

CHAPTER IV

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

Of all the 26 scales, the scale which produced the most consistent differences in every pair of comparisons in which class was varied was the scale of "Intellectual stimulation" in which the middle class subjects had significantly higher means than the lower class subjects (Table 6-8, 11-12, 19-21). This would indicate that the middle class parents seemed to stimulate their children to learn more than did the lower class parents. This finding is consistent with the study of Thomas and Surachmad¹ conducted in Bandung, Indonesia, with subjects from the lower and upper middle classes. Again, in the present investigation it was found that when mothers and fathers in each class and sex were compared, results showed the mean for fathers to be higher in encouraging and stimulating the children. In addition, boys received more stimulation from both mothers and fathers.

Another consistent result was that, in every comparison, on the positive scales, the means for middle class children were found to be significantly higher while, on the other hand, on the negative scales, the means for lower class children were significantly higher. Therefore, middle class children tended to be more positively treated

¹Murray E. Thomas and Winaro Surachmad. "Social Class Differences in Mothers' Expectations for Children in Indonesia." The Journal of Social Psychology, Vol. 57, 1962, 303 - 307.

than were lower class children who seemed to receive more negative treatment than did middle class children. This finding supports what was found in an earlier study with American children who lived in a metropolitan area near a large university. In this study, Bayley and Schaefer² found that the mothers of higher socioeconomic status tended to be more warm, understanding and accepting and for those of lower status to be more controlling, irritable and punitive.³

In Tables 6-8 (comparisons of perceptions towards maternal behavior from reports of children), the middle class mothers seemed to show less autonomy than the lower class mothers. At the same time, they shared, stimulated the children to learn, restricted and directed the children significantly more than did the lower class mothers. In return, the lower class mothers had significantly higher "Negative evaluation" and "Irritability" scores. These results were similar to those reported by Schaefer and Bayley³ in their follow-up study of consistency of maternal behavior with mothers of different socioeconomic status in the United States.

When class was controlled and sex varied for the perception of maternal behavior, middle class mothers (Table 9) tended to show autonomy, had positive evaluation and stimulated sons more than daughters. This might be due to the fact that in Thai culture

²Nancy 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.

³Earl S. Schaefer and Nancy Bayley. "Consistency of Maternal Behavior from Infancy to Preadolescence." Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, Vol. 61, 1960, 1 - 6.

parents perceive sons as more important than daughters. For example, it is the son who must assume family responsibilities as well as carry on the family name to future generations. Another possible cause could be that girls are brought up in the way that they have to obey and be submissive towards parents more than boys who seem to be freer in doing things. In contrast, they showed significantly more possessiveness towards daughters. In addition, lower class mothers (Table 10) seemed to share but at the same time control daughters through guilt more than sons. The results from the lower class mothers on the negative scales, though not significantly different, showed that daughters were more controlled than sons. This meant that boys were freer and gained more appreciation and love than did girls. The possible reason might be that daughters, though of different class, were required to obey parents and spend most of their time at home so they were closer to mothers. Parents appeared to take more care of and pay more attention to daughters. The figures in Tables 4 and 5 indicated that the majority of mothers were housewives. As pointed out earlier, Thai culture places certain restrictions on girls' activities outside the home. As a result, they spend more time at home where the mother is working and are closer to their mothers than are sons. Since some disagreement, and punishment will inevitably occur between them during these periods of close contact, they might perceive that they are more negatively treated than are sons. While the results from lower class mothers were similar to those for middle class mothers, they contrasted with those for fathers. The author would suggest that fathers showed more love and appreciation for daughters than for sons. One possible reason is that when they return from work

they are often met by daughters who want to talk and to please them. On the other hand, sons very often are out with friends in the evening. Further research is necessary to support the accuracy of this supposition.

After discussing about maternal behavior we came to paternal behavior and see what would be indicated in the reports of children towards fathers. In Tables 11 and 12, after controlling sex and varying class, the results seemed to agree with those of the mothers. Thus, the middle class fathers tended to be significantly more positive while lower class fathers seemed to be significantly more on the negative side. That is, middle class fathers encouraged their children to be sociable, expressed more affection, gave more encouragement of independent thinking, supported emotions of children more, had much interest in children (on the scale of "child-centeredness") and showed more possessiveness. This result was supported by the results from a study of Srisavadi⁴ who found that middle class fathers, though working hard, had time to share responsibility in bringing up children while Chuchit⁵ found opposite results among lower class fathers.

⁴Srisavadi Cholwient. "Child-Rearing Practices of Middle Class Families in Bangkok-Dhonburi". Master's Thesis, College of Education, Prasanmitra, 1962.

⁵Chuchit Phitakphon. "Child-Rearing Practices of Lower Class Families in Bangkok-Dhonburi". Master's Thesis, College of Education, Prasanmitra, 1962.

Lower class fathers seemed to more often evaluate children in a negative way i.e. rejecting and neglecting them more than middle class fathers. In addition, fathers of lower class boys and girls showed more lax discipline and irritability toward their children (sex controlled) while middle class fathers stimulated their children to learn more. One possible cause might be that lower class fathers are laborers (Table 5) who must spend a lot of time away from the home and therefore, do not have much time to be with and share experiences with their children. When they return home they are tired and want to rest. Thus, if an annoying situation occurred, they would be upset and behave in a negative way towards their children. This might be the reason for children perceiving them as having rejected or neglected them more than did middle class fathers. The majority of lower class parents raise their children by emotion rather than reason which possibly accounts for the finding of lax discipline and irritability. With regard to the comparison between girls on the scale of "Nagging", there was no significant difference. It may be that men do not like to "nag" as much as women, especially with daughters who, it seems, gained more love than did sons. A similar finding was reported in Chirapa's master's thesis⁶ on the topic of "Child-Rearing Practices" conducted among middle class mothers.

⁶Chirapa Kowatrakool. "Child-Rearing Practices and Parent's Expectation as Perceived by Middle Class Adolescents". Master's Thesis, Chulalongkorn University, 1962.

When comparisons were made between boys and girls in each class on perceptions towards paternal behavior, middle class girls seemed to receive more love and less negative behavior from fathers than boys. Therefore, as indicated in Table 13, boys tended to receive punishment, negative evaluation, irritability and were rejected and ignored significantly more than girls. This was supported by the results obtained by Chizapa⁷.

There were no significant differences within the lower class when perceptions towards paternal behavior were compared. It might be that lower class fathers perceived their sons and daughters as having equal importance or unimportance and, therefore, behaved similarly towards them. However, there were some significant differences when separated by grades. In grade ten, fathers of lower class girls showed less discipline and more neglect than fathers of boys, while the latter encouraged independent thinking and were more strict with boys than with girls (see Appendix C). Both results tended to be a contradiction of those found for the middle class. Perhaps, this is due to certain restrictions of paternal behavior imposed by socioeconomic status. A possible explanation might be that the environment in which many lower class families live is unfavorable in many ways and, at times, may provide temptation for children to do wrong. For girls, they must stay home and spend most of their time with mothers so there is no need to control them as much as boys.

To see whether fathers and mothers of both classes and sexes

⁷Ibid.

had any similarity in behavior or whether there were significant differences between the two, the author then grouped the data from reports of children's perceptions towards mothers and fathers and separated it by class. With regard to middle class children (see Tables 15-17). mothers seemed to protect, intrude, suppress aggression, restrict, nag and reject children significantly more than fathers did. This might be due to the reason stated earlier i.e. that mothers were closer to children than fathers, so they seemed to behave more negatively towards children than did fathers who did not have much time to be with their children. Therefore, children frequently perceived them as behaving more positively. Fathers were higher on extreme autonomy and intellectual stimulation than were mothers.

The results for lower class subjects were similar. Thus, lower class children (Tables 17 and 18) gained positive evaluation, emotional support, child-centeredness, possessiveness, protectiveness, intrusiveness and ignoring from mothers significantly more than from fathers, who stimulated their children to learn significantly more. This finding is in agreement with the studies of Sears, Maccoby and Levin⁸ and Bayley and Schaefer⁹.

Since the data was available, the author decided to compare maternal behavior from mothers' reports to see whether the results from different classes would be similar to those of the children.

⁸R.R. Sears, E.E. Maccoby and H. Levin, Pattern of Child-Rearing, Evanston Illinois: Row, Peterson, 1957, 425 - 427.

⁹Bayley and Schaefer, loc. cit.

In general, the results (Tables 19-21) seemed to agree with those from children. Therefore, on the comparisons between classes, the mothers of middle class children tended to be more positive while those in the lower class seemed to be more negative. Hence, the mothers of middle class children shared, expressed affection, supported emotion and stimulated children to learn significantly more, while the mothers of lower class children were significantly more irritable. This supports the study of Sears, Maccoby and Levin¹⁰.

When comparisons were made between reports of mothers, by controlling class and varying sex, there were no highly significant differences. This possibly indicates that mothers from the same class, though the children were of different sexes, had similar child-rearing practices and ways of behaving towards children. The only exception was for mothers of middle class boys and girls on the scale of "Suppression of aggression". Aggression in girls seemed to be more suppressed than for boys. This undoubtedly is a reflection of the Thai culture and the way of rearing children, in which girls are taught to be submissive and not to show emotion or aggression, while boys seem to be encouraged in the direction of freer expression. This result also supports the findings of Sears, Whiting et. al.¹¹

As the data was available, the author made

¹⁰ Sears, Maccoby and Levin, loc. cit.

¹¹ R.R. Sears, W.J. Whiting, V. Nowlis and P.S. Sears. "Some Child-Rearing Antecedents of Aggression and Dependency in Young Children". Genetic Psychological Monographs, Vol. 47, 1953, 233 - 234.

comparisons to discover whether the perception of maternal behavior reported by children was similar to that reported by the mothers themselves. Therefore, the data was matched and analyzed (see Appendix C). While the results were similar, mothers reported themselves as more positive than did the children on all positive scales and less negative on each of the negative scales. For example, on the scale of "Encouraging independent thinking", when comparisons were made for the entire sample, the mothers' reports of their encouragement was significantly higher than the perceptions of the children, while on the scale of "Ignoring", the mothers reported that they ignored the children significantly less than did the reports from children. It may be that there was a gap between these two groups. That is, the children's perceptions and the mothers' behavior were not always in agreement.