

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION



One of the most important topics of discussion among adults, particularly among those who are involved in the educational system, is the behavior of children and adolescents. What makes children behave the way they do? Why do some children behave in one way and others behave in other ways? Why are some children concerned with achieving while other children are unconcerned? Why are some children considered to be responsible and others irresponsible? These are questions which educators and others would like to answer. We could investigate these problems in a number of different ways. We could be concerned with only the attitudes of the children. Another approach could be a concern with the attitudes of the teachers and the resulting effect on the children. A third approach could be to study the patterns of child rearing practices and the attitudes of the parents towards the child.

Personality theorists have attempted to show that the foundation of the behavior and personality of the child is formed in the early years of a child's life. According to Erikson's theory (3), the child is completely helpless at birth. He cannot walk, cannot talk and he is completely passive. The child depends on others; as a result, the child's personality develops out of the interaction with his mother and others. So, the presence of the mother is crucial in the child's

development. The first year of a child's life is the most important period; it is at this time that the foundation of the child's personality is formed. The child learns from his mother's consistent behavior that he can trust others; he learns that whenever he is hungry his mother will feed him. The parent is the child's world. From this relationship Erikson contends that a sense of basic trust or mistrust will develop. A child who has basic trust feels sure that if something is wrong, his parents will help him. This has a profound effect on the later life of the child. He will take risks, knowing that he will be loved and helped. In contrast, the child who has developed basic mistrust will not take risks; when he goes out into the world, which he can't trust, he will feel that risks will lead to failure.

Although the preceding is an oversimplification, first stage of development in Erikson's theory, most personality theorists would agree with him that the first years of life are the most formative. They are the years during which the foundation of the child's personality is created.

Building upon the general personality theory of Freud, Erikson and others, social psychologists have attempted to investigate the ways in which parents, especially mothers, bring up their children. Methods of breast feeding, toilet training, general child care, punishment, etc., are but a few of the areas studied. Most of these studies were reviewed by Brofenbrenner (1) in 1958 in an attempt to provide future researchers with an easy access to the general methodological and empirical findings of the past so that future research could be somewhat standardized over



"time" as well as "space".

Brofenbrenner, in his thorough review of child rearing practices in the U. S., points out some of the comparative differences between the manner in which lower class and middle class mothers bring up their children. Research by Maccoby, Sears and Levin, as reported by Brofenbrenner, and in their book *Patterns of Child Rearing* (9), present some of the changing trends of child rearing practices in the U. S. In general, the authors state that middle class mothers have a tendency to rear their children in a more permissive, less punitive manner than do lower class mothers. This is in contradiction to a study reported a decade earlier by Davis (4) in which it was pointed out that lower class mothers were more permissive than middle class mothers. Whatever the reasons for these differences, Brofenbrenner (1) points out that the present trend, as reported in recent studies, is in the direction of the Sears, Maccoby, Levin study (9).

While these recent studies seem to point out the major changes occurring in American child rearing practices, there is a need to *investigate* this area in other cultures. There have been a number of studies carried out in cultures other than the United States. One such study by Dr. Hugh Philp (7) and his staff at the *IntBangkok* Institute for Child Study uncovered some interesting facts about methods of child rearing in rural (village) Thailand. In general, they found that Thai mothers are permissive in bringing up their children, e.g., toilet training seems to be quite late. In contrast, they also found that weaning, while late, tends to be severe (as seen by the mothers).

The author states:

"...training for social responsibility is very highly valued, and this area alone of child rearing we have found to be non-permissive. That is to say, the mother who is highly permissive over toilet training, over feeding, over general behavior of the child will at the same time be very non-permissive, and will indeed be quite aggressive in a physical way for breaking the rules or regulations or techniques, whereby the child shows social responsibility. In this area alone mothers consistently claimed that they do beat their children for breaches of the code, so that on the one hand you have a highly permissive set of relationships between mothers and children in most areas, but in this one area of social responsibility, you often have quite punitive behavior... In a relative sense, accompanied with their own behavior in relationship to other areas of child rearing, this one area of social responsibility is treated in a punitive fashion. Dependency and independency follow a similar kind of pattern to those I have just described. Children are imagined to be dependent in this area of social responsibility (7,P.6)"

Dr. Philp also points out that in general there is little difference between methods of child rearing used for boys and girls except that girls are expected to have a greater sense of responsibility at an earlier age; "more is expected of them.(7)".

A study by Landy (4) in rural Puerto Rico gives a little more insight into child rearing practices in a rural area. Using the same interview schedule as Sears, Maccoby and Levin, he found that mothers tend to demand unquestioning obedience to parents and older people and expect the child to be dependent. They threaten the child with desertion, danger, etc. They inconsistently and rarely physically punish the child, although threats of physical punishment are common. Once the child reaches five or six years of age, or at the birth of a new sibling, he is no longer

entertained by the parents and, in general, the love and warmth is withdrawn.

In a study of the middle and lower class of Brazil, Rosen (1) studied the relationship of family structure to socialization and achievement motivation. He reported that:

"The child learns that toward a serverely authoritarian father only revolt or submission is possible. And submission in the form of ingratiation and obedience, is the dominant adjustment to authority in Brazil. (These children) are not likely to acquire a sense of responsibility for their own fate. Often the result of this situation is not the development of self-reliance but excessive dependence". (8, PP.612-624)

Rosen compared American and Brazilian achievement training which shows that American mothers on the average expect their children to achieve earlier than Brazilian mothers. The mean age of American achievement training is 7.5. years as compared with 8.2 years for Brazilian mothers. With regard to independence training, American mothers, on the average, expect their children to be independent earlier than Brazilian mothers. The mean age for Americans is 7.4 years and for Brazilians, it is 8.0 years. Rosen states that:


"Brazilian parents tend to be excessively protective and over-indulgent. Children who are reared in this fashion may develop exaggerated self-evaluations and expectations whose frustrations could generate feelings of being excessively pressured and rejected. A boy in this situation will often lose interest in the actual working process of competition and achievement although he may continue to fantasize about success." (8, P.622)

In short, the nature of Brazilian child rearing practices causes difficulty for the child in later situations which require achievement. What seems to be occurring in Brazil is that the children are indulged

and treated permissively in childhood to a point that dampens their desire to achieve and to be responsible. As a result, later in life they have difficulty facing situations in which they must achieve.

Thailand, as described by some observers and as shown in a pre-test of this research, seems to show trends similar to those in Brazil. It is common to find strong authoritarian fathers and mothers who are almost always over-indulgent. In fact, the English word "indulgent" has a negative connotation, while in the Thai language, the equivalent is positive (*tam jai mǎg*). It is a part of being a Thai child and adult to be submissive toward and dependent upon others who are older, or who have more education, or who are of higher status. The basic question of this research, then, is to ask: What are the child rearing practices of urban middle-class mothers in Thailand?

Some previous research carried out with an urban middle-class sample of only 30 mothers gives some leads. Srisawarde Cholvisutdhi (10) found that the differences in child rearing practices between Thai upper middle-class and lower middle-class are not quite clear, but there is some difference in toilet training demands. Upper middle-class mothers tend to be more strict in toilet training than lower middle-class mothers. They started to train their children when they were very young (3-4 months old). The children could not sit alone, so the mothers would put them on the bowl, resulting in an unpleasant situation for the child. Lower middle-class mothers started later. They began to train the children when the children were able to sit and understand the mothers' language. It was felt



to be better timing because the child did not react against the mother's training.

In terms of punishment, both classes of mothers did not like to beat the children. However, beating is the most popular method to use for punishment, being used inconsistently, depending upon the mother's emotions. Another method used to punish a child is to threaten the child with physical punishment, or not giving the child what he wants. The upper middle-class mothers train a child to be independent in eating, dressing, and washing himself at an earlier age than do lower middle-class mothers, but in responsibility training, (helping others, looking after younger siblings, bringing things to adults), lower middle-class mothers train the child earlier than do the upper middle-class mothers.

Another study by Dr. Supha Malakul (11) dealt with the child rearing practices of only 10 mothers. She reports that most of the mothers thought that boys at 3 years of age should be able to eat alone and wash themselves, while girls of the same age should do better. All the mothers agreed that the child being able to do things by himself at an early age influences the later character of the child. They reported that the first thing that a child should be able to do is eat unaided, and the least important thing the child should be trained to do is to dress by himself.

The worst possible behavior of the child is considered to be aggressiveness towards older people and strangers. Mothers also preferred their children to control their emotions and not to show anger. However, mothers did expect their children to show

aggressiveness when they had to defend themselves, and felt that aggressiveness was necessary to succeed in life. In practice, however, the child remains submissive to and dependent upon adults.

In general, the child rearing practices of Thai mothers as reported by Dr. Supha tends to be permissive with one basic exception -- the child's behavior towards older people.

Following the above studies carried out in both Thailand and other countries, the present research is a descriptive study of the child rearing practices of urban Thai middle-class mothers.

The purpose of this research is to investigate the following:

1. How middle-class mothers in urban Thai society rear their children.
  - (a) Are they indulgent or strict?
  - (b) How they treat the children in such situations as feeding, toilet training, achievement training, independence training, responsibility training, attention and care, punishment, educational aspirations, relationship between father and child?
2. Attitudes towards the child's future and the child's success and failure in school.