to understand child abusing families tried to apply methods of psychiatric diagnosis to the parents. These efforts were preceded by the work of a radiologist, Caffey (1946) who wrote an article dealing with multiple fractures of the long bones in children. Caffey noted that these fractures were frequently associated with subdural haemotoma, and were of unknown origin. He suggested that the basis for these injuries was traumatic. Silverman (1953), and Wooley and Evans (1955) came to similar conclusions. Since the publication of these studies a number of writers predicted high incidences of psychotic and neurotic disturbance in the parents which, it was claimed, were strongly related to the occurrence of abuse (Greengard, 1964; Miller, 1959; Simpson, 1968; Woolley and Evans, 1955). But subsequent research into the incidence of psychosis in child abusers indicated that a small but consistent number are affected (Fleming, 1967; Laupus, 1966; Smith, 1975; Steele and Pollock, 1968). It also appears that the most violent and abusive of abusing parents are frequently found to be schizophrenic (Adelson, 1961; Kaufman, 1962; both quoted by Spinetta and Rigler, 1972).

Writers such as Johnson and Morse (1968), and Smith and Hanson (1975) have described child abusers as more typically neurotic. These authors' opinions are strongly supported by Smith's (1975) finding. In his study, 48% of abusing mothers were diagnosed as neurotic by interview, and his sample scored significantly higher on neuroticism on the Eysenck Personality Inventory. No differences were found for the fathers.

Psychopathic tendencies have also been reported in these parents

(Smith, 1975; Wright, 1974). Wright, who used the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, states that " ... the nature of the revealed disturbance on the MMPI is a near-classic profile for psychopathy ..." (p.44).

The contribution that diagnostic categories have made to constructing a profile of abusing parents seems limited in that while some features have emerged clearly, the overall impression is of a mixed diagnostic picture. Steele and Pollock's (1968) findings after studying 60 child-abusing families support this view. They state: "It was not possible to make a simple diagnosis in most patients. They presented mixed pictures such as "obsessive-phobic neurosis with marked masochistic features and mild depression" (pp.94-95). Furthermore, Steele and Pollock feel that the explanatory power of diagnostic categories is weak as they contribute little to answering the crucial question of why certain parents abuse their children.

1.2. Clinical and Research Findings

A major portion of the literature on child abuse consists of a wealth of descriptive material: lists of commonly found personality traits, personal history data, attempts at constructing typologies of abusers.

It should be stressed that the coverage of this material will be extremely limited for a number of reasons: Firstly the intention here is to confine discussion to those characteristics about which there is general agreement, i.e., those which are most frequently reported. Secondly, this limitation will allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of each characteristic rather than a superficial listing of many such characteristics. Thirdly, the features selected for discussion are

frequently referred to by authors using psychopathologically oriented models of child abuse. This will therefore serve as a background to the discussion of these models in the next section (Section 2). Finally, by a more in-depth coverage of some of this literature the contribution of the 'Characteristics' approach to the study of child abuse can be evaluated.

1.2.1. History of abuse. One of the most strongly held contentions among many authors is that abusing parents were themselves subjected to physical or emotional abuse, or were neglected as children. For example, Fleming (1967), Silver, Dublin and Lourie (1969), Harper (1963), and Wasserman (1967) support this view. Melnick and Hurley (1969) conducted a well-controlled study of abusing mothers who were assessed on eighteen personality variables. They found strong evidence of "... prior frustration of their /the parents'/ own emotional needs" by their families of origin. Melnick and Hurley relate this early experience to the parents' inability to cope with the demands of life in general, and their children in particular, which predisposes them to react violently when their children are difficult to manage. These findings are in line with those of Steele and Pollock (1968) who propose that abusing parents recreate with their own children the negative patterns of child-rearing they themselves experienced as children.

1.2.2. Self concept . Blumberg (1974, 1977) maintains that negative childhood experiences of rejection and abuse contribute greatly to the abusing parents lack of ego strength, poor self esteem

and negative self-image. This contention is supported by Johnson and Morse (1968), and Green, Gaines and Sandgrund (1974). In addition Green et al state:

> "They /the parents/ display disturbances in identity formation. Identifications are shifting and unstable and are dominated by hostile introjects derived from the internalization of "bad" self and object representations of early childhood ... They respond to assaults on their fragile self-esteem with a compensatory adaptation ... they must separately defend themselves against the awareness of underlying feelings of worthlessness by the frequent use of projection and externalization ... The projection of negative parental attributes onto the child causes him to be misperceived and used as a scapegoat in order to bear the brunt of the parent's aggression." (p.883).

1.2.3. Aggression. The disturbing and often horrifying nature of the aggression directed towards abused children has, not surprisingly, received much attention by a number of writers. Smith and Hanson (1975) studied 214 parents of battered children and found that the need to act out hostility was found only for those parents who confessed to battering. They believe this group may be more amenable to treatment. Paulsen, Afifi, Thomason and Chaleff (1974) compared male and female abusers on the MMPI and found that the profiles of the females indicated major conflicts centering around violence, aggression and authority, whereas those of males did not demonstrate these features. Johnson and Morse (1968) however, found both male and female abusers to be hostile. They state: "They expressed the limits of their expectations by

spur-of-the-moment outbursts of rage or despair ... They frequently used corporal punishment, but more as an expression of agitation than purposeful discipline." (p.22). Spinetta and Rigler (1972), in their comprehensive review of the literature on characteristics of the abusing parent, state that while there is general agreement among many authors that a defect in personality allows aggressive impulses to be expressed too freely, there exists considerable disagreement in pinpointing the source of these impulses. They quote Nomura (1966) and Ten Have (1965) who claim that abuse is an outburst preceded by a long period of tension. They note that authors such as Cohen, Raphling and Green (1966), and Fontana (1964) relate the source of aggression to the inability of parents to fulfil parental roles, while Heins (1969) maintains that the inability to face the daily stresses of life is responsible for their assault of these children. In a more comprehensive analysis Steele and Pollock (1968) have theorised that aggression directed towards the parent in early infancy results in a highly punitive superego. This aggression surfaces frequently in situations with the parent's child and is then released in "superego approved-channels" i.e., the punitive superego sanctions the use of violence in the management of the child. Wasserman's (1967) suggestion that that child acts as a 'hostility sponge' for the parent's anger and is an unconscious symbol of pain and rejection experienced in the parent's original family, would seem to be in line with this view.

What emerges clearly from most of these writers is that while there is agreement regarding the highly aggressive quality of the behaviour of child abusers, aggression per se is not a consistently found phenomenon amongst some abuser subgroups, particularly in

studies utilising standardised questionnaires and comparison groups (Paulsen et al, 1974; Smith and Hanson, 1975). Furthermore, Spinetta and Rigler's assertion regarding disagreement in describing the source of aggressive impulses seems to be borne out. It is possible that this apparent confusion in the literature is related to the study of aggression as an isolated characteristic of child abusers. This method of study may in fact obscure its relatedness to other parental characteristics as well as the interpersonal context within which it occurs. The difficulties inherent in studying any particular characteristic in isolation can of course be debated at this point; however, it would be more appropriate to consider this problem at the end of the section on characteristics.

1.2.4. Impulsivity. As Spinetta and Rigler (1972) have noted many authors support the opinion that abusing parents express their aggression in an impulsive manner (see section 1.2.3). Research evidence on this point is not entirely clear. Hyman (1977) compared thirty-seven abusers to thirty-seven normal controls on the 16PF test and reported poor ego control for females in the abuse group. She concludes that this would imply low frustration tolerance, changeability and susceptability to emotional upset. There is difficulty in evaluating these results, however, as Hyman does not seem to have used a homogeneous sample, - nine families had been referred to her on the basis of fearing they would abuse their children, and had not actually injured their children. In addition, the social class position of the abuse group may not have been held constant. Both of these control factors place a question mark on the acceptability of these results. Another study by

Smith and Hanson (1975) controlled for both age and class and found the use of physical punishment in abusing parents to be significantly more frequent than in controls. They state that this suggests that these parents were less able to control their aggression than normal, control group parents. However, another similarly well-controlled study by Paulsen, Schwemer and Bendel (1976) conflicts with this finding. They compared sex differences in abusers, and compared abusers to non-abusers and found no statistically significant differences on the Megargee overcontrolled Hostility Scale for either set of comparisons. Although clinical evidence lends support to the impulsive quality of abusing parents' aggression, research evidence is conflicting and thus the matter should be regarded as an unresolved issue at this point. Once again, as outlined in the above section (1.2.3) on Aggression the confusion in the literature may be attributable to the difficulties inherent in studying a particular characteristic in isolation.

1.2.5. Typologies. There have been at least three attempts to construct a typology of child abusers, viz.: Zalba (1967), Delsordo (1963), and Merril (1962). Of these Merril's will be outlined in detail as those of Zalba and Delsordo can generally be reduced to Merril's categories (Smith, 1975; Spinetta and Rigler, 1972). Strictly speaking a typology is not a characteristic but an attempt at categorisation. Nevertheless, it may be useful to look at these attempts as they do provide an overall picture of many of the characteristics of abusing parents. Merril proposed four clusters: Group I are those child abusers who are hostile and aggressive to the world in general. The uncontrolled nature of their aggression

is rooted in childhood experiences. Group II refers to those who are rigid in behaviour and attitudes, and lack warmth. They are typically rejecting of their child and defend their right to batter. Their compulsiveness results in excessive demands of cleanliness from their children. Group III show strong feelings of passivity and dependence and are immature. They are emotionally unstable and tend to compete for their child's affection with their spouses. Group IV are composed only of fathers who are unemployed due to physical handicap and whose families are supported financially by the mother. Although usually young and intelligent their frustrations lead to aggressive and rigid discipline.

Smith (1975) has pointed out that the validity of Merril's categories has not been established as no research has been carried out with them. Moreover, although a well-constructed typology may have its uses in aiding the identification of child abusers it appears that the usefulness would depend greatly upon the ability to discriminate between abusers and non-abusers.

As has been noted above (section 1.2.3), the difficulties inherent in studying the characteristics of abusing parents as relatively isolated phenomena may contribute to the conflicting opinions, research results and theoretical formulations which are common amongst authors who adopt this approach. These authors tend not to address the interpersonal or social contexts of child abuse. They appear to locate the basic problem in child abuse to 'defects' or abnormalities in parental personality functioning and do not consider whether these abnormalities could still be detected in the interpersonal or social contexts. For example, a particular characteristic could be a feature of the social class from

which a particular sample of abusers is drawn, rather than definitive of abusers. Another major difficulty seems to be the problem of poorly controlled research. This has been dealt with in the relevant sub-sections. A further source of confusion seems to be the lack of cohesiveness or apparent unrelatedness of one characteristic to another. Whereas some attempts have been made to construct theoretical links between characteristics (e.g., the relationship between aggression and impulsivity) they tend to be limited in that they do not provide a comprehensive account of personality functioning in abusing parents. Thus as an approach to understanding child abuse the study of characteristics appears limited in its analysis. However, it should be noted that these attempts are still valuable as aids to diagnosis in the clinical situation.

2. PSYCHOPATHOLOGICAL THEORIES

There have been several attempts to construct a well-rounded theory of child abuse. Of these, three stand out as of major importance viz. Steele and Pollock's (1968) maternal affection theory, Terr's (1970) family approach and Green, Gaines and Sandgrund's (1974) dependency theory. Other attempts at theory-building (Blumberg, 1974, 1977; Galdston, 1965; Morris and Gould, 1963; Flynne, 1970) can generally be subsumed within one or more of these theories. These three attempts will be outlined in some detail in this section.

Of particular relevance to the present study is that all three theories concern themselves with how the abusing parent perceives the abused child. Their contributions to this problem will be evaluated at the end of this section.

2.1 Steele and Pollock's Maternal Affection Theory

The central principle in this theory is that child abuse is a consequence of a particular pattern of child rearing in which the maternal

affectional system has brokem down. Steele and Pollock (1968) distinguish between basic mechanical child care procedures such as feeding, cleaning and comforting and what they term "motherliness" which refers to less obvious attitudes of tenderness, gentleness and empathy which usually accompany these procedures. (Motherliness is present in children and adults, and in both sexes). Child abuse is considered a function of the breakdown in motherliness rather than in the mechanics of caretaking. The origins of this inability to provide maternal affection is to be found in the early life experience of the parents. In their study of sixty abusing families Steele and Pollock (1968) found repeated evidence of prior emotional deprivation, neglect, and abuse in the parents' histories. They also report that these parents experienced excessive demand to comply with parental needs and commands. Steele (1976) suggests that the result is that " ... the child is left with a sense of failure, low self-esteem, and a beginning tendency to believe in the use of physical attack to solve problems. There may also be the beginning of patterns of either being unduly compliant and submissive or being too negativistic and aggressive" (p.14).
As has been noted in the 'Characteristics' section, the negative early child rearing experiences of abusing parents has been reported by many authors. Steele and Pollock have been struck by the startling similarity between the way these parents have been reared and their own child-rearing practices. In some families they were able to trace this parenting style in three successive generations, although they had rather limited evidence on which to base this finding. However, in two separate studies, Oliver and Cox (1973) were able to trace the same patterns of abuse, neglect, and emotional deprivation in two families for at least three successive generations. This replication of parenting behaviour

in successive generations has also been observed in studies of non-human primate behaviour. Horenstein (1977) referred to the work of Seay, Alexander and Harlow (1964) who reported that monkeys reared without maternal contact but nevertheless fed and cleaned adequately, avoided their own infants, failed to nurse, and frequently attacked them. Although Steele and Pollock do not fully accept the applicability of these findings, Horenstein believes there is a striking similarity to the child abuse situation.

Given the nature of the parents' early life experiences, how do they come to repeat this with their own children? Steele and Pollock maintain that a very early identification, before two years of age, occurs in which the child identifies directly with aggression (rather than an aggressor which would require more sophisticated object-relations). This identification occurs as a rudimentary precursor to the development of the superego. Later a true identification with the aggressor occurs in the preliminary phases of superego development. In addition to this development of a highly punitive superego the demands and attacks being made on the infant frustrate basic needs for comfort and empathy. These frustrations easily become anger toward the frustrating parent; but this anger is soon turned inward toward the self in the face of excessive guilt generated by the strict superego.

> "This guilt, largely unconscious, predominantly in relation to the mother, persists through the patient's life. It accounts in the adult for the frequent periods of depression and contributes to the pervasive sense of inferiority and low self esteem. When the parent misidentifies the infant as the embodiment of his own bad self, the full aggression

of his punitive superego can be directed outward onto the child" (Steele and Pollock, 1968, p.108).

The excessively high standards of the superego, which are expressed through demanding behaviour which the child cannot produce, also sanctions the use of physical attack when demands are not met.

The distortion of the parent's ability to show motherliness is of course brought into focus with the birth of a child. Drawing on the work of Benedek (1959), Steele and Pollock infer that with this event there occurs an upsurge of childhood memories when the adult becomes a parent. Two memories are activated: what it was like to be a child, and how one was parented. This recall would be largely unconscious consisting of vague feelings and moods but would strongly influence the patterns of behaviour toward the infant from birth onwards. The observation that abusing parents place demands on their children that developmentally, they cannot cope with is well supported in the literature (Bain, 1963; Gregg, 1968; Helfer and Pollock, 1967; Johnson and Morse, 1968; Morris and Gould, 1963). Some of these findings have been challenged in recent years by Smith (1975), and Smith, Hanson and Noble (1974) who found that after controlling for the effects of age and social class, abusing parents did not practise early toilet training, rigid feeding schedules, intolerance of screaming, and punishment of aggression; however, they did find that abusing parents used physical punishment far more than expected for their age and class. While this challenges Steele and Pollock's finding of excessive demand, it confirms their finding regarding the punitive character of child rearing.

Another study by Spinetta (1978) found that a sample of abusing mothers (all from a low socio-economic group) tended to have higher than normal expectations for their children's performance, and that they failed to separate their own feelings from those of their children. In contrasting the methodology of Smith to that of Spinetta, it appears that while Spinetta conducted his investigation with subjects from a single socio-economic class, Smith and Hanson used a mixed group and then adjusted their results using weighted scores in order to make comparisons. However, this method of adjusting for social class has been criticised by Starr (1978). A further study by Paulsen, Afifi, Schwemer and Bendel (1977) revealed no significant differences between abusing and controlled parents on measures of child-rearing attitudes and expectations. They note, however, that their measurement techniques may well have been faulty. It thus appears that the concensus of opinion in the literature lends support to this theory. However, this should be viewed in the light of the fact that research attempts to assess its validity have not produced conclusive evidence.

2.2 Green, Gaines and Sandgrund's Dependency Theory

These authors regard psychodynamic factors within the parent as of prime importance in accounting for child abuse. However, current environmental stress and the characteristics of the child are held to play a part. These two factors can be briefly outlined as follows: environmental stress in the form of diminished help in childrearing (e.g., desertion of a spouse), or the threat of, or actual loss of a significant relationship which has provided security, may place increased pressures on the already limited capacities of the parents. Similarly, children with extreme physical or psychological deviance (e.g., physical

defect, mental retardation) tend to be poorly tolerated.

The psychodynamic patterns of the parent are rooted in childhood experiences where there is frequent rejection and criticism by parents and subjection to harsh, violent punishment. The result of this is that the adult retains strong dependency needs which have never been satisfied. The adult invariably seeks gratification from her own child. Since these demands on the child conflict with the child's own needs, the parent is brought to a point where her own needs are once again frustrated. At this crucial juncture the mother equates the child with her own critical, rejecting parent at an unconscious level. This misperception of the child sets the stage for an assault on the child, for it is through this attack that the parent is able to master the originally-experienced rejection of her own mother. The manner in which this occurs is succintly described:

> "The mother passively re-enacts with the abused child the rejection and humiliation she originally experienced with her own mother. The resulting anxiety, guilt, and loss of self-esteem threaten the mother's fragile, narcissistic equilibrium. Her 'bad' self-image and unacceptable feelings are displaced onto the child. ...With this shift, the mother assumes the identification with her 'bad' mother, representing her punitive superego, and attacks her child, who now symbolizes past and current inadequacies" (Greene, Gaines and Sandgrund, 1974, p.885).

The identification of the child as rejecting and persecutory by way of its stimulating unconscious childhood traumas in the abusing parent is a feature of these dynamics that has also been reported by Flynn (1970),

Blumberg (1974, 1977) and Galdston (1965). These authors maintain that the abused child is endowed by the parent with the attributes of an adult in that the child is believed to be able to satisfy unresolved dependency needs. This phenomenon has been termed "role reversal" by Morris and Gould (1963) who found very similar dynamics in their own patients. To date there appear to be only three research attempts which have investigated the phenomenon of an inversion of roles whereby the parent seeks gratification of unresolved dependency needs. Melnick and Hurley (1969) reported severely frustrated dependency needs in a group of abusing mothers. However, they used only ten cases in their study, of which eight were Negro. Smith and Hanson (1975) used the Semantic Differential to investigate Morris and Gould's role-reversal theory and found that abusing and control group mothers felt equally unhappy when their children exhibited dependency behaviour; however, the abusing mothers were upset more frequently by this behaviour. Although Smith and Hanson do not analyse this finding further it seems nevertheless to suggest that abusing mothers are more prone to emotional upset in the face of their children's demands. Gaines, Sandgrund, Greene and Power (1978) found no evidence to support a hypothesised relationship between mother-neonate bonding and abuse. They administered questionnaires on child-rearing and life-stress and found results which indicated life-stress to be the most prominent feature of their analysis. Thus out of the three research attempts, one study contains supporting evidence, another partially supports, and a third fails to find results which support this theory. At present the validity of the theory cannot be adequately evaluated given this inconclusive research evidence, although clinical investigations by its authors as well as writers such as Flynn (1970), Blumberg (1974, 1977), Galdston (1965) and Morris and Gould (1963) strongly support it.

2.3 Terr's Family Theory

In contrast to many authors, Terr (1970) attempts to locate the psychopathology of child abuse within the matrix of family relationships rather than attributing it predominantly to the parent's intra-psychic functioning. She identifies four elements in the patterning of relationships in abusing families. These are outlined below:

2.3.1 Abuser fantasies. In the ten families studied, Terr found that the assault was precipitated in each case by a specific fantasy which the abusing parent had about the abused child. Four types of fantasies were evident. The first type involved fear of the infant's helplessness in which the infant was strongly identified with the mother who was typically infantile herself and incapable of meeting her child's needs. The second type of fantasy revolved around fearing punishment from the child. Although similar to the role reversal concept these fantasies were much more elaborate and not merely false preconceptions of parental attributes in the child. The third fantasy was fear of the child's seductiveness in which the parents attributed extraordinary sexual powers to their children. In one case, the child was feared for homosexual tendencies, in another the child was viewed as a powerful rival for the father's affections. The fourth type of fantasy concerns disappointment in the child's inability to fulfil preconceived hopes, even though the child was unable to do so. An example of this is the child who was seen as a saviour who would release the mother from her intolerable environment. Terr emphasises the highly individual nature of these fantasies which are much more complex that simple role-reversal ones.

2.3.2 Exaggerated dominant-submissive spouse relationships

In nine cases the relationship of the parents were markedly extreme in dominant-submissive or aggressive-passive patterns. The non-abusing partners had serious problems in dealing with aggression, while six of these couples had chronic marital difficulties. Terr sees the hostility generated by the tensions inherent in these patterns of relating as finding expression in angry behaviour towards the child. Flynn (1970) has made a similar observation in abusing mothers who seemed unable to connect their aggression towards their children to the anger they had suppressed towards their husbands.

2.3.3 Displacement of fantasies onto siblings. The abuser's treatment of the siblings was closely related to how fixed the abuser's fantasy was upon the abused child. In cases where the fantasy was not rigidly fixed it tended to displace easily onto one or more siblings.

2.3.4 The contributions of the child. There were three influences which the abused child exerted on the family. Physical abnormalaties in the form of failure-to-thrive and prematurity tended to exaggerate parental fantasies or stimulate parental guilt and hostility directly. The ego defects of the abused child (expressed as withdrawal and indifference to the mother) tended to block communication and make it more difficult for the mother to relate to the child. These ego defects were secondary to maternal deprivation. Finally eight out of ten abused children displayed retaliatory behaviour to the abusing parent (e.g., spitting out food, lying and stealing).

Although Terr maintains that the family system as a whole must be studied in accounting for abuse this is not really evident in her analysis. Although she emphasises factors such as the spouse relationship and the contributions of the child the general impression that is created is that these factors are only important insofar as they are relevant to the intrapsychic dynamics of the parent. For example, failure-to-thrive tended to accentuate parental guilts while prematurely born infants stimulated the mother's already existing fantasies about them. Nevertheless this theory certainly contributes in examining the nature of child abuser fantasies and the spouse relationship. One of its main difficulties is its generalisability as only ten families were studied. In addition, no research to date has attempted to explore its formulations.

2.4 Contribution of the Psychopathological Approach

As an approach to the study of child abuse psychopathologically oriented models have undoubtedly contributed valuable insights into the nature of the abusing parent's personality functioning. This type of theory-building represents an advance on the 'characteristics' approach insofar as it attempts to construct a coherent account of the antecedents of child abuse. Nevertheless there are certain evident similarities between the 'characteristics' and psychopathological approaches. As has been noted already (see pg. **7**) the Psychiatric Model of abuse which incorporate both approaches, assumes that the causes of child abuse are attributable to psychopathology in the parents. This assumption has been challenged in recent years by authors such as Galles (1973), Gil (1970), and Burgess (1979). (These criticisms will be dealt with in the section on the Sociological approach). A further difficulty with the Psychiatric Model is that it tends to ignore the social contexts of the phenomena

that it investigates (Burgess, 1979). This point has been touched on in the 'Characteristics' section; however, psychopathologically oriented researchers have received similar criticisms. (Once again, these criticisms will be dealt with in the section on the Sociological approach).

2.4.1 Contribution of psychopathological theories to the present study. A number of theories have been presented which have attempted to explain the causes of child abuse, and some of the difficulties encountered with these formulations have been explored. While it may be valuable to analyse these efforts in more detail it should be noted that the primary intention in discussing these theories has been to provide a basis for elaborating the aims of the present study. A major aspect of this study is concerned with how the abusing parent perceives the abused child. It is clear that many authors regard the misperception of the child by the parent as a crucial element in accounting for abuse. In addition, the consequences of the parent misperceiving the child results in a disregard for the child's abilities to satisfy the demands that are made by the parent. Research that has attempted to explore the child-rearing attitudes and practices of the parents (Smith, 1975; Smith and Hanson, 1975; Paulsen, Schwemer, Afifi and Bendel, 1977; Spinetta, 1978; Robertson and Juritz, 1979) have largely focussed on the parents' attitudes and practices to children in general. Only the study by Smith and Hanson explored these factors in relation to the abuser's own children. Nonetheless all of these attempts have not directly assessed parental perceptions of the child, but have inferred them from studying child-rearing practices and attitudes. Given the inconclusive findings of much

of this research it would appear that direct assessment of parental perceptions is warranted, and may also help to clarify aspects of the theories discussed above.

3. SOCIALLY ORIENTED APPROACHES

In recent years a growing number of authors have begun to question the validity of the Psychiatric Model and have attempted to study child abuse from the perspective of its social dimension. The criticisms of the Psychiatric Model have generated considerable debate around the problem of what type of analysis is best suited to the understanding of child abuse. This has, not surprisingly, led to the questioning of assumptions which underpin the various theoretical approaches. The present study is not designed to test the validity of any particular model of child abuse; however, the manner in which the results are interpreted may have some bearing on a particular model. The reverse is also true: a particular theory may help to clarify the findings. For these reasons it seems that a brief consideration of the main contributions of this approach is necessary.

3.1 Criticisms of the Psychiatric Model

A considerable number of authors using socially oriented approaches have questioned the basic premise of the Psychiatric Model, viz. that factors within the individual child abuser are responsible for the occurrence of abuse (Alvy, 1975; Antler, 1978; Garbarino, 1976, 1977, 1979; Gelles, 1973; Gil, 1968). Smith's (1975) study, which examined a wide variety of parental characteristics, lends weight to the validity

of questioning this premise. He states that his results showed that when social and economic factors are held constant, child abusers are observed to be far less handicapped than previous studies have shown. A further criticism of the Psychiatric Model (Burgess, 1979; Gelles, 1973) has pointed out that much of the research which has attempted to verify the model's theoretical propositions has suffered greatly from poor methodology and frequently yielded inconsistent findings. These points seem to be borne out in the light of previous discussion in the 'Characteristics' and 'Psychopathology' sections (1 and 2). Gelles (1973) has criticised the Psychiatric Model for its narrowness and its tendency to deny the relevance of sociological and contextual variables associated with child abuse.

The difficulties that have been encountered in studying child abuse from the Psychiatric Model viewpoint have been instrumental in encouraging socially oriented authors to develop alternative models (Belsky, 1978; Burgess, 1979). There are two models which warrant attention, viz., the Sociological Model and the Social Interactional Model. Of these the Sociological Model is by far the most well represented in the literature. The Social Interactional Model is a more recent development which is clearly distinct in approach.

3.2. The Sociological Model

Belsky (1978) states that the Sociological Model has, as its basic premise, the idea that forces within society are responsible for the occurrence of child abuse. Accordingly authors such as Gil (1968a, 1968b, 1969) have studied the range of stress factors and social norms which have a bearing on child abuse. Gil studied nearly 6 000 physically abused

children over a one year period in the United States. He found that the majority of his sample were of low socioeconomic status. Educational level and occupational status of the parents were found to be very low, and unemployment rates of the fathers were three times the national average. Family incomes were also low with 60% having received some form of public assistance during or prior to the study. Other writers such as Bennie and Sclare (1969) (cited in Gelles, 1973) have found 80% of their cases to be of low socioeconomic status, while Galdston (1965) maintains that abusing parents are frequently found to have limited educational and financial means. Gelles (1973) states that this evidence lends support to the claim that intrafamily violence is prevalent in the working class. Gil (1971) has argued that on the basis of his findings socioeconomic pressures on the 'lower' class tend to weaken psychological mechanisms of self control in parents. He maintains that working class poverty leads to frustrations which are subsequently released in an assault on the child. Belsky (1978) in commenting on studies which have explored socio-economic factors, states that such findings do not imply that abuse is restricted to low income groups. He notes, as does Pfohl (1977), that wealthier patients are able to use the services of private practitioners who are less likely to report cases. The issue of class-related stress factors being causally related to child abuse has been challenged in the literature. Belsky (1978), and Spinetta and Rigler (1972) state that such explanations do not account for the fact that most parents in low socioeconomic groups do not abuse their children even though they are subject to the same environmental pressures as abusing parents. Fowler and Stockford (1979) in fact found that abusing parents were no different from other parents seeking help from Social Service Departments in terms of family size, income levels, employment, social class and.

broken marriages.

For Gil (1969) the basic factor underlying all the antecedents of child abuse is the nature of violence in society:

> "Its basic level upon which all other factors are superimposed is the general culturally permitted use of a measure of physical force in caretaker-child interaction and the related absence of clear cut legal prohibition against this form of interpersonal violence" (Gil, 1969, p.861)

This contention is strongly supported by authors such as Alvy (1975), and Garbarino (1977). Alvy further suggests that while there are qualitative and quantitative differences amongst various social groupings in the approval and practice of physical force in child rearing, this nevertheless creates the conditions under which other contributing factors combine to produce a physical assault.

