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RELATIONSHIPS OF RECEIPT OF AID (AFDC), NUMBER OF CHILDREN,
AND MATERNAL RECEPTIVE VOCABULARY TO MATERNAL CHILDCARE
ATTITUDES

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

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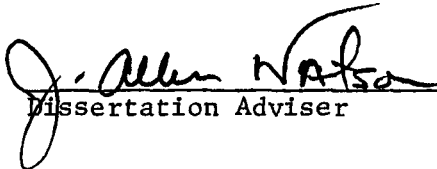
by

Joyce Vonderweidt

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
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Approved by


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APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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VONDERWEIDT, JOYCE. Relationships of Receipt of Aid (AFDC), Number of Children, and Maternal Receptive Vocabulary to Maternal Childcare Attitudes. (1983) Directed by: Dr. James A. Watson. Pp. 136

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate maternal attitudes toward childcare responsibilities in families of low socioeconomic status. A secondary purpose was to determine whether maternal attitudes are as homogeneous in this population as several previous investigators have argued. The investigation attempted to determine if receipt of financial aid (AFDC), number of children, and maternal receptive vocabulary abilities would discriminate mothers on several different attitude dimensions related to child-rearing responsibilities.

The sample consisted of 75 low-socioeconomic-level nonwhite and white mothers of children between two and five years of age. Mothers were self-selected from the Health Department and Head Start Program in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The study was descriptive and utilized a questionnaire and home-visit format in obtaining responses from mothers. Maternal attitudes were measured by an instrument developed by Cohler, Weiss, and Grunebaum (1970). Maternal receptive vocabulary abilities were measured by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (Dunn & Dunn, 1981). Demographic variables, AFDC status, and number of children were determined by mother responses to the Sociocultural Scale of the System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment developed by Mercer and Lewis (1977).

Three hypotheses were tested: (1) mothers not receiving AFDC funding have childcare attitudes significantly more positive than do mothers receiving AFDC funding; (2) mothers with greater numbers of children have childcare attitudes significantly less positive than do mothers responsible for fewer children; and (3) mothers achieving significantly higher scores on a test of receptive-vocabulary abilities have significantly more positive childcare attitudes than do low-scoring mothers. The data supported the first and third hypotheses.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

For those caught in the downward economic spiral, poverty is painful. For the rest of society, poverty is not only painful in cost of human suffering, but expensive. In 1981, the number of Wake County, North Carolina families receiving financial aid from the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program numbered 3,242 and represented 8,130 individuals. With a 1981 population of 303,375,¹ this represented approximately 2.3 percent of the population and an expenditure in excess of \$6,200,000.² In times of widespread and increasing economic stress, these figures draw attention to the importance of understanding the factors associated with such poverty.

One characteristic not often considered in studies of economically depressed families is that of maternal childcare attitudes and factors contributing to their formation. There is evidence that maternal childcare attitudes may be related to patterns of maternal and child behaviors (Clarke-Stewart, 1973; Doty, 1967; Lakin, 1957; Levy, 1943; Moss, 1967; McGillicuddy-Delisi, in press; Ollendick, la Berteaux, & Horne, 1978; Tulkin & Cohler, 1973), and possibly to young children's mental test performance (Cohler, Gallant, Grunebaum, Weiss, & Gamer, 1980; Farran & Haskins, 1980; Ramey & Brownlee,

1981). Ramey and Brownlee (1981) suggest that maternal attitudes may even represent a significant portion of the process of environmental deprivation. Because environmental deprivation and economic stress are related, it is of theoretical and practical importance to identify specific factors that may be related to maternal child-care attitudes in economically depressed families.

As early as 1967, Whiteman, Brown, and Deutsch questioned assumptions of relative homogeneity within groups classified as socioculturally deprived. They contended that the assumption of relative homogeneity within deprived groups overlooks factors that may be important and results in research findings with considerable unexplained variance. Lower socioeconomic families are not equally deprived. Most studies have not acknowledged this variation, broadly comparing lower-class with more middle-class characteristics. Increasingly, this approach is being criticized as simplistic (Mueller & Parcel, 1981).

In order to examine this variance of deprivation within an economically depressed population, the present study attempted to investigate how maternal attitudes vary within this population. Maternal attitude is a critical focus of interest that has not been exhaustively studied. Studies such as the one presented here may, therefore, have implications for the quality of parent-child interaction.

Purpose of the Study

Based on research needs stated by Ramey and Campbell (1976), Ramey and Brownlee (1981), and Greenberg and Davidson (1972), one purpose of the present study was to examine the extent to which differences in maternal attitudes within a low socioeconomic group of mothers may be related to their AFDC status, the number of their children, and their receptive vocabulary abilities.

