

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION



Several recent studies of maternal child-rearing attitudes and practices, both in Thailand and other countries, have indicated that there is a relationship between the nature of these practices and socioeconomic status. If this is true, then it becomes necessary to take socioeconomic factors into account when comparing the effects of maternal behavior on middle and lower class children's perceptions.

In Thailand, there are many studies about child-rearing practices of middle class or lower class mothers. However, there does not appear to be any studies comparing these two classes with regard to perception towards maternal behavior.

A child may have a "good" or a "bad" attitude toward mother by perceiving her behavior. Thus, the author suggested that it might be both interesting and useful to compare children from these two classes with regard to their perceptions of maternal behavior if there were any differences. If this was the case, the results might help to provide a guide for dealing with parent-child problems.

As the author has stated, while there is some research on Thai child-rearing practices within either middle or lower classes, no study has compared the two classes with regard to maternal behavior. Therefore, since no standard for classifying subjects according to Thai socioeconomic status has been used, the author decided to design the research as an exploratory study with the hope that the results might be usable as a tool in dealing with these same types of children in counseling services, classroom situations and education.

Furthermore, as many foreign investigators have conducted research on this same topic and there was no similar data for Thai subjects, the author wished to compare the results of this investigation with others to see whether different culture produced any differences with regard to perceptions towards maternal behavior of middle and lower class children.

Purpose of the Study

General Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine whether there were differences between perceptions of middle and lower classes towards maternal behavior.

Specific Purpose

The specific purpose of this study was to compare different classes of children of the same and different sexes in perceiving maternal behavior to see if :- (1) socioeconomic status had an influence on perception towards maternal behavior, (2) sexes of the same class had an influence on perception towards maternal behavior, (3) children of the same sex and same class perceived maternal and paternal behavior differently and (4) maternal behavior from perception of children and from reports of mothers were similar.

Delimitation

The scope of the problem was confined to Thai children in

grades nine and ten in Bangkok and Dhonburi who were Buddhists with both parents and grandparents of Thai nationality, Thai ethnic background and who lived with both parents from infancy to the present time. Subjects were separated by socioeconomic status (middle and lower classes). These designations were determined by the criteria of the mother's education, income and occupation, all of which will be clearly defined in the sample.

Hypothesis

Significant differences in the perceptions of maternal behavior will occur as a result of variations in the social class and sex of subjects.

Related Literature

There are numerous studies by authors, both Thais and those from other countries, who were interested in one or two aspects under the scope of "Child-Rearing Practices Related to Socioeconomic Status".

Sears, Maccoby and Levin¹ found, on the basis of interviews with mothers of five-year-olds, that middle class mothers were generally more permissive and less punitive toward their young children than were working class mothers, and generally expressed more warmth in dealing with their children. Another frequent finding was that parents treat young boys and girls differently from early infancy.

¹R.R. Sears, E.E. Maccoby & H. Levin. Pattern of Child-Rearing Evanston Illinois: Row, Peterson, 1957, 425 - 427.

Several studies indicated that mothers expressed greater warmth towards girls, but permit more aggression in boys.

Comparing sixty one aggressive boys, fifty seven non-aggressive, underachieving boys and one hundred and sixteen well-adjusted boys on their new psychometric instruments, Longstreth and Rice² found that aggressive boys described their parents as significantly lower on love scores than well-adjusted boys and significantly lower on control scores for certain situations.

When fourteen normal male siblings of schizophrenics and sixteen normal male siblings of normals were compared on a child-study-questionnaire, the normal siblings of schizophrenics perceived their mothers' attitudes as being more martyred and subtly dominating than did normal siblings of normals.³

In addition to this study, Heilbrun⁴ also did a study on schizophrenics by comparing perceptions of fifteen schizophrenics and twenty normal daughters towards mother's child-rearing attitudes. The results showed that schizophrenics more than normals tended to perceive attitudes relating to the "authoritarian-control" dimension

²Langdon E. Longstreth and Roger E. Rice. "Perceptions of Parental Behavior and Identification with Parents by Three Group of Boys Differing in School Adjustment; Journal of Educational Psychology, Vol. 55, 1964 144 - 151.

³Catherine B. Porro. "Perception of Maternal Child-Rearing Attitudes by Schizophrenic Males, Their Normal Males Whose Siblings Are Normal." Journal of Consulting Psychology, Vol. 29, 1965, 242 - 246.

⁴Alfred B. Heilbrun Jr. "Perception of Maternal Child-Rearing Attitudes in Schizophrenics." Journal of Consulting Psychology, Vol. 24, 1960, 169 - 173.

as more normal.

Thomas and Surachmad⁵, in their study found, from interviewing a sample of 100 lower class and 100 upper-middle class mothers in Bandung, Indonesia, upper-middle class mothers expected earlier weaning, reading and writing, the lower class mothers expected their children to play unsupervised at an earlier age.

Chirapa⁶, in her master's thesis on child-rearing practices, found that when comparing 95 males and 51 females of grades 8, 9 and 10 by using a questionnaire technique, middle class adolescent's perceptions were very similar. There were statistically significant differences between males' and females' perceptions on fathers' "nurturance" and "expressive reflection" behavior, and mothers' "achievement pressure". Males seemed to receive positive reinforcement from mothers more than from fathers.

The study of child-rearing practices of middle class families in Thailand stated that, from interviewing seventy mothers of grades 8, 9 and 10 children, middle class mothers thought their children should be indulged in almost all of their desires. However, two major exceptions were noted, the child must be obedient to his parents and must perform well in school.⁷

⁵Murray R. Thomas and Winaro Surachmad. "Social Class Differences in Mothers' Expectations for Children in Indonesia". The Journal of Social Psychology, Vol. 57, 1962, 303 - 307.

⁶Chirapa Kowatrakul. "Child-Rearing Practices and Parents' Expectations as Perceived by Middle Class Adolescents". Master's Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1962.

⁷Pilai Chayakul. "Child-Rearing Practices of Middle Class Families in Bangkok-Dhomburi." Master's Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1962.

Having done an investigation on "Child-Rearing Practices" of middle class mothers, six upper middle class and twenty-four lower middle class families, Srisavasdi⁸ found that fathers of both groups shared the duty of housewives by earning money for family living, paying an interest in children's education, accompanying children to many places and so forth. Houseworks were duties for mothers who looked after things at home but sometimes shared in working outside. To conclude, middle class mothers, as a whole, were generous, mild, friendly, gave little punishment and expressed affection towards children.

The majority of research concerned with child-rearing practices in Thailand has concentrated on middle class families. One exception is the work of Chuchit⁹ conducted among lower class families. From interviewing thirty lower class mothers, the investigator found that they were housewives who followed advice of their own mothers and also did all the housework by themselves. Fathers assisted with looking after the children only when the children were infants. Mothers, though loving their children, gave hard punishment and threatened the children not to be disobedient.

Schaefer and Bayley¹⁰, in their study of consistency of maternal

⁸Srisavasdi Cholvisut. "Child-Rearing Practices of Middle Class Families in Bangkok-Dhonburi." Master's Thesis, College of Education, Prasanmitra, 1962.

⁹Chuchit Phitakphon. "Child-Rearing Practices of Lower Class Families in Bangkok-Dhonburi." Master's Thesis, College of Education, Prasanmitra, 1962.

¹⁰Earl S. Schaefer and Nancy Bayley. "Consistency of Maternal Behavior from Infancy to Preadolescence." Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 61, 1960, 1 - 6.

behavior towards children, indicated that a mother's behavior with her child was significantly related to her behavior with the same child at preadolescence, especially in the scale "Love versus Hostility".

From their follow-up study employing socioeconomic status as one of the variables, Bayley and Schaefer¹¹ found that there was a slight tendency for the mothers of higher socioeconomic status to be more warm, understanding and accepting, and for those of lower status to be more controlling, irritable and punitive. The differences were much more evident for the mothers of boys than of girls.

¹¹Nancy Bayley and Earl S. Schaefer. "Relationships Between Socioeconomic Variables and the Behavior Toward Young Children." The Journal of Genetic Psychology, Vol. 96, 1960, 61 - 77.