Garbarino (1976, 1977) has attempted to clarify the relationship of environmental stress factors (e.g., low income, unemployment) and abuse by focusing on how stress is likely to affect the caregiver role. He states that stress factors and a low level of skill in a caregiver combine to produce "situationally defined incompetence" - the pathological adaptation of the abuser to the child. He cites research by Bettelheim (1943), Milgram (1974), and Zimbardo and Ruch (1975) who demonstrated that "virtually everyone can be 'broken' if the situation is arranged effectively in terms of roles" (Garbarino, 1977, p.723).

Garbarino's explanation does not account for how low levels of skill in caregiving are generated in abusers in the first place. However, his attempt to link environmental stress factors to the

caregiver role appears to be a more sophisticated explanation for the occurrence of child abuse than those which have studied stress factors in relative isolation.

3.3. The Social Interactional Model

This model is a comparatively recent development which resulted from dissatisfaction with the attempts to explain abuse solely as a function of the abusing parent's psychological characteristics, or as due to social stress factors (Burgess, 1979). Its main focus centres on the roles of the abusing parent and abused child in the family, and the interaction of these roles. It also strongly acknowledges the effects of psychological and sociological variables in the occurrence of child abuse (Belsky, 1978; Burgess, 1979; Parke and Collmer, 1975). Belsky (1978) notes that recent thinking in the field of child development has led to a questioning of long held assumptions which regard socialisation as a uni-directional process; i.e., that the development of a child is shaped by parents and society. He maintains that the growing recognition that children can influence the behaviour of their parents has significant implications for the study of child abuse. Belsky outlines the findings of a number of authors (e.g., Johnson and Morse, 1968; Elmer and Gregg, 1967) and maintains that there are indications that the abused child may well be atypical prior to the occurrence of the abuse. Prematurity in the form of low birth weight and early gestational age, unwanted pregnancies, and deviation in social interaction prior to abuse are cited by Belsky as factors which are commonly found in abused children and which may stimulate the occurrence of negative patterns of interaction between parent and child from early childhood. Belsky, however, cautions against adopting a single factor

causal approach when considering the occurrence of child abuse:

> "There are families that live under conditions of social stress identical to those of abusive families that do not abuse; parents with psychiatric histories similar to abusive parents that do not become abusers; and children with characteristics identical to those of maltreated children who do not elicit abuse. This suggests then, that some dynamic interplay between adult, societal, and child characteristics is at work in the abuse process" (Belsky, 1978, pp.46-47).

Burgess (1979) has attempted to investigate the "patterned forms of interaction" in abusing families. He used direct observational methods to examine a variety of interactions: giving and receiving behaviours, affect quality, commands, and command consequences. He found that in two-parent abusing families rates of interaction were significantly lower than in matched controls. This was particularly the case for affectionate and supportive behaviours. Negative and coercive interactions were significantly greater in number for the abuse group. Burgess states, furthermore, that his findings suggest that the childrens' negative behaviours are quickly suppressed by counter responses from the abusing parent. He concludes by stating that the recurring transactions between family members shoud be viewed in the broader context of historical and cultural tolerance of aggressive behaviour; the coercive styles of interaction of abusing families therefore need closer examination to discover their antecedents and the environmental factors that maintain them.

It is clear that the emphasis on parent-child interaction, and the

intersection of parent- and child-related characteristics in the Social Interactional Model is a valuable addition to the literature on child abuse, particularly as it attempts to synthesize many different viewpoints. Nonetheless it should be stressed that this model is still in a stage of early conceptual development, and research evidence supporting its formulations is minimal.

3.4 The Contribution of Socially Oriented Approaches

The most obvious contribution of socially oriented theories of child abuse is that they have sought to locate it within the wider context of societal norms and socioeconomic stresses. These authors have generally not ignored the influence of the psychological characteristics of the parent and the child although they tend to give these much less weight. Their emphasis on environmental stress factors has been criticised for being unable to account for why parents subjected to the same stresses do not abuse their children. It is evident, however, that child abuse does not occur in a social vacuum, - the variety of social conditions which frequently accompany physical assaults on children must at least be considered as contributory factors which increase the risk of a child being abused.

The Social Interactional Model appears to be one of the most well-balanced attempts to formulate a theory of child abuse, focusing on the roles of parent and child in the abusing family and acknowledging the influence of the social environment. This model seems to more closely fit in with the basic aims of the present study, particularly insofar as it concerns itself with both parent and child characteristics. While this study is not designed as a test of this model it may nevertheless be of some use in evaluating the results.

CHAPTER III

The Children

1. THE NEED TO STUDY ABUSED CHILDREN

Investigations of the characteristics of abused children appear to be under-represented in the literature where the main focus of attention has centred on the role of the parents, and on the social environment in which abuse commonly takes place. In this chapter it is intended to review the major findings on the characteristics of abused children. In doing so it is also intended to consider the problem of the atypicality of these children prior to abuse.

2. DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

The present study is concerned with particular aspects of development in abused children viz., levels of functioning in the areas of socialization, cognitive development, language and gross motor development. As such the literature to be reviewed in this section will be that which has some direct or indirect bearing on these features of development.

2.1 Medical History

There have been several studies which have investigated the incidence of low birth weight in abused children. Elmer and Gregg (1967); Martin, Beezley, Conway and Kempe (1974); Rowan (1979) and Smith (1975) have reported a history of low birth weight in 25% to 30% of the abused children they studied. Smith notes that some authors (Simons, Downes, Hurster and Archer, 1966; Gregg and Elmer, 1969;

Skinner and Castle, 1969) have claimed that low birth weight infants may be at increased risk of being abused. However, Smith maintains that this may be explained by maternal factors which predispose to delivery of low birth weight babies, - low social class, youthful and single status, and rejecting attitudes during pregnancy.

Kempe and Kempe (1978) describe children with the failure-to-thrive syndrome as emaciated, frantic, and difficult to cuddle. Failure-to-thrive is usually defined in terms of an infant's failure to gain in weight and height, within normal limits (Martin et al, 1974). Gregg and Elmer (1969); Martin et al (1974); Oates and Hufton (1977); Smith (1975), and Starr (1978) report failure-to-thrive in significant numbers in the abused children they studied.

Undernutrition is also frequently reported in studies of abused children: Martin (1972); Elmer (1967) - cited in Martin et al (1974), and Smith (1975) have all reported this feature. Martin et al state that poor nutrition accompanied by poor physical growth is seen in 25% to 35% of abused children.

The neurological status of abused children has been assessed by several authors. Martin (1972) studied 42 abused children of which 33% were developmentally retarded. Forty-three per cent of the 42 children had neurological damage. Another study reported by Martin et al(1974, 1976c) investigated 58 physically abused children and classified them into four neurological classes:

Class Zero: No neurological dysfunction.

Class One: Mild neurological signs ('soft' signs) which include mild, gross or fine motor inco-ordination and mild sensory distortion.

Class Two: Moderately severe neurological abnormality, - for example deficiency in proprioception, delay in motor skill acquisition.

Class Three: Serious and significant neurological abnormality such as paresis or impaired cranial nerve function.

Comparisons were made between those children who had suffered head trauma and those who had no such history. Not unsurprisingly nearly all those with history of head trauma manifested clinical signs in classes one, two and three; however, 43% of the children with no head trauma history also showed signs in classes one, two and three. There is difficulty in evaluating the findings of Martin and his co-workers as the social class position of the children is not reported and a normal control group was not assessed for comparison purposes. In addition, the use of percentages to report results is not usually considered as statistically sound.

2.2. Intellectual Functioning

Research studies that have investigated levels of intellectual functioning in abused children are few in number. There are even fewer which can be considered methodologically sound. One of the first attempts to study intellectual functioning was that of Elmer and Gregg (1967). They report IQ's ranging from 52 to 103 in 20 abused children, with 50% of their sample falling below IQ 80. They state that although no children fell within the retarded range of functioning, there was not a single score in the high average range. Unfortunately this study has several methodological faults: three different tests were employed (the Columbia Mental Maturity Scale, Form L-M of the Stanford Binet Intelligence Test, and the WISC), but the characteristics

of the sub-groups which were assessed on each of these tests are not reported, (e.g., age, sex, social class). Sex differences and social class factors do not appear to have been controlled. It is therefore difficult to drawn meaningful conclusions on the basis of these results alone.

Martin et al (1974) assessed 58 abused children on a number of measures (32 children on the WISC, 14 on the WPPSI, three on the Bayley Scales of Infant Development, 4 each on the Stanford Binet and Revised Yale Developmental Schedules, and one on the Leiter International Performance Scale). They found IQ's ranging from 15 to 131 with a mean IQ of 92,3. The distribution of scores was not found to be significantly different from that of a normal distribution. As these assessments included abused children with neurological dysfunction and a history of head trauma, the sample was split into a neurological dysfunction group and a non-neurological dysfunction group. The non-dysfunction group was found to have significantly higher IQ scores, ranging from 17 to 21 points higher. Martin et al acknowledge that the use of a variety of test instruments on their sample was not desirable, however, this had to be done due to the variability in ages. Other difficulties with this study included the failure to hold ethnic background and social class factors constant.

A further study by Starr (1978) compared 18 abused children to a sibling group of four children on the Bayley scales. Scores on the Mental Scale of both the abused children and the siblings were found to be somewhat below average. The abused childrens' scores on the Motor Scale were in the average range, but lower than those of the siblings. Starr does not state whether this finding was significant. As the control group consisted of only 4 siblings it would in any case be quite difficult

to make valid comparisons.

Van Staden (1979) administered the Griffiths Mental Development Scales to 30 white South African abused children and 20 non-abused children. She excluded from the abuse group any child with brain injury. The findings showed significant differences between index and control children for the General Quotient of the scale. In addition, all but one sub-scale yielded significant results. These scales were: Personal-Social, Hearing and Speech, Eye and Hand Coordination, Performance (i.e., manual dexterity), and Practical Reasoning. The Locomotor scale findings were not significant. Von Staden states that absence of control measures for the variables of sex and socioeconomic status constitutes a failing of this study. Furthermore, her control group was drawn from a rather mixed group of children who presented at a Psychiatry outpatients department with such problems as temper tantrums, hyperactivity, encopresis, and enuresis.

Smith (1975) found significant differences between abuse and control groups for the Griffiths Scales' general quotient. When these data were compared after excluding those abused children who had suffered head injury, the results were not significant for the Personal-Social, Locomotor and Hand and Eye Coordination Scales. These findings contradict those found by Van Staden outlined above. Only the scores on the Hearing and Speech Scale were significant. It should also be noted that the Griffiths Scales do not distinguish between receptive and expressive language as the Speech and Hearing scale gives a single score incorporating both functions.

In summary, the studies quoted above do not appear to clearly establish the status of abused childrens' intellectual functioning.

The findings seem to support the contention that lower levels of functioning are common in abused children. However, only two of these studies can be considered to approach acceptable methodological standards - those of Van Staden (1979) and Smith (1975). The issue is even less clear with attempts to evaluate non-head trauma/brain injured abused children. The studies by Van Staden and Smith which undertook this have shown largely conflicting findings. Whereas it can be accepted with reasonable certainty that abused children function at lower levels than normal non-abused children, it seems that this is not the case for sub-groups which do not have central nervous system impairment. Further investigations of the levels of development of these sub-groups appears to be needed. It is intended in the present study to assess the functioning of these children. Included in this investigation will be separate assessments of receptive and expressive language. Thus the main focus of developmental investigations is on a group of abused children who have not suffered from detectable impairment of the CNS. As such, this is a relatively "pure" group of abused children whose intellectual functioning has not been directly affected by physical assault in so far as it is possible to determine this.

The investigation of abused children along the lines proposed above may help to shed some light on an issue which has been occasionally raised in the literature, viz. the contribution that the child might make towards the eventual occurrence of an assault. Belsky (1978), Burgess (1979), Friedrich and Boroskin (1976), and Milowe and Lourie (1964) have all made claims to the effect that the child may contribute to his/her own abuse. These authors have based their claims on findings which point to the atypicality of abused children prior to the occurrence of abuse. These include low birth weight, failure-to-thrive syndrome, prematurity,

and unplanned pregnancy which have high incidences amongst abused children. The present study will investigate abused children in the post-abuse situation. However, as the effects of CNS impairment, which may bias the findings in the delay direction, will be eliminated as far as possible, the results obtained might give some clues as to the developmental status of these children prior to abuse. However, as these methods of inquiry can obviously not be used to make predictions about development status prior to abuse it should be stressed that any conclusion drawn on this basis would have to be extremely tentative, serving only to indicate whether this issue merits further inquiry.

3. TEMPERAMENT IN ABUSED CHILDREN

There have been some suggestions in the literature that abused children may vary with respect to their temperament characteristics. Milowe and Lourie (1964) described the reactions of nurses to abused children in a hospital ward. The nurses reacted to the difficulty of managing these children and commented on their irritable crying and their generally unappealing nature. A similar observation was made by Martin (1976a) who noted that members of the nursing staff at his own hospital reacted to these children "with anger and protestations that, 'No wonder that child got abused, I'd hit him too if I had to live with him'." (p.37). Another study by Johnson and Morse (1968) stated that child welfare workers reported the 52 children in their study to be whiny, fussy, listless, chronically crying, restless, demanding, stubborn, restive, negativistic, unresponsive, pallid, sickly, ... fearful, panicky, unsmiling" (p.21). Milowe and Lourie (1964) have gone as far as to suggest that the abused child may unwittingly invite physical abuse from their parents. This contention has been

challenged by Smith (1975) who states that after being in hospital for some time the abused children he studied were not observed to be more irritable than control children. However, Smith's interviews with abusing mothers revealed that they encountered difficulty with their children, especially clinging and crying behaviour, significantly more often than control mothers.

The observations of the authors cited above seem to suggest that temperament factors in abused children may be a significant avenue of exploration, particularly if atypicality in temperament is present from birth. Martin (1976b) appears to be the only author to date who has addressed this problem directly. He states that it is frequently noticed by nurses in newborn nurseries how normal children can vary quite considerably. Some are seen as placid, others irritable, while some are easy to hold and others are difficult. He cites the work of Brazleton (1974), and Thomas, Chess and Birch (1968) who have investigated variables in infant and child behaviour which are based on inherent biological factors. These variables include such elements as cuddliness, excitability, distractability, and adaptability. Martin acknowledges that it may be difficult to separate out inherent capacities from those shaped by the environment. His comment on this issue, however, is significant:

> "And yet, the variation in capacity to adapt to one's environment cannot be denied, even if it cannot be isolated and strictly defined. For if babies vary in their ability to adapt to their environment, if the "temperament" of babies differs from the first few days and weeks of life, if we appreciate the observations of parents about their different

> children, then we must assume that those inherent differences in bio-psychological equipment do not dissipate and disappear. Even as we acknowledge the tremendous role of experience in shaping people's coping mechanisms, we cannot help but be impressed by the variation in people's capacity to be shaped by their environment. In lower animal forms this variation ... is clearly seen. Even in domesticated animals one sees variability in the capacity ... to stalk prey or to react to danger" (Martin, 1976b, pp.141-142).

Martin suggests that variations in these inherent capacities in abused children may well be important in contributing to a child being placed at risk for abuse, particularly in the light of other "at risk" factors such as prematurity, unplanned pregnancy, and neonatal separation which are frequently found in abused children.

There appear to have been no research attempts to date which have directly investigated temperament factors in abused children. In the present study an attempt will be made to do this. However, before considering this aspect of the study further, it is necessary to consider the concept of temperament in greater depth.

4. THE CONCEPT OF TEMPERAMENT

It was largely the work of Alexander Thomas and his associates which pioneered the study of temperament in young children. It is therefore the investigations of these workers that will be explored here, particularly as the focus of their work has included the age

group which is under consideration in this study.

Thomas, Chess and Birch (1968) state that temperament may be regarded as a general term which refers to the how of behaviour. In other words, temperament refers to the way in which a child behaves. Thomas et al have also termed it the behavioural style of the individual child. They differentiate temperament from other aspects of behaviour. It specifically does not include the content of behaviour, the motivations for behaviour, and the abilities that are manifested in behaviour. Furthermore, temperament is intimately linked to organismic factors within the child. Their concern with the "organismic individuality" of the child stemmed from research that appeared in the 1940's and 1950's which identified individual differences in infants. Some of these included sleeping and feeding patterns, quality and intensity of emotional tone, and autonomic response patterns. Furthermore, these studies emphasised that these individual differences were present from birth and could not be explained as the result of post-natal experience. Thus it appears that for Thomas et al, temperament is a qualitative dimension of child behaviour which ultimately has an organismic or biological basis. Temperament however is not considered to be an immutable organismic characteristic of an individual which alone determines the course of development. Thomas et al state:

> "This concern with the child's own characteristics as a force in development has accelerated sufficiently in the past few years so that currently there is a broad concensus among investigators in child psychiatry and child development that the consideration of both organismic and environmental

factors, as well as their mutually interactive influences, is required for any comprehensive study of a child's normal or abberant development" (Thomas, Chess and Birch, 1968, p.6).

Moreover, temperament is regarded by these authors as being capable of undergoing change as a result of environmental influence. In this respect it is similar to factors such as height, weight, and intellectual competence. In addition, temperament is regarded as a particular facet of personality and should not be construed as the equivalent of personality. Thomas et al seem to imply that temperament is an aspect of personality which has a direct basis in organismic functioning. They have defined temperament as: "a phenomenologic term used to describe the characteristic tempo, rhythmicity, adaptability, energy expenditure, mood, and focus of attention of a child, independently of the content of any specific behaviour" (Thomas, Chess and Birch, 1968, p.4). At the end of Section 3 of this chapter, it was stated that to date no research attempts appear to have been made to investigate the temperament of abused children. It is intended to conduct such an attempt in the present study.

Thomas, Chess and Birch (1968), and Thomas, Chess, Birch, Herzig and Korn (1964) have reported on their research into child temperament, and their development of nine categories of temperament which may be used to rate the behaviour of children. The categories of measurement developed by Thomas et al (1964, 1968) are as follows:

Activity Level

Rhythmicity of Biological Function.

Approach or Withdrawal.

Adaptability.

Intensity of Reaction.

Threshold of Responsiveness.

Quality of Mood.

Distractability.

Attention Span and Persistence.

The precise definitions given for each of these categories are quoted in Appendix A. The present study makes use of these researchers' rating schedules and scoring techniques. However, the nature of this research requires some alterations to the methods followed by Thomas and his associates. For this reason, an outline of Thomas' research and measurement techniques will be presented in Chapter 5 (Methodology) and will be followed by the alterations necessitated by the present study.

CHAPTER IV

Rationale and Hypotheses

1. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

As has been mentioned frequently, this study addresses two main problems in the field of child abuse: developmental and temperament factors in abused children, and characteristic ways of perceiving the abused child in abusing parents.

The necessity for further investigation into the levels of development in abused children has been outlined in Chapter III, section 2.2. In summary: there is general agreement that abused children function at lower levels than normal children. Attempts to compare normal children with the sub-group of abused children who have not suffered impairment of the CNS have, however, not yielded conclusive findings. In view of this, the present study will attempt an investigation of non-impaired abused children. The areas of functioning which will be examined are: gross-motor development, cognitive development, socialisation, receptive language and expressive language.

Recent suggestions in the literature (Martin, 1976a, 1976b) have indicated that temperament may be an important feature in the psychological functioning of the abused child. Martin (1976b) has suggested that variations in the "inherent differences in bio-psychological equipment" (p.141) in abused children may be factors which contribute to them being placed at increased risk for abuse. Although Martin has speculated at length on this issue, there have not been any empirical investigations into the temperament of abused children, either before

the occurrence of abuse or after it. Thus it appears that a crucial problem is to establish whether such differences do exist. The present study attempts to investigate the temperament of abused children (in the post-abuse situation) using the theoretical and practical formulations of Alexander Thomas and his co-workers.

The way in which abusing parents misperceive their children has received much attention in the literature. In particular, the abusing parent has been described as placing demands upon the child while disregarding the child's ability to comply. This carries a strong implication that the child's abilities are not accurately perceived by the parent; however, there have been no research attempts which have explored the perceptions of parents directly. (It has already been mentioned in Chapter 1 that the present study is concerned with how the parent perceives the abused child's characteristics).

It seems clear that if the parent is capable of misperceiving the child's ability to comply with demands, it is not unlikely that the parent's judgement of the child's level of functioning might be inaccurate. One might argue in a similar vein about the parent's perception of the abused child's temperament, but the literature does not contain any suggestions which explore this possibility. However, if one considers that the abusing mother's background is regarded as a poor preparation for parenthood by many authors (see Chapter II, section 1.2.1, and section 2) and that the parent is considered to be capable of disregarding the child's psychological functioning in favour of his or her own needs, it is possible that inaccurate perceptions of the child could be generated in these parents from the time of the birth of the child. The present study is concerned with investigating

abusing parents' perceptions of temperament with a view to clarifying whether these misperceptions exist.

It should be briefly mentioned that probably the most crucial question regarding all of the features outlined above is whether the abused child is atypical in level of development and in temperament prior to the occurrence of abuse. Any research attempt to investigate these characteristics prior to the onset of abuse, in the manner envisaged in the present study, would probably find it extremely difficult if not impossible in practice. Thus it seems that the only basis on which speculation about events prior to abuse can occur, is retrospectively, - after an occurrence of physical assault which has profound traumatic impact on the child. However, there does not seem to be another feasible way of doing this and yet the problem is a crucial one in the aetiology of child abuse. Although this study investigates the factors outlined above in the post-abuse situation, it is hoped that the methodology employed might permit some limited speculations about events prior to abuse.

2. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. Abused children will score lower than control children on all five sub-scales of the Grover Developmental Charts.
2. There will be a difference between the ratings of abused and control children on six categories of temperament.
3. There will be a difference between abusing mothers' and non-abusing control mothers' ratings of the levels of their childrens'

development in the areas of gross-motor functioning, socialization skills, and receptive language.

4. There will be a difference between abusing mothers' and non-abusing control mothers' rated opinions of their children on six categories of temperament.
5. There will be a difference between abused childrens' ratings and abusing mothers' rated opinions of their children on six categories of temperament.
6. There will be a difference between control childrens' ratings and control mothers' rated opinions of their children on six categories of temperament.

It will be noted that hypotheses 5 and 6 are designed to test the 'match' between the parents' perceptions and their childrens' temperament as rated in the six categories of temperament this investigation uses. This is possible as the ratings for both parents and children are done in the same six categories. Unfortunately, it is not possible to compare levels of development in the children with their parents' perceptions of these levels, as the types of data in each case are different - i.e., age scores on a developmental test, and ratings of developmental levels respectively. However, the comparison of abusing and control mothers' perceptions of levels of development may be considered an indirect test of the 'match' between the abusing parent and the abused child, in the light of the theories that have claimed that a crucial aspect of the dynamics of child abuse concerns the demands that abusing parents make on a child who is unable to comply. This issue will be dealt with more fully in Chapter VII.

CHAPTER V

Methodology

1. SUBJECTS

1.1. Abuse Subjects

1.1.1 Selection. Ten children between the ages of 13 and 24 months (mean age 23,1 months; standard deviation 7,9 months) were drawn from the 'coloured' population group. There were five boys and five girls. All of these subjects were children who had been brought by their parents to a day hospital, municipal clinic, or hospital casuality unit for the treatment of injury. They were referred to the Child and Family Unit of the Red Cross Children's Hospital on the confirmation of, or suspicion of, being abused by their mothers. The mothers were told that their children would be given a number of tests, and the information gained would go back to their referring agency where it may be of use in dealing with their problems. They were also informed that the author was studying children with all kinds of problems in order to learn more about them. Four mothers refused to bring their children to the Child and Family Unit.

1.1.2 Screening procedures. All subjects were given a thorough physical examination by a paediatrician. Any subjects found to have sustained CNS impairment were excluded as their inclusion may have biased the measurement of development in the 'delay' direction. Any subjects with a history of head injury were also excluded. (This information was obtained from

the referring clinic's records). Criteria for a positive diagnosis were:

a) that the parents concerned (i.e., the abusing mother) admitted to the abuse, and/or

b) that detectable physical injury existed in the absence of adequate explanation.

Either a) or b) were acceptable criteria for inclusion in the study.

1.1.3 Socioeconomic status. The social class position of all subjects coincided with class V of Hollingshead's (1958) classification. In his study entitled "Social Class and Mental Illness", Hollingshead classified the general population into five main social class groups. He conducted extensive interviews with 3 559 households and used "ecological area of residence, occupation and education" (p.37) to determine class position. Class V was denoted as the 'lowest' class of the five and is comprised of adults who usually find employment as semi-skilled factory workers or unskilled labourers. They generally have no high school education and often do not complete junior school. They tend to live in tenements and flats in 'slum' areas of the city. Family ties are described as "brittle". He states that "41% of the children under 17 years of age live in homes that have been disrupted by death, desertion, separation or divorce" (p.124), in the sample he investigated. Hollingshead's description of the life-style of class V members is significant:

> "The struggle for existence is a meaningful reality to these people. Their level of skill is low, their jobs poorly

paid and they have no savings to carry them over a crisis. Adults are resentful over the way they have been treated by employers, clergymen, teachers, ... and other representatives of organised society" (p.135).

The life circumstances of the research sample of this study in large measure coincides with Hollingshead's description of Class V. For basic information of the sample's characteristics see Appendix B.

1.2 Non-Abuse Subjects

1.2.1 Selection. The non-abuse control group was drawn from well-baby clinics in the Cape Peninsula (i.e., a population of children brought to the clinics for the purpose of routine innoculation). Three clinics were used from which a sample of 10 children was drawn. These clinics were selected on the basis of their having referred the majority (8 children) of the abused cases used in this study. In other words, the clinics from which the control was selected served the same geographical areas in which the majority of the abuse group children lived. Clinic staff assisted in initiating contact with volunteers. They informed the parent that a staff member of the Red Cross Hospital was studying the behaviour of normal children and would like their help In all cases it was made clear that participation was voluntary. There were no refusals to participate. Each child in the control group was matched for age and sex with a child in the abuse group. The mean age of the control group was 23,7 months; standard deviation 7,6 months.

They ranged in age from 13 to 33 months.

1.2.2 Screening procedures. As control subjects could not be examined by the Red Cross screening staff, the clinic medical records of these subjects were examined for a) history of CNS impairment, b) emotional disturbance, c) history of abuse of the child or its siblings, d) history of burns, fractures, or serious bruising. Any child found with one or more of these features in the medical history was automatically excluded.

1.2.3 Socioeconomic status. The social class position of all subjects coincided with Class V of Hollingshead's (1958) classification. (See paragraph 1.1.3 for a fuller description of Hollingshead's Class V). Appendix B contains basic information of this sample's characteristics.

1.3 Parents.

Interviews were conducted with the mother of each child. In each case, the parent (i.e., the mother) known to have abused the child, was interviewed. This was determined either by the parent admitting to abusing the child, or else by the abuse being independently witnessed (e.g., by a neighbour).

2. APPARATUS

2.1 The Grover Developmental Charts

2.1.1 General description. This locally developed scale

(Grover, 1978) covers the age range 10 to 36 months.*

It consists of five independently scored subscales:

- Interaction with Objects and Fine Motor Dexterity. The items tap such functions as manual dexterity, perceptual motor integration, laterality, spatial orientation, shape discrimination. This scale can be said to assess cognitive functioning. There are 66 items.

- Body Management and Mobility. The items are concerned with what is broadly termed gross-motor functioning, i.e., crawling, standing, walking, climbing stairs, jumping. There are 66 items.

- Socialization. This scale tests the range of self-help skills, e.g., dressing, toileting, eating; as well as the awareness of self and others in the environment. It contains 66 items.

- Communication. Both expressive and receptive language functions are tested and separate developmental age scores obtained for each. This chart therefore consists of two separately scored subscales. Each language subscale has 30 items. A "Common" section of 20 items precedes the Receptive and Expressive subscales. It has been included due to the difficulty in separating expressive from receptive language functions in children whose performance falls at

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*Unfortunately, for copyright reasons, reproduction of the Charts' items was not possible, and thus they could not be appended.

the lower end of the Communication Chart. The "Common" section score is included in the final score for both Receptive and Expressive subscales. The separate assessment of receptive and expressive functions has been done with a specific purpose in mind:

> "Mentally retarded and some other kinds of handicapped children may well have a specific deficit in spoken language (expressive) but their understanding of the spoken word (receptive) may be considerably better" (Grover, 1978, p.24).

Plaut (1978), in discussing the assessment of expressive and receptive language on the Grover Developmental Charts, notes that there do not appear to be tests available which give separate estimates for these two functions in the age range for which this test is designed.

All the subscales are arranged in order of ascending difficulty. Provision is made for scoring spontaneous behaviour, omissions and refusals. Each subscale yields a developmental age, but not a quotient. No <u>overall</u> score in the form of a quotient or developmental age is provided for either "since a major objective of the Charts is to detect strengths and weaknesses in atypical children" (Grover, 1978, p.31). In addition, the Charts have been designed to yield high inter-chart correlations and, thus, normally developing children are expected to achieve fairly similar levels of development on all subscales.