Extensive clinical work with this group suggests differences between mothers receiving federal financial aid and those not receiving such aid. Mothers in extreme poverty, and thus more likely to be receiving aid, have been noted as less able to care for themselves and their children physically, educationally, and emotionally. Severely deprived mothers have been noted to be withdrawn, avoiding of eye contact with their children, suspicious of services available for their children, and less able or willing to comply with programs set up to facilitate the health, independence, education, and development of themselves and their children. Observations of these mothers often reveal inappropriate parenting skills when compared to more middle-class standards. Behavior expectations for their children by mothers of very low socioeconomic status are sometimes unrealistic with children expected to behave in ways more developmentally advanced than the child's age might permit. Discipline has been noted as occasionally nonconditional on child behavior, often physical, and sometimes unrelated to the developmental level of the child. The behaviors described above are not

limited to mothers of low-socioeconomic status. However, these observations are particularly consistent in studies of very low socioeconomic-level mothers and their children, the population sample in this study.

More so than mothers less economically deprived, poverty-level mothers hold attitudes more concrete and authoritarian in nature (Schaeffer & Bell, 1958). Family configuration factors such as number of children and parent education levels have been noted to impact on parental beliefs (McGillicuddy-DeLisi, Sigel, & Johnson, 1979) and on the degree of affect expressed among and between family members (Bossard & Boll, 1956; Nye, 1951; Rainwater, 1960; Willie & Weinandy, 1963). The physical and emotional exhaustion resulting from continuous and often futile attempts of poverty-level families to meet basic physical and safety family needs would seem to leave little time for nurturance, guidance, education, and appreciation of individual differences among their children (Nye, Carlson, & Garrett, 1970). It is feasible, then, that hardships compounded by greater numbers of children in the home would contribute in a negative way to maternal attitudes.

Many economically deprived mothers have difficulties with expressive and receptive language skills (Ervin-Tripp, 1971; Hart, 1975; Moerk, 1980; Robinson, 1971). Verbalizations between parent and child have been cited as often sparse, somewhat arbitrary, and frequently unappreciative of the cognitive level of the child (Hess & Shipman, 1965). Verbal commands to achieve behavior control have been cited as devoid of the verbal and gestural expansion frequently required to assist a child's understanding of message content.

Deprived mothers have been found to use restricted and constricting language in communicating with their children and in conveying their attitudes to and about their children (Robinson, 1971).

Hess and Shipman (1965) have argued that the behaviors associated with educational, economic, and social poverty are learned through socialization during the early years. The lack of cognitive meaning in the communication system between the poverty-level mother and her child has been highlighted as a primary factor involved in the effects of cultural deprivation. Ramey and Brownlee (1981), on the other hand, have suggested that it is the attitudes mothers hold toward their childrearing responsibilities that may possibly represent a significant portion of the process of deprivation. Their suggestion has been based primarily on the evidence associating less adaptive attitudes with deprived mothers. Since language deficiencies in parents may limit their effectiveness in communicating meaningfully with children, and thereby increase frustrations and lower morale, language abilities may be a potentially important variable in detecting differences in maternal attitudes regarding childrearing practices.

Language, the number of children in the home, maternal attitudes, and environmental deprivation seem to be interrelated. Identifying relationships between and among these variables could possibly contribute to a better understanding of some of the factors that contribute to the perpetuation of poverty from one generation to the next.

A second and equally relevant purpose of the study was to demonstrate that variation in maternal childcare attitudes exists within this relatively homogeneous, low-socioeconomic group of mothers (Mueller & Parcel, 1981).

Proposal for Research

A variety of studies have shown that parental attitudes differ according to various family constellation factors (Brophy, 1970; Campbell, 1970; Cicirelli, 1975, 1976, 1977; Elder & Bowerman, 1963; Hilton, 1967) and socioeconomic status (Chilman, 1965; Hurley & Hohn, 1971; Kohn, 1959; Lesser, Fifer, & Clark, 1965; Pavenstadt, 1965; White, 1957; Wright & Wright, 1976). This study investigated whether maternal attitudes vary according to the family's AFDC status (receiving AFDC or not receiving such aid), the number of children in the home, and maternal receptive-language abilities. Subjects were 75 mothers of two- to five-year-old, Raleigh, North Carolina, Head Start and Health Department children. The majority of families were black. While their income source and level varied somewhat, they were primarily of very low-socioeconomic status. The investigator's extensive experience in clinical work with this group indicated that this population would provide a sufficient range of variation in the variables under study.

Maternal tests included an assessment of attitudes on childcare determined by an extensive, developmentally based maternal attitude scale. The Maternal Attitude Scale was constructed according to

Sander's (1962, 1964, 1969) formulation of the developing relationship between mother and child during the first years of the child's life (Cohler, Weiss, & Grunebaum, 1970). During a parent interview, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (PPVT-R) (Dunn & Dunn, 1981), a quickly administered language test with high-interest level useful in measuring vocabulary and degree of cultural assimilation (Sattler, 1974) was administered. Also, the System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment Sociocultural Scales (SOMPA) (Mercer & Lewis, 1977) were administered. This interview assessed socioeconomic status in such a way that AFDC status could be determined, as well as the number of children in the home.

Assumptions

1. Based on support from the literature, the investigator assumed that difficulties with verbal expression (word knowledge and skills) are associated with environmental deprivation and lower-socioeconomic status.
2. A limited vocabulary may exacerbate feelings of hopelessness and futility. Hopelessness and futility, in turn, may contribute to the authoritarian and less positive childcare attitudes held by low-socioeconomic-level mothers. The investigator assumed, therefore, that mothers with greater word knowledge (as measured by receptive vocabulary abilities) would hold attitudes reflecting a more positive approach toward childrearing responsibilities.

3. The investigator assumed that mothers responsible for greater numbers of children would have attitudes more concrete, and therefore, more authoritarian in nature (less positive maternal attitudes), based on the supposition that positive attitudes are more demanding of maternal time and energies than are less positive attitudes.
4. The investigator assumed that mothers evidencing language difficulties would be able (with unbiased and value-free assistance from the investigator assured by the application of clinical skills achieved through training and practical experience with the scale) to comprehend the meanings inferred by the statements in the Maternal Attitude Scale
5. Finally, the investigator assumed that within an apparently homogeneous group of mothers low of socioeconomic status, individual differences, heretofore relatively unknown, would be found in their childcare attitudes (Mueller & Parcel, 1981).

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of definitions of key words used throughout the context of the study.

Maternal childcare attitudes are beliefs held by a mother, accompanied by affect, stemming from her life experiences which predispose her to behave toward her child in specific ways.

AFDC status refers to families receiving financial support in the form of Aid to Families with Dependent Children at the time of

the study. Funds for this program are provided under Title IV of the Social Security Act:

Aid to Families with Dependent Children is a money payment for certain relatives and needy children who have been deprived of parental care and support because of the death, physical or mental incapacity, or continued absence from home of one or both parents--natural or adoptive.

The money for this program is appropriated by the United States Congress, the North Carolina General Assembly, and the Boards of County Commissioners.

Federal and State regulations establish the eligibility requirements and the budget amounts allowable.

The County Board of Social Services or in some cases the county director makes the decision as to an applicant's eligibility and the amount of payment within the established requirements. (NC Department of Human Resources, 1981, p. 2) (See Table 1.)

Head Start children are those children qualifying for benefits under Title V of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 as amended by Public Law 95-568, Section 525(a) which established eligibility requirements and limitations for enrollment in Head Start Programs. The 1981 poverty income guidelines are shown in Table 2.

Number of children refers to the number of children in the home being cared for by the mother. The children can be half-brothers or half-sisters, stepbrothers or stepsisters, or adopted, as well as biological brothers and sisters. Number of children only includes children living in the home and does not include children cared for during the day.

Maternal receptive vocabulary abilities are expressed in the form of a standardized score based on the raw score achieved through administration of the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (Dunn & Dunn, 1981).

Table 1
Consolidated Standard of Need Table
By Number in the Budget Unit

	Number in Budget Unit													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Consolidated Standard Allow- ance	\$127	\$167	\$192	\$210	\$230	\$248	\$266	\$277	\$289	\$305	\$320	\$336	\$352	\$368

Note. Add \$16.00 to the consolidated standard allowance for 14 for each person in the budget unit in excess of 14 (NC Department of Human Resources, 1981, p. 2).

Table 2
Poverty Income Guidelines for all States
Except Alaska and Hawaii

Size of Family Unit	Nonfarm Family	Farm Family
1	4,310	3,680
2	5,690	4,850
3	7,070	6,020
4	8,450	7,190
5	9,830	8,360
6	11,210	9,530

Positive maternal attitudes reflect an understanding that the child is independent and responsive as an individual and acknowledge variation in affect between mother and child. Positive attitudes are accepting and reinforcing of a give-and-take communication system between mother and child.

Less positive maternal attitudes refer to attitudes determined to be concrete, authoritarian, naive to variations in affect between mother and child, and less accepting of the child as an independent and emotionally responsive individual.

Strengths and Limitations

Strengths

The two major strengths of the present investigation were the following: (1) the choice of population to be studied, and (2) its focus on a broad range of maternal attitudes. The study investigated a population not only difficult to reach and motivate for this kind of data collection, but traditionally believed to be rather homogeneous in maternal attitudes.

First, by looking within a relatively homogeneous population for variation in maternal attitudes, opportunity was taken to detect previously unrecognized variation within this relatively low socioeconomic group. Lower socioeconomic groups have been compared previously with their middle-class counterparts. With widespread economic stress increasing, this approach is no longer appropriate (Mueller & Parcel, 1981).

Second, in contrast to other widely used maternal attitude scales, the maternal attitