



# Comparison of Attachment Measure Among Juvenile Sex Offenders

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## Introduction

The purpose of this study aimed to examine the utility of the Inventory for Parent and Peer Attachment (IPPA) and the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI) for assessing the construct of attachment. Attachment theory literature suggests that adolescents, who have poorly formed parental bonds early in life, may develop insecure attachment to their peers. This attachment deficit suggests a possible pathway toward sexually abusive behaviors during adolescence. The subscales on the PBI will be compared with the parental subscales on the IPPA. Also, parental attachment subscales will be compared to peer attachment subscales on the IPPA to determine if the relationship adolescents have with their parents is stable across peer relationships as well.

## Hypotheses

Parental attachment as measured on the IPPA would correlate positively with the care subscale for both mother and father attachment of the PBI within juvenile sex offenders (JSO). Also, overall peer attachment as measured on the IPPA would correlate positively with maternal and paternal attachment scores on the care dimension of the PBI. Finally, overall parental attachment should correlate significantly with overall peer attachment as measured by the IPPA.

## Method

### Participants

Four hundred seventy-one male residents incarcerated at an Alabama Department of Youth Services facility participated in this study. The mean age at the time of assessment was 15.66 years (SD = 18.21 months). A majority of the sample was Caucasian (56.8%), while African-Americans comprised the next largest group (40.2%), followed by Hispanic-Americans (0.3%) and individuals identified as "Other" (2.7%).

## Measures

Each participant was administered the IPPA and the PBI upon incarceration. The IPPA is a 53-item measure used to assess adolescents' perspective of affective and cognitive aspects of relationships with parents and peers. This measure is based on trust, Communication, and Alienation. The PBI is a 25-item instrument designed to measure parent-child bonds as perceived by the child. The PBI assesses care and overprotection.

## Procedure

All adolescent offenders were assessed within 3 weeks of their arrival at the DYS facility. Identification numbers were assigned to maintain the anonymity of the adolescents. Participants received a consent form and were fully aware of the confidential nature of the information that was going to be collected.

## Results

Table 1. Means and standard deviation for the IPPA and PBI.

Measure	JSO	
	M	SD
IPPA—Parents		
Trust	40.51	8.42
Communication	37.34	8.35
Alienation	19.21	7.35
Total attachment score	58.63	20.99
IPPA—Peers		
Trust	38.82	9.91
Communication	27.38	8.49
Alienation	17.86	6.80
Total attachment score	48.34	19.11
PBI Care--Maternal	28.99	7.42
PBI Overprotection—Maternal	15.27	5.89
PBI Care—Paternal	21.83	10.75
PBI Overprotection—Paternal	14.35	7.51

Table 2. Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficients between the IPPA scores and the PBI for JSO.

Measure IPPA	PBI-Maternal		PBI-Paternal	
	Care	Overprotection	Care	Overprotection
Parent Attachment	.546**	-.156**	.305**	-.084
Trust	.491**	-.167**	.277**	-.104*
Communication	.488**	-.087	.256**	-.029
Alienation	-.421**	.152**	-.260**	.089
Peer Attachment	.166**	-.200**	.075	-.079
Trust	.164**	-.200**	.064	-.082
Communication	.158**	-.119**	.078	-.008
Alienation	-.029	.123**	-.024	.094*

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

## Discussion

The current investigation was designed to assess the relationship between the subscales of two widely used attachment measures, the IPPA and the PBI. Results indicate that there are several strong positive correlations between and within the attachment measures. When determining overall parental attachment, maternal and paternal care accounted for 55% and 56% of the total variance, respectively. Maternal care and peer attachment only revealed a small positive correlation, while the relationship between paternal care and peer attachment was shown to be insignificant. However, a significant positive correlation was found between the overall parental and peer attachment as measured on the IPPA. This finding indicates that juvenile sexual offenders may be more securely attached to their mothers than their fathers. Also, parental and peer relationships are related and support the theory that attachment relationships are maintained throughout adolescence and may continue through adulthood. The results of this investigation suggest that further research needs to be conducted within the clinical adolescent population to investigate specific links between maternal or paternal attachment with the formation of peer bonds.