Standardization of the test was carried out on 600 white

children in the Cape Peninsula; however, to date little research has been done on it.

2.1.2 Reliability and validity Plaut (1978) conducted both reliability and validity studies. Her results are as follows:

a) Test-retest and test-observer reliability. Coefficients of ,95 and higher were obtained.

b) Criterion-related validity. Subscale correlations with the Denver Developmental Screening Test ranged from ,86 to ,96.

c) Construct validity. Factor analysis revealed age differentiation to be the major component reflected in all five subscales. Inter-subscale correlations ranged from ,951 to ,990.

2.1.3 Cross-cultural factors. The applicability of the scale to populations other than that which it was standardised on, in particular the 'coloured' population should be commented upon. (The majority of children assessed were Afrikaans speaking; however, as the Charts are mainly performance oriented and require a minimum of verbal communication, only two items on the Receptive Language subscale had to be translated). A high verbal component in a scale of this nature may well prejudice the performance of testees not drawn from the standardisation population due to the inevitable cultural loading inherent in verbal items. 'Lower' class 'coloured' children may not have the cultural background to cope with such items. In addition, a large number of culturally loaded items in a test would not give an adequate assessment of developmental status. The Grover Developmental Charts are primarily performance oriented with the exception of the Communication chart. Furthermore the use of a control group would tend to offset the problem of the

unavailability of norms for this population.

2.2. Thomas et al's Method of Temperament Assessment

As detailed earlier at the end of Chapter Three (Section 4) this investigation makes use of Thomas et al's techniques of temperament assessment. The requirements of the present investigation necessitated a number of alterations to Thomas et al's (1964, 1968) methods as they rely heavily on interviews conducted with parents to assess the child's temperament. It is probably not feasible to use parent interviews to obtain a behavioural record of the abused childrens' characteristics as most of these parents would usually be concerned with the medico-legal consequences of assaulting their children. Their reports cannot therefore be regarded as a valid reflection of their childrens' behaviour. In order to obtain these assessments direct observation procedures of the children were undertaken. Before detailing the modifications that this required to Thomas et al's methods, the research and measurement techniques developed by these workers will be outlined.

In order to construct categories suitable for the assessment of temperament, an investigation over a period of eight years was undertaken (Thomas, Chess, Birch, Herzig, and Korn, 1964; Thomas, Chess and Birch, 1968) in which a total of 66 normal children, and 136 children with a variety of behaviour disorders were used. These disorders included such problems as enuresis, school refusal, stuttering, tantrums, and poor peer relations. (This clinical sample was included as the categories of temperament were devised for eventual use with clinic populations). All subjects (behaviour disordered and normal

children) were white, middle- and upper-class children who were resident in New York City at the time of the study. To obtain descriptive material in-depth interviews were conducted with each parent. This inquiry focussed on eliciting descriptions of the child's behaviours, for example: motility, feeding, dressing and undressing, toileting, and responses to people. Once these data had been collected a content analysis was performed and nine categories of functioning, which could be scored throughout the protocols, were elicited. These have been detailed in Chapter Three, Section 4. For the sake of clarity they are presented again below:

Activity Level

Rhythmicity of Biological Function.

Approach or Withdrawal.

Adaptability.

Intensity of Reaction.

Threshhold of Responsiveness.

Quality of Mood.

Distractability.

Attention Span and Persistence.

The behavioural records obtained from the interviews were scored for each of the nine categories on a three-point scale. The scale points were the polar extremes and a middle level (e.g., high-medium-low). Thomas et al (1964) state that their initial scoring procedure was based on a five-point scale. However, as the mid-point of this scale showed low reliability they adopted the three-point scale.

Thomas et al (1964) conducted reliability and validity studies of their assessment methods. The interscorer reliability coefficient

was computed at ,90. Test-retest reliability over a three month period yielded a coefficient of ,90. In order to assess validity, 23 children were randomly drawn from the study population and directly observed in their own homes by two trained observers. The observers made their observations independently, and within two weeks of the parent interview. They used the same scoring method for the children as were used to score the behavioural records obtained from the parents. The comparison of the two sets of scores obtained by direct observation were in agreement at the ,05 level of confidence. The direct observations agreed with the parental interview assessment at the ,01 level of confidence. Thomas et al 1964) concluded that the assessment of reliability and validity indicates that the data of the parent interview were a valid indication of the child's behaviour, and that scoring methods were reliable.

2.3. Modification of Thomas et al's Methods for Use in the Present Study

As stated in Section 2.2 above, direct observation techniques were used to evaluate temperament in abused and non-abused subjects in this investigation. These techniques were used instead of the parent interviews employed by Thomas et al (1964, 1968) due to the possible unreliability of behavioural reports which might be obtained from abusing mothers. Observation methods were as follows:

a) A free play situation for each child was set up, with age-appropriate toys, in a room with a minimum of distracting influences (e.g., parents, other children).

b) An observer (previously trained in scoring the categories) was placed in an unobtrusive position in the room. The

observer always occupied the same position.

In addition, the following changes were made in respect of the temperament assessment categories:

a) Two of the temperament categories used by Thomas et al were excluded as direct observation was not an appropriate method of assessing them. These were: Adaptability and Rhythmicity of Biological Function. In order to assess these, very lengthy periods of observation would have been necessary, a requirement which went beyond the resources of this research project.

b) The categories of Distractability and Attention-span were collapsed. A series of trial runs with creche children revealed that for all practical purposes these categories were too close in nature to warrant a distinction. It appeared that a distractable child frequently had a short attention span as well. Thomas et al (1964) in fact state that these two categories are related.

Due to the extent of the departure from Thomas et al's method, a reliability study was carried out on 15 'coloured' creche children. The creche was situated in a geographical area similar to that from which the abuse and control samples were drawn. Inter-scorer reliability coefficients were computed for the six categories used in this study. The calculations yielded coefficients ranging from ,98 to 1,00. These high coefficients are the result of the very highly refined definitions of the scale points used in scoring the categories. The scorers used in this reliability study were the author and an assistant who had completed three undergraduate courses in psychology. The six categories used in the present investigation were:

Approach and Withdrawal.

Activity Level.

Intensity of Reaction.

Quality of Mood.

Attention Span and Persistance/Distractability.

Threshold of Responsiveness.

2.3.1 Scoring methods. Each child's behaviour in the free-play situation was observed and a rating was made on each of the six categories. A score of minus one, zero, or plus one was assigned on each category of temperament during the observation period. This method of rating followed the same basic principles used by Thomas et al for the scoring of the behavioural records obtained from parents. A score of minus-one was assigned on a particular category if the child's behaviour demonstrated a 'low' or a 'negative' quality. For example, a child who responded to entering the observation room by being very hesitant and taking a long time to become involved with the play materials, would be scored minus one on the Approach-Withdrawal category. A score of zero was assigned where the quality of response was in the middle range. Taking the same example again, a child who entered the room, and was hesitant for a short while before starting to play, was assigned a score of zero. Similarly a child who immediately became involved in playing without any hesitation or acknowledgement of being in a new and strange situation, was scored plus one; i.e., a score which indicated a 'high' quality of response. Appendix C contains examples of scoring in each category of temperament.

2.4 Assessment of Parental Perceptions

A semi-structured interview was conducted with each mother in which an assessment was made of her perception of her child's level of developmental functioning. An assessment was also made of her perception of her child's temperament. As different methods of inquiry was used for each set of perceptions, they will be considered separately.

2.4.1 Perceptions of development. Perceptions of these levels of functioning were elicited in three areas of development: gross-motor functioning, socialization skills, and receptive language. These areas correspond respectively to the Body Management and Mobility, Socialization, and Receptive Language subscales of the Grover Developmental Charts. Each parent was asked to assess her child's ability in each of these areas of functioning. The parent was asked to rate her child as more advanced, less advanced, or as at the same level of functioning as other children of the same age. Scores of minus one, plus one, or zero were assigned to these ratings respectively. It was originally intended to employ a five-point scale; however, a series of trial runs with abusing mothers prior to the commencement of the study showed that they had difficulty in making ratings on the intermediate scale points. All of these ratings were requested by the interviewer during the administration of the Socialization subscale of the Grover Developmental Charts (G.D.C.). The instructions for the administration of this subscale required a parent to be interviewed in order to score the items. (The procedure is similar to the administration of the Vinelands

Social Maturity Scale - see Doll, 1965). The conducting of the inquiry for perceptions during the administration of the Socialization subscale also had the effect of making such an inquiry into behaviour a natural part of the interview as a whole.

2.4.2 Perceptions of temperament. The parents' perceptions of temperament were assessed during the structured interview used for the administration of the Socialization subscale of the G.D.C. Thus, as for the 'perception-of-development' inquiry (Section 2.4.1., above) the inquiry into parental perceptions of development appeared as a natural part of the interview as a whole. As an attempt was being made here to assess parental perceptions of temperament, it was necessary to obtain the parent's opinion or judgment of how her child behaved in a variety of situations. However, the question is raised as to whether such opinions obtained from abusing mothers can be regarded as accurate reflections of their perceptions. This material might be contaminated by the parent portraying her child in a negative light in order to gain sympathy for herself, in the face of the medico-legal consequences of the abuse, to which she could be subject (e.g., removal of the child). It does not seem possible to discount the effects of such possible contamination. The mother's responses during such an inquiry into her child's temperament might be exaggerated due to situational variables, and may not be an accurate reflection of her perceptions.

In order to safeguard against contamination as far as possible, two levels of inquiry were used to obtain a measure of the parents' perceptions. Level One involved inquiry along

the same lines as Thomas et al (1964, 1967) used in their investigation. (This method of inquiry is outlined in Section 2.2). Thus a factual record of the child's behaviour in a variety of situations was obtained from the mother. Level Two inquiry was started after this and involved a series of non-directive questions designed to elicit the parent's opinion of the behaviour in question. To illustrate both levels of the inquiry it seems best to give an example:

Question: "What does your child do when you wash him in the bath?" (According to the method of inquiry designed by Thomas et al.)

Answer: "He splashes and kicks a lot and he doesn't want to get out when he is finished." (Parent's description of the behaviour)

Question: "Can you tell me more about that?" (Non-directive question to elicit an opinion).

Answer: Yes, well he's terrible you know. He makes a big mess and he can't keep still in the bath, and when I try to take him out he cries like anything. He's always like this - he's very stubborn and always crying for no reason."

The above sample record can, for example, be scored in the categories of Activity Level and Quality of Mood. In many instances it was not necessary to proceed to Level Two inquiry as the parents spontaneously volunteered their opinions of their childrens' behaviour in Level One. Interviews were generally conducted in a mixture of Afrikaans and English, this being the language form best suited to these individuals.

In order to assess the parental perceptions over all the

categories of temperament being used in this study, the inquiry into the child's behaviour ranged over a variety of behaviours. The administering of the Socialization subscale of the G.D.C. provided an excellent source for this material as it assesses areas of functioning such as dressing and undressing, washing, toileting, play, and feeding. Thus the inquiry for perceptions was an extension of the administration of this subscale.

Scoring followed Thomas et al's (1964) method of rating parental opinions into polar extremes, and a middle range on each temperament category (see Section 2.2). Polar extremes were assigned scores of minus one or plus one, and the middle range was given a score of zero. Appendix C contains the method of rating employed in this study, and the scores assigned to each category for quantification purposes. In the example quoted above the category of Activity Level was given a rating of plus one. Quality of Mood was rated minus one. All ratings of the parents' opinions were assigned by an independent rater who was trained in the rating method by the author. (She was the same person who was the assistant in the inter-scorer reliability study of the temperament categories. See Section 2.3).

It should be briefly mentioned that the interview methods outlined above may be regarded as more appropriately included under Procedure (Section 3). However, it also seems that these interviews are techniques of measurement. They may therefore be regarded as apparatus in the wider sense of the word in that they are designed for the purpose of collecting data. Hence their inclusion under 'Apparatus'. The same rationale applies

to the interview methods for parental perceptions of development.

3. PROCEDURE

3.1 Assessments of the Child, and Parental Interview

All investigation sessions began with the testing of the child on the Grover Developmental Charts. The mother of each child was asked to wait outside the testing room during this assessment. However, as some of the younger children (in both abuse and control groups) refused to co-operate under these circumstances, their mothers were asked into the room. Care was taken to ensure that they did not in any way interfere in the process of administration. The administration of the Socialization subscale of the G.D.C. was conducted with the mother as an informant. As mentioned before in Sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2, the inquiries into parental perceptions of developmental status and temperament were carried out in the course of the administration of this subscale. While this interview was being conducted the child was taken into a separate room for an observation period in which ratings on the temperament categories were made. Five children, who were noticably irritable and aggressive, refused to enter the observation room and were excluded from the study. An observer sat in one corner of the room and remained as inconspicuous as possible. She had been previously trained in scoring the temperament categories and had in fact participated as an assistant in the reliability study detailed in Section 2.3. She had no knowledge of whether a child was abused or non-abused. She had been told prior to the commencement of the research programme that all the children she was to observe had

been diagnosed as abused. In the observation room a free-play situation was set up with toys appropriate to each child's age. The children were each told: "Here are some toys to play with. You can play for a time while your mother is speaking to the man." Each observation period lasted for a minimum of 20 minutes, but continued for longer in cases where more time was needed to complete the scoring of the categories. In cases where the child refused to enter the observation room alone, this procedure was conducted with the mother present. She was asked to remain seated in one corner and to allow the child to play alone.

3.2. Controls for Experimenter Effect.

The influence of the experimenter in psychological research has long been considered a potentially uncontrolled variable (McGuigan, 1963; Kints, Delprato, Mettee, Persons and Schappe, 1965). Two sources of experimenter bias are possible: The experimenter may bias the responses of subjects in the direction of the hypothesised outcome of an investigation; and he/she may bias the results in the same direction.

In the present study, the biasing of subjects' responses and of the results of the investigation is minimised due to the fact that the outcome cannot be predicted in any particular direction. This seems true for the investigation of parental perceptions and the investigation of the childrens' temperaments. The basic reason for this is that there has been no research done in these areas by other investigators to date, thus there is no adequate basis on which to make predictions. The exception here is the assessment of the levels of

development in the children, as abused children have been found to be developmentally delayed in a number of studies (see Chapter III, Section 2.2). The Grover Developmental Charts have standardised administration and scoring procedures which leave little leeway for the user of the test to employ personal judgments. This would help to minimize the biasing of responses and results in the expected direction.

3.3. Control for Perceived Demand

In a study of this nature, in which interviewing of parents is required, the influence of the demand characteristics of the interviewer, as perceived by the subject, may well bias the results (Orne, 1970). This is particularly so in respect of child abusing parents where medico-legal consequences (in the form of court proceedings or removal of the child from home) may result. The interviewer may well be perceived by parents as an authority figure who has the power to influence judicial and welfare authorities. It may therefore be in the parents' interest to influence the interviewer into seeing them as "good" parents.

Aspects of this study which are sensitive to this phenomenon are the administration of the Socialization subscale of the G.D.C. and the inquiry into temperament and developmental functioning with the parents. Whereas perceived demand control of these aspects has been indirectly dealt with in the Subjects and Apparatus sections above, it is necessary to clarify this in view of the potentially serious biasing which could occur.

With regard to all aspects of the interview it can be accepted that from the viewpoint of the parent the material dealt with focussed entirely on the behavioural and developmental characteristics of the child. This was facilitated through the use of standardised administration

procedures of the Grover scales, and by the highly structured nature of the behavioural inquiry in the rest of the interview. Thus the nature of the interview may be construed as not directly concerned with the interests and wishes of the parent insofar as their possible involvement in abuse of the child is concerned. The interviewer noted that during the interviews a number of abuse parents insisted on how much they cared for their child, or else complained bitterly of their life circumstances. While these appeared to be attempts to gain the sympathy of the interviewer they tended to disappear as the interview progressed. Thus it appears that control measures for perceived demand were essentially a feature of the methods of assessment and inquiry.

4. STATISTICAL TREATMENT OF THE DATA

1. The scores of abused and normal children on each of the five subscales of the Grover Developmental Charts will be compared using the t-test for dependent samples.
2. The ratings of abused and normal children on each of the six categories of temperament will be compared using the t-test for dependent samples.
3. The abusing and non-abusing mothers' rated opinions (i.e., perceptions) of the levels of development in their children will be compared using the One Way Analysis of Covariance (ANACOVA).
4. The abusing and non-abusing mothers' assigned ratings (i.e., perceptions) of the temperament of their children will be compared using ANACOVA.
5. The abusing mothers' assigned ratings on the six categories of temperament will be compared to the abused childrens' ratings on six categories of temperament, using the t-test for dependent samples.

6. The control mothers' assigned ratings will be compared to the control childrens' ratings, on the six temperament categories, using the t-test for dependent samples.

Brief mention should be made of the use of ANACOVA for comparing parental perceptions, as the reason for this may not be immediately apparent. The use of this analysis enables statistical control of variables which may correlate with the criterion measure which is being used to compare two groups of subjects. For example: in the present study, parental perceptions of levels of development are being compared, the comparison being between abusing and non-abusing mothers. However, it is possible that the variable of developmental level may correlate with how a particular child is perceived by the parent. A child may have, for instance, delayed development, and the parent may also perceive this child as delayed. Such a child's 'actual' level of development may, in part, account for why the parent judges the level of development in the 'delay' direction. Thus the perceptions of abusing and non-abusing mothers are 'contaminated' by the fact that a third variable (or covariate), the level of development, correlates with these perceptions. A similar situation obtains for comparisons of parental perceptions of temperament where the 'actual' temperament of the children may also correlate with the abusing and non-abusing mothers' perceptions. The use of ANACOVA permits statistical control of the contamination effect of the covariate by excluding its "influence" on the criterion measures under consideration. Thus a more 'pure' comparison is achieved.

> "The analysis of covariance ... permits <u>statistical</u> rather than <u>experimental</u> control of variables. The

> result is equivalent to matching the various experimental groups with respect to the variable or variables being controlled. ... The analysis of covariance consists essentially of determining that a proportion of the variance of the criterion existed prior to the experiment, and this proportion is eliminated from the final analysis" (Roscoe, 1969, p.254).

The use of t-tests to analyse the various rating scale measurements (points two, three and four above) should be commented on. Strictly speaking these are ordinal data which may require non-parametric statistical analysis. However, as the distance between scale points on the rating scales for each category are equivalent it is thought that a t-test is more appropriate. The rationale begind this is that the equivalence in distance between scale points renders the measurements to be more like interval data, even though it is not strictly interval type measurement either. (The classification of this kind of rating falls on a continuum between ordinal and interval type measurement, but it is closer to the interval end). In addition, the t-test provides a more powerful test of significance that a non-parametric analysis would.

CHAPTER VI

Results

1. ASSESSMENTS OF THE CHILDREN

1.1. Development Assessments

The results of the comparison between the abused group and control group children on the Grover Developmental Charts appear in Table I. As the Charts do not yield quotients for each of its subscales, and it has not been standardized for use with 'coloured' children, a discrepancy-score was computed for each subject. This discrepancy-score was obtained by subtracting the performance age on the test from the chronological age of each child. The means in Table I have been computed using these discrepancy-scores. (It will be noticed that most of these means have minus values. The minus denotes a mean performance age below that of the mean chronological age).

Table I reveals that there are significant differences between the discrepancy-score means of abused and control children on the Receptive Language, ($p < ,005$) Expressive Language, ($p < ,005$) and Body Management and Mobility ($p < ,05$) subscales of the G.D.C. Inspection of the differences between the means of the discrepancy-scores suggests that abused children performed at lower levels than controls on these three subscales. (It should also be noted that the results on both language scales were significant at the ,005 level). Referring again to Table I, it can be seen that the discrepancy-score means of abused and control children did not show significant differences at the ,05 level on the Interaction With Objects (IWO) and Socialization subscales.

Table 1

Summary of results obtained for the comparison of the mean discrepancy-scores in months of control and non-CNS impaired abused childrens' scores on the Grover Developmental Charts.

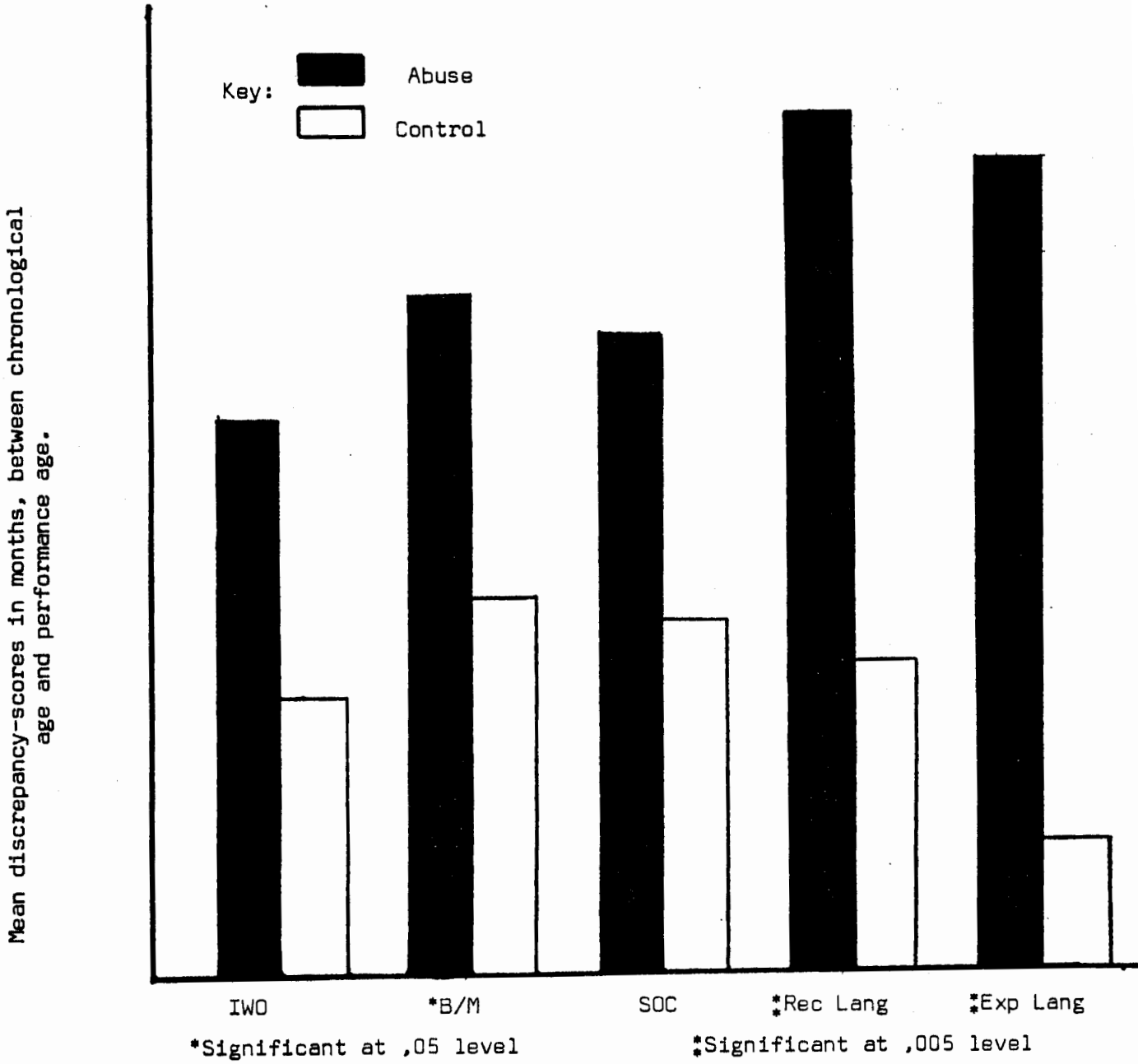
SUBSCALE	MEANS		S.D's		TWO-TAILED TEST OF SIGNIFICANCE	
	ABUSE	CONTROL	ABUSE	CONTROL	*t	p
INTERACTION WITH OBJECTS	-2,45	-,70	2,73	1,27	1,77	> ,05
BODY MANAGEMENT	-3,20	-1,35	3,57	2,51	2,11	< ,05
SOCIALIZATION	-2,95	-1,15	4,05	2,65	1,81	>,05
RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE	-4,30	-,90	3,20	3,67	4,30	< ,005
EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE	-4,00	,20	3,56	3,29	4,36	< ,005

*df = 9

However, inspection of the relevant discrepancy-score means reveals that on both scales, abused children performed at lower levels than controls (IWO- 1,75 months lower; Socialization - 1,80 months lower). Thus the direction of these differences is in line with those of the other three subscales. The general trend of the data for comparisons of abused and control children suggest that abused children perform at lower levels than controls on measures of their levels of development. Figure 1 on page 75 serves to illustrate the data more clearly.

Figure 1

Mean discrepancy-scores between chronological and performance age of non- CNS impaired abused children and control children, on the Grover Developmental Charts



*Significant at ,05 level

**Significant at ,005 level

IWO: Interaction with Objects and Fine Motor Dexterity

B/M: Body Management and Mobility

Soc: Socialization

Rec Lang: Receptive Language

Exp Lang: Expressive Language.

1.1.2 Qualitative aspects of performance on the Grover Development Charts. The most marked difference between abused and control children was in their performance on the language subscales. The receptive language performance of the abuse group on the G.D.C. was, on average, 3,8 months below that of controls. Expressive language performance averaged 3,4 months below that of control childrens' performance, Moreover, the scattering of passed and failed items on both language subscales, beyond the first item that was failed (i.e., the basal level of performance) was much greater for the abused children. In other words, the control childrens' performance beyond the basal level for the most part included only one or two "scattered" passes, while the abused children tended to pass and fail a much longer series of items. A content analysis of this scatter revealed a number of interesting findings. On the Receptive Language subscale, seven out of the ten abused children failed items which required them to demonstrate an understanding of commands (e.g., Item One - "Put the sweets in the cup. Put the ball on the floor.") On the Expressive Language subscale eight of the abused children consistently failed items which required them to make statements and questions; and items which required the use of words such as "who" and "what". With respect to the other three subscales, the scatter of passed and failed items of the abuse group appeared to be no more extensive than that of controls. However, on the Body Management subscale, the abused childrens' performance was, on average, 1,85 months below that of the controls. Performance on the Interaction with Objects and Socialization subscales was also marginally lower than controls (1,80 months

and 1,75 months respectively), even though the comparisons of the means did not reach statistical significance (see Table 1)

1.2 Temperament Assessments.

Abused and control children were rated on a three-point scale (from minus one, to plus one) on six categories of temperament. However, to facilitate the easier computation of results, the assigned ratings of minus one, zero, and plus one were converted to ratings of one, two, and three respectively. The results of the comparisons between the abused group and control group childrens' ratings appear In Table II.

Referring to Table II, it will be readily seen that none of the differences between the means of abused and control children, on all nine categories of temperament, reached statistical significance. Thus, the temperament ratings on the nine categories do not appear to have discriminated the abuse group children from the control group children.

Table II

Summary of results obtained for the comparison of the means of the ratings assigned to control and abused children on six categories of temperament

TEMPERAMENT CATEGORY	MEANS		S.D.'s		TWO-TAILED TEST OF SIGNIFICANCE	
	ABUSE	CONTROL	ABUSE	CONTROL	*t	p
APPROACH AND WITHDRAWAL	1.70	1.70	,48	,48	0	> ,05
ACTIVITY LEVEL	1,90	1,90	,57	,32	0	> ,05
INTENSITY OF REACTION	2,00	2,00	,47	0	0	> ,05
QUALITY OF MOOD	1,90	2,00	,57	0	± ,557	> ,05
ATTENTION SPAN AND PERSISTENCE/ DISTRACTABILITY	1,80	1,80	,42	,42	± ,429	> ,05
THRESHOLD OF RESPONSIVENESS	2,00	2,00	0	0	±1,700	> ,05

*DF = 9 (for all categories)

Table III

Summary of the results obtained for the comparison of the means of abusing and control mothers' ratings of the levels of development in their children

AREA OF DEVELOPMENT	ADJUSTED MEANS		S.D.'s		*F	p
	ABUSE	CONTROL	ABUSE	CONTROL		
GROSS-MOTOR FUNCTIONING	2,10	1,90	,32	,78	± ,52	> ,05
SOCIALIZATION SKILLS	1,95	2,05	,74	,74	± ,09	> ,05
RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE	1,89	2,81	,88	,42	±6,63	< ,05

*df = 1 and 17 (for all areas)

2.2 Parental Perceptions of their Childrens' Temperament

Table IV summarises the main findings for the comparison of the abusing mothers' and non-abusing control mothers' rated opinions of their children in the six categories of temperament. In order to facilitate easier computation of the results these ratings of minus one, zero and plus one were converted to ratings of one, two and three respectively.

Referring to Table IV, it will be noted that there were no significant differences ($p > .05$) between abusing and control group mothers' rated opinions of their children in all six categories of temperament. The ANACOVA summary tables for these comparisons appear in Appendix E.

Table IV

Summary of the results obtained for the comparison of the means of abusing and control mothers' rated opinions of their children in six categories of temperament

TEMPERAMENT CATEGORY	ADJUSTED MEANS		S.D.'s		*F	p
	ABUSE	CONTROL	ABUSE	CONTROL		
APPROACH AND WITHDRAWAL	1,90	2,00	,57	,82	± ,13	> ,05
ACTIVITY LEVEL	2,20	2,10	,42	,32	± ,41	> ,05
INTENSITY OF REACTION	1,80	2,00	,42	0	±3,09	> ,05
QUALITY OF MOOD	1,93	1,88	,57	,32	± ,14	> ,05
ATTENTION SPAN AND PERSISTENCE/ DISTRACTABILITY	2,00	2,00	0	0	±1,70	> ,05
THRESHOLD OF RESPONSIVENESS	1,80	2,00	,42	0	0	> ,05

*Df = 1 and 17 (All categories)

3. THE 'MATCH' BETWEEN MOTHER AND CHILD: TEMPERAMENT

3.1. Abused Children and Abusing Mothers

Table V contains the summary of the comparison between ratings of abused childrens' temperaments and the abusing mothers' rated opinions of their childrens' temperaments. The comparison of ratings is reflected for all six temperament categories.

Referring to Table V, it will be seen that none of the comparisons of ratings for the six categories of temperament reached statistical significance ($p. > ,05$). The results suggest that these mothers' perceptions of their childrens' temperaments matches the objective (rated) temperaments of their children.

Table V

Summary of the results obtained for the comparison of the means of abusing mothers' rated opinions and abused childrens' ratings on six categories of temperament

TEMPERAMENT CATEGORY	MEANS		S.D.'s		TWO-TAILED TEST OF SIGNIFICANCE	
	Mothers	Children	Mothers	Children	*t	p
APPROACH AND WITHDRAWAL	1,90	1,70	,54	,42	±1,50	> ,05
ACTIVITY LEVEL	2,20	1,90	,40	,54	±1,36	> ,05
INTENSITY OF REACTION	1,80	2,00	,40	,45	± ,34	> ,05
QUALITY OF MOOD	1,90	1,90	,54	,54	0	> ,05
ATTENTION SPAN AND PERSISTENCE/ DISTRACTABILITY	2,00	1,80	0	,37	±1,19	> ,05
THRESHOLD OF RESPONSIVENESS	1,80	2,00	,40	,45	±1,19	> ,05

*Df = 9

3.2. Control Children and Control Mothers

Table VI summarises the findings for the comparison between the ratings of control childrens' temperaments and the control mothers' ratings of their childrens' temperaments.

As will be noted from Table VI, none of the comparisons of rating for the six categories of temperament were statistically significant ($p > .05$). These results suggest that the mothers' perceptions of their childrens' temperaments, 'matches' the objective (rated) temperaments of their children.

Table VI

Summary of the results obtained for the comparison of the means of control mothers' rated opinions and control childrens' ratings on six categories of temperament

TEMPERAMENT CATEGORY	MEANS		S.D.'s		TWO-TAILED TEST OF SIGNIFICANCE	
	Mothers	Children	Mothers	Children	* t	p
APPROACH AND WITHDRAWAL	2,00	1,70	1,26	,46	$\pm$1,15	> ,05
ACTIVITY LEVEL	2,10	1,90	,95	,30	$\pm$1,19	> ,05
INTENSITY OF REACTION	2,00	2,00	1,41	1,41	0	> ,05
QUALITY OF MOOD	1,90	2,00	,95	1,41	$\pm$1,00	> ,05
ATTENTION SPAN AND PERSISTENCE/ DISTRACTABILITY	2,00	1,80	1,41	1,41	$\pm$1,19	> ,05
THRESHOLD OF RESPONSIVENESS	2,00	2,00	1,41	1,41	0	> ,05

*df = 9.

CHAPTER VII

Discussion

1. EVALUATION OF THE FINDINGS

1. The Children

In terms of the goals formulated in Chapter IV, the general trend of the developmental comparisons suggests that the abused children investigated in this study function at lower levels than the control children (Table 1). On the other hand, the findings also suggest that they appear to be no different in temperament than the controls (Table II).

The most marked deficits in development appeared to be in the area of language. The presence of a markedly greater range in the "scatter" of passes on both Receptive and Expressive subscales of the G.D.C. suggests that the language skills of abused children are erratically developed. Moreover, the content analysis of failed items showed a consistent tendency to fail on items which included a "social" component (Chapter VI, Section 1.1.2). These were test items which required that another person understand the spoken word of the child, and those which required the child to understand the spoken word of another person. This was a particularly interesting finding, the implications of which will be discussed in Section 2.1.

Performance at lower levels of functioning was not limited to the area of language development. The abused children showed significantly lower levels in the area of gross-motor functioning. Moreover, the findings in the area of socialization skills and cognitive development

although not statistically significant, suggest a trend towards lower levels of functioning. This trend is in keeping with the significantly lower levels found in the language and cognitive areas.

The finding of a general trend of lower levels of functioning in abused children appears to be in agreement with other studies which have investigated the sub-group of non- CNS impaired abused children (Smith, 1975, and Van Staden, 1979). (See Chapter III, Section 2.2). Although Smith stated that only his findings on the Speech and Hearing scale of the Griffiths Scales were significant, he reports in his discussion of his research, that his sample of non-impaired abused children were generally lower in intellectual ability than controls.

The one area of functioning concerning which there is agreement is that of language development. The findings of both Smith and Van Staden, as well as those of the present study, strongly suggest that non-CNS impaired abused children have a lower level of language skill than normal children. The issue of gross-motor functioning is less clear. While Van Staden found significant differences between the controls and abused children in her study, Smith did not. The findings of the present study contradict those of Van Staden as well as those of Smith. However, although Van Staden's study did not employ controls for sex and social class, Smith's study did. As the present investigation also attempted to control these variables it appears that clarity on this issue is not at present possible.

As indicated in Table II the temperament of the abused children in this investigation did not differ from that of controls. Evaluation of these findings in terms of previous research is not possible, for, as noted in Chapter III, Section 3, there appear to have been no research

attempts in this area. The present research into temperament grew from theoretical speculation in the literature, particularly that of Martin (1974). While the present findings do not offer support for Martin's speculations, it is the author's opinion that the investigation of temperament in abused children may still be a fruitful area of research. A fuller discussion of this issue appears in the section dealing with the limitations of the present study (Section 3).

1.2 The Parents

The prediction of differences between control and abusing mothers' perceptions of their childrens' development and temperament was, in general, not supported by the findings (Table III). The only exception to this was in the area of perception of receptive language functioning, where the abusing mothers tended to rate their children at lower levels than control mothers. This finding appears to be out of line with the other perceptual comparisons. However, a possible explanation is that the area of receptive language (and more generally, communication), may be one that is more "sensitive" with respect to the abuse situation than those of socialization skills, gross-motor functioning and temperament. This issue will be more fully explored in Section 2.1.
One further point should be made. As the receptive language skills of the abused children were found to be lower than control children it may be thought that this finding is indeed a reflection of lower levels of performance in the abused children; i.e., the fact that abused children may have poorly developed language skills may explain the tendency of their mothers to rate them lower. However, the use of the ANACOVA method to treat the data was designed to exclude the

effect of the variance associated with the childrens' performance on their mothers' perceptions (See Chapter V, Section 4). Therefore, the finding that abusing mothers tend to perceive their childrens' receptive language functioning as lower than that of controls, occurred notwithstanding the exclusion of the variance accounted for by lower levels of language skill in their children.

1.3 The "Match" Between Parents and Children

The findings set out in Chapter VI suggest that both abusing and control mothers have perceptions of their childrens' temperaments which "match" or are in line with, the (objective) ratings of temperament in both groups of children (see Tables V and VI). A background of research against which these findings may be evaluated is not available; however, as this aspect of the study was conceived in the light of theoretical speculation, and the reporting of clinical impressions in the literature, it will be considered in the context of the material discussed in Section 2.1.

2. IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORIES OF CHILD ABUSE

2.1 Psychopathological Theories

One of the crucial problems to which the present study is addressed is that of the characteristic ways of perceiving in the abusing parent. In Chapter II it was noted that many authors regard the misperception of the abused child by the parent as a crucial element in the generating of tensions which lead to an assault (e.g., Steele and Pollock, 1968;

Terr, 1970; Greene, Gaines and Sandgrund, 1974). The findings of the present study for the most part, do not lend support to this contention. Out of nine comparisons of abusing and control mothers' perceptions, only one - perception of receptive language skills - was found to discriminate between the abusers and non-abusers. This general trend seems to be in line with Smith's (1975) conclusion that the child abusers in his study appeared "far less handicapped" (P.217) than previous studies have claimed. The question then remains as to why abusing mothers should be atypical in their perception of their childrens' receptive language skills, and yet in all the other areas of perception they did not appear any different to normal mothers? The present study does not permit definitive conclusions to be drawn on this point; thus it is possible only to speculate on this issue. It may be the case that the general area of communication is a particularly sensitive one in child abusing families. Many of the authors mentioned in Chapter II have commented on the inability of the abused child to meet parental needs. If this is true, then it would not seem unlikely that the parent should regard the child as incapable, or at least less capable, of <u>understanding</u> demands for compliance. This may be particularly the case when tensions in the parent are at their peak, following for example, a realization that the child cannot fulfil the demands of the parent. Even after the occurrence of the abuse these perceptions might persist, as a physical assault on the child would not necessarily change this belief of the parents. Steele and Pollock (1968) in fact remark that they frequently came across abusing parents who vigorously defended their right to beat their children severely.

Further problems are raised by the above conjectures: why should communication be a "sensitive" area in abusing families, and not areas such as the child's socialization, gross-motor skills and temperament? Again it is only possible to speculate. In terms of the theoretical propositions generated by authors such as Steele and Pollock (1968), the abused child's role is one of meeting parental needs. It is possible that developmental lag in the gross-motor area, i.e., learning to crawl, sit, walk, run, climb stairs, etc. is not seen by the parent as an indication that the child will not/cannot fulfil her emotional needs, as these abilities may not be directly linked with need fulfilment in the parent. A similar argument may be put forward for socialization skills. Even though the child's ability in toileting, dressing and undressing, feeding, etc. may well be potential conflict areas, the parent may not construe these as a direct challenge to the fulfilment of her emotional needs. Likewise, the child's temperament may not be seen as such a challenge. The findings suggest that both abusing and control parents perceive their childrens' temperaments accurately (Tables V and VI). Even if all of these areas are potentially conflict-producing the crucial element may still be that of communication as the parent might interpret the child's inability in other areas as a failure to understand her demands.

Before concluding this section, brief mention should be made of one point that may not seem immediately clear. The fact that abusing mothers did not rate their childrens' gross-motor functioning differently from controls may suggest that they had distorted perceptions of their children in this area of development, i.e., in the light of the fact that the findings suggest that the gross-motor functioning of the abused children was at a lower level than control children. The use of ANACOVA to treat the data, however, permitted the exclusion of the effect

of the variance associated with the childrens' performance on their mothers' perceptions. Thus the finding that abusing mothers perceived the gross-motor functioning of their children so differently to controls, occurred after the exclusion of the variance accounted for by lower levels of gross-motor functioning in their children.

It seems in the light of the above speculation that the present study's findings may be both general and specific with respect to psychopathological theories of child abuse. In general, they do not support the contention that abusing parents have distorted perceptions of their children; however, it may be possible that highly specific facets of the parent's perception of the child, viz. in the area of receptive language skills, may be subject to distortion.

2.2 The Role of the Child

In Chapter IV it was stated that the findings of the present investigation may help to shed light on the question of the atypicality of abused children prior to the occurrence of abuse - a problem which has received attention in the literature. As far as the present study is concerned, speculation on this issue revolves around the question of whether the methodology employed permits such conjecture. The investigation of developmental and temperament characteristics in these children was undertaken after the occurrence of the physical assault - an event which must have a profound traumatic impact on any child. Some light may be thrown on this issue by restating the original problem: on the basis of investigations into the status of non-CNS impaired abused children, including the present study, is it possible to attribute the trend of the findings towards lower levels of development entirely to the occurrence of the physical assault? Parenthetically, this question is posed in the light of reports in the literature which have described a high incidence of "at risk" factors in the medical histories of these children - viz. prematurity, low

birthweight, failure-to-thrive. Given already-existing reports which suggest that many abused children may be atypical prior to abuse, it does not seem unreasonable to pose the question of prior atypical levels of development.

The methodology used in the present investigation sought to exclude any children with signs of CNS impairment, and history of head trauma, as the effects of such injury would clearly bias the findings in the delay direction, as other studies have shown (Martin et al, 1974; Smith, 1975). It seems clear that the findings of a general trend towards delay in levels of development in this and other similar studies, may be attributed either to the physical assault of the child, or else to conditions prior to the assault. The findings of the present investigation may be analysed with this in mind. In this respect the present study may be seen as hypothesis-generating, rather than hypothesis-testing, i.e., that any such speculation must be regarded as highly tentative, suggesting possible future avenues of exploration.

The findings of lower levels of gross-motor functioning will be considered first. Two suggestions can be put forward in this regard: firstly, that the assault itself represents a very fundamental intrusion into the child's sense of physical, bodily security, and stability. The effect of this intrusion might be to inhibit the child in fully exploring and developing his or her gross physical abilities. Thus the opportunities available to the child to explore such activities as running, jumping, and climbing may be limited, and might consequently affect such a child's performance in the testing situation. One problem arises in response to this, viz. that a delay in gross-motor development may be considered, qualitatively, as a very basic, fundamental type of deficit. This suggests that the antecedants to the child's relatively low level of functioning may be further back

in the child's developmental history than the time of the assault. This leads to the second suggestion, viz. that lower levels of functioning in the gross-motor area may be attributable to the child being reared in an environment which is generally physically punitive. Several authors have commented on the abusing parents' tendency to resort easily to physical punishment (e.g., Steele and Pollock, 1968; Smith, 1975). Of course, it is possible that a combination of the child's punitive environment together with effects of the assault may be responsible for lower levels of gross-motor development.

The finding of receptive and expressive language deficits in the abused children likewise suggest two possibilities: that the child's difficulty in expressive and receptive language may derive directly from the effects of physical assault, or else may be a function of the type of environment in which the child is reared. The presence of specific "social" type language deficits may be suggestive of a general breakdown in communication between mother and child. Indeed many authors have considered that the act of abuse itself constitutes a manifestation of this breakdown. It might be acceptable then to regard the child's language deficits as a function of a generally hostile, punitive environment in which verbal communication is minimal. The physical abuse of the child may then be seen as one (major) instance of this hostile environment which limits the child's opportunity to develop language skills.

In summary, it appears that the findings of the present study may not necessarily be explained only by the physical assault of the child, and that in the absence of empirical evidence to the contrary, further exploration of the child's characteristics prior to abuse

seems warranted. The issue of the extent to which the assault has an effect on the child's functioning may be more complex than originally thought, given the quality of the environment in which the child is reared.

2.3 Socially Oriented Theories

The present study did not directly address theoretical propositions put forward by socially oriented theorists in the field of child abuse. However, the findings may be cautiously interpreted as offering some support for the proposition that social stress factors play a significant role in the occurrence of child abuse. As mentioned before in Section 2.1 the present study's findings appear to be in line with Smith's (1975) conclusion that abusing parents appeared far less handicapped when compared to normal parents in the same social class. The main objection levelled at the attributing of abuse to social stress factors stems from the fact that such explanations do not account for why non-abusing parents from the same social class do not abuse their children (Belsky, 1978; Spinetta and Rigler, 1972). However, the findings presented by Gil (1969, 1971) may be interpreted as suggesting that abusing parents are more strongly characterised by unemployment, low occupational status, and low income levels. The characteristics of the abuse and control group families used in this study are set out in Appendix B. Although drawn from the same social class as controls, the abuse group appears to have a less stable family composition. Smith (1975) also reports this phenomenon in his study. It may be possible then, to characterise abusing families at the 'lower' end of a continuum representing the degree of social disorganization in

working class families. Accordingly it seems difficult to discount the effects of stress on these families.

The Social Interactional Model of child abuse has been suggested as a useful way of conceptualising the methodology of the present study insofar as it focusses on the roles of both parent ahd child in the occurrence of child abuse. While many writers do not deny the relevance of both parent and child, it seems that there is a paucity of empirical research which attempts to simultaneously investigate abusing parents and their abused childrem. The present investigation seems to underline the importance of not considering the various elements in child abuse in isolation from one another.

3. LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

There are a number of methodological considerations which place a degree of restriction on the interpretation of the findings. For the most part, the present study attempted to investigate aspects of the child abuse situation which do not appear to have been researched before, viz. the investigation of the childrens' temperaments, and the mothers' perceptions of temperament and development in their children. In addition, the exploration of temperament factors in the children and perceptions in the parents, required the adoption of measurement techniques which do not appear to have been used before in this type of research. Although these considerations need not necessarily be regarded as methodological errors, it is felt that they should be taken into consideration in the context of the ensuing discussion which outlines specific problems which have a bearing on the findings.

1. Use of the Grover Developmental Charts

The G.D.C. has not been standardised for use with the 'coloured' population group; however, the use of a control group would tend to offset the problem of the unavailability of norms for this population. The applicability of the Charts for use with 'coloured' children rests more with the issue of whether it yields a valid estimate of levels of development in these children. No research studies have as yet established its validity for use with these children; however, there are some indications which suggest that the Charts may be useful in assessing developmental status. To date the Charts have found some use with 'coloured' children in the clinical setting. In addition, Stern (1979) used the Charts as a research tool to evaluate working class 'coloured' childrens' performance in an educational intervention programme. Moreover, many of the test items were drawn from already-existing scales which have been used with this population - for example, the Bayley Scales, the Merril-Palmer Scale, and the Vinelands Social Maturity Scale. It seems in the light of these points that the G.D.C. may at present be regarded as a reasonable estimate of levels of development for this population of children.

2. The Assessment of temperament

As noted earlier (Chapter V, Section 2.2), the temperament assessment techniques developed by Thomas et al (1964, 1968) required modification for use in the present study. Strictly speaking, such a modification would necessitate research into its validity; however, it should be pointed out that the ratings of the children on each temperament category were done using the same category

definitions, and scale point definitions as used by Thomas et al. Research into the technique's validity would have gone far beyond the resources of the present study. An inter-scorer reliability study, conducted before the commencement of the present study, however, yielded high correlations for the scoring of each category.

3. Sampling.

The use of only ten children and ten mothers in the abuse group, and ten children and ten mothers in the control group was less than ideal. The use of relatively small samples would tend to limit the generalisability of the findings. The strict requirements for inclusion in this study resulted in many abused children who were possible subjects to be excluded. This severely limited the availability of subjects. In addition, as noted in Chapter V, Section 3.1 five children refused to enter the observation room and consequently had to be excluded from the investigation. Moreover, these children struck the author and his assistant as notice irritable and whiny. This suggests that the abuse sample did not incorporate the full range of abused children insofar as the study of their temperament is concerned. However, such a group of abused children had to be excluded on the basis of their being uncooperative and 'difficult', may be a finding in itself, as it suggests that the study of temperament in abused children is a line of research which is worth pursuing.

4. Social desirability

Many authors have commented extensively on the susceptibility of self-report measurement techniques to the phenomenon of social

desirability (Anastasi, 1969; Crowne and Marlowe, 1964; Edwards, 1957; Fredirikson, 1965). Although the parents in the present study were not asked for self-reports, they were nevertheless required to make evaluations of their childrens' levels of development. As their childrens' abilities may be held to reflect on their capabilities as caretakers, the possibility of them biasing their responses in order to create a particular impression on the interviewer must be entertained. The author, however, observed that for both abuse and control groups the parents did not appear reluctant to rate their children in the 'delay' direction; nor did there appear to be any marked tendency to continuously rate children as either 'normal' or 'advanced'. A possible explanation for this is that requesting the parents to rate the abilities of their children does not directly inquire into their competence as caretakers, although doing so may carry the implication that their caretaking ability is being evaluated.

5. Constancy of social class.

In Section 2.3, it was suggested that the abusing families investigated in this study had less stable family compositions than control families. Whereas both sets of families can be situated within Hollingshead's (1958) class V, it appears that the abusing families differed from controls in this one respect. This may carry the implication that social class factors were not held adequately constant. As the family composition factor does appear to set them apart, this seems to be a possible source of error - although to a limited extent, as other social characteristics of the abuse and control groups did

not show marked differences.

The findings of the present study should be interpreted with the above points in mind. In addition, the implications that the present study may have for theories of child abuse, future research and clinical practice should also be considered in the light of these observations.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND CLINICAL PRACTICE

With respect to the methodology which the present study engaged, the limitations outlined in Section 3 may serve as guidelines indicating how similar future studies should attempt to improve upon the present investigation. In addition to these points, the findings of the present study suggest a number of future research possibilities.

As already mentioned, the study of temperament warrants further investigation. An extension of the present study could undertake direct observation of the children together with their parents, thus providing useful information on the interaction of the childrens' temperaments with parental perceptions. In addition, it is felt that naturalistic observation methods, perhaps conducted in the home setting, may yield useful data.

The specific nature of the deficits in the abused childrens' performance in this investigation lead to the problem of exploring the nature of the family environment of the child more fully. In particular the way in which such an environment places limitations on the child's opportunities for gross-motor and language development need further study. Related to this, it appears that future research could usefully

explore parent-child communication in child abuse, an area in which direct empirical investigation appears to be lacking.

A further crucial avenue of research is that which addresses the problem of possible atypicality of the abused child prior to the occurrence of abuse. While it is recognised that investigation into this area presents considerable methodological difficulties, it is felt that this aspect in the field of child abuse is crucial in generating a fuller understanding of its aetiology.

The findings of the present study suggest a number of issues which may be important in the clinical situation. The area of communication between mother and child appears to be a feature of the child abuse situation which the clinician may fruitfully explore. In particular, the possibility of the child's having poorly developed language ability which may in turn be related to the extent to which the family environment allows opportunity for language development, seems to be an area needing careful assessment and intervention. In addition, the tendency of the mother to perceive the child as less capable in the receptive language area, which in turn may be related to the mother's own psychological needs, appears to warrant a simultaneous assessment and intervention. These parent-related and child-related characteristics on one level appear to be unrelated phenomena insofar as they have differing antecedents. However, clinically, it seems reasonable to expect that the extent to which the parent is concerned with fulfilment of her own emotional needs, may be strongly related to the extent to which she allows the child opportunities for development. This argument also pertains to the area of the child's gross-motor functioning, which may in turn be a function of the lack of opportunity for development.

Thus it appears that the planning of clinical intervention in child abuse would need to consider factors within the parents as well as the children. Finally, it should be stressed that abuse is a multi-level problem involving legal, medical, psychological, and social work aspects. Intervention at the psychological level, discussed above, should therefore not occur in isolation from other disciplines.

5. CONCLUSION

The present study attempted to isolate particular child-related and parent-related characteristics which may have a bearing on the nature of the child abuse situation. The assessment techniques employed brought to light specific areas in development in which abused children appear to function at lower levels, viz. language development and gross-motor development. The findings in the language and gross-motor areas suggested that the familial context in which the child is reared may be important factors in accounting for the atypicality of abused children prior to abuse.

The investigation into the abusing mothers' perceptions of their childrens' development and temperament yielded one finding of note: the tendency to regard the child's level of receptive language development as delayed. This finding was considered in the light of psychological theories of child abuse which stress the parents' dependency needs as taking precedence over those of the child.

The occurrence of child abuse was also considered in the light of its social context. The extent to which environmental stress factors may play a part in generating tensions which lead to physical assault

of the children was accented. In addition, viewing abuse as a problem incorporating social and psychological factors was stressed with particular reference to parent-related and child-related characteristics which shape their respective roles.

The implications of the present study's findings for the clinical setting was highlighted, and future research possibilities have been suggested. It is hoped that the present study's attempt to investigate largely neglected features of the child abuse phenomenon served in some small way to contribute to the growing body of knowledge in this field.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

The following definitions of temperament categories are quoted from Thomas, Chess, Birch, Herzig and Korn (1964), pages 40 - 41.

1) Activity level

The motor component present in a given child's functioning, and the diurnal proportion of active and inactive periods, plus protocol data on motility during bathing, eating, playing, dressing, and handling, as well as information concerning the sleep-wake cycle, reaching, crawling and walking, were used in scoring this category.

2) Rhythmicity

The predictability and/or the unpredictability in time of any function was analysed in relation to the sleep-wake cycle, hunger, feeding pattern and elimination schedule.

3) Approach or withdrawal

The nature of the response to a new stimulus, be it a new food, new toy or new person, provided information relevant to this category.

4) Adaptability

Responses to new or altered situations: One is not concerned with the nature of the initial responses, but with the frequency with which they were successfully modified in desired directions.

5) Intensity of reaction

The energy level of response, irrespective of its quality or direction.

6) Threshold of responsiveness

The intensity level of stimulation that was necessary to evoke a discernible response, irrespective of the specific form that the response might take or the sensory modality affected. The behaviours utilized were those concerning reactions to sensory stimuli, environmental objects and social contacts.

7) Quality of mood

The amount of pleasant, joyful and friendly behaviour as contrasted with unpleasant, crying and unfriendly behaviour.

8) Distractibility

The effectiveness of extraneous environmental stimuli in interfering with or in altering the direction of, the ongoing behaviour.

9) Attention span and persistence.

These two categories are related. Attention span is the length of time a particular activity is pursued by the child. Persistence refers to the continuation of an activity in the face of obstacles to the maintenance of the activity direction.

Appendix B

Social Characteristics of the Families

The Abuse Group

1. Employment

Five of the ten mothers were not employed, and worked as housewives. Two did charring work. One was in full-time employment; two were looking for work.

2. Income

The average family income was R90 per month. This figure excludes the two mothers living with their parents.

3. Age

The mean age of the mothers was 24. That of five of the fathers was 27. The rest of the fathers' ages were not known by the mothers.

4. Housing

Five of the families were in two- or three-roomed council houses. Three mothers boarded in single rooms with their children, and without their spouses.

5. Family cohesiveness

Three couples were married; one divorced. Three of the fathers were seamen who were frequently away from home, and for long periods.. One father was in jail at the time of the abuse, and one was dead.

One father had a brief association with the mother, after which she had not seen him again. The average number of children per family was four.

The Control Group

1. Employment

Seven of the control mothers worked as full-time housewives. One was in full-time employment, and two did charring work.

2. Income

The average income per family was R115 per month.

3. Age.

The mean age of the mothers was 25, and that of the fathers 26.

4. Housing

Eight out of ten families lived in two- or three-roomed council houses. One shared a house with another family, and one family lived with the mother's parents.

5. Family cohesiveness.

Five mothers were married and lived with their husbands. Four were not married and cohabited with their spouses, one of which was infrequently at home as he was employed as a seaman.

Appendix C

Thomas et al's Method of Rating Temperament Categories, and the Scoring Equivalents Used for Rating in the Present Study; And a Scored Example for Each Category

The scoring methods outlined below should be read in conjunction with the category definitions to be found in Appendix A.

1. Activity Level

Thomas et al's Scoring Method:	Low	Moderate	High
Present Study's Scored Equivalents:	-1	0	+1

Example: The child moved rapidly from one play activity to another. Threw the ball across the room on several occasions and kicked it around frequently. Continued in this way for most of the session.

Score: +1

2. Approach and Withdrawal

Withdraws	Variable in Approach-Withdrawal	Approaches
-1	0	+1

Example: The child was very hesitant on entering the room and spent half of the session near the door, sitting on the floor. Then played with the wooden blocks for the rest of the session; remained sitting near the door during the entire session.

Score: -1 (This was not the same child as in the above example).

3. Intensity of Reaction

Mild	Variability in Intensity	Intense
-1	0	+1

Example: The child at first cried when taken into the observation room but later settled down with the toys and seemed quite contented.

Score: 0

4. Threshold of Responsiveness

Low	Moderate	High
-1	0	+1

Example: The child seemed acutely aware of any sound. Responded by stopping play activity frequently and looking around.

Score: -1

5. Quality of Mood

Negative	Variable Mood	Positive
-1	0	+1

Example: (Same child quoted in the example for Approach and Withdrawal). Whined for much of the time. Settled down only a little, but then cried loudly for the mother towards the end of the session.

Score: -1.

Appendix D

ANACOVA Summary Tables for Comparison of Abusing and Control Mothers' Ratings of their Childrens' Levels of Development

1. Gross-Motor Functioning

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Between	,18	1	,18	,52
Within	5,80	17	,34	

2. Socialization

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Between	,05	1	,05	,09
Within	9,20	17	,54	

3. Receptive Language

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Between	3,31	1	3,31	6,63
Within	8,49	17	,50	

Appendix E

ANACOVA Summary Tables for Comparison of Abusing and Control Mothers' Ratings of their Childrens' Temperament

1. Approach and Withdrawal

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Between	,05	1	,05	,12
Within	7,16	17	,42	

2. Activity Level

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Between	,05	1	,05	,41
Within	2,06	17	,12	

3. Intensity of Reaction

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Between	,12	1	,12	3,09
Within	1,10	17	,06	

4. Quality of Mood

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Between	,02	1	,02	,14
Within	2,56	17	,15	

5. Attention Span and Persistence/Distractability

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Between	0	1	0	1,70
Within	0	17	0	

6. Threshold of Responsiveness

Source	SS	DF	MS	F
Between	0	1	0	0
Within	-1,70	17	-1,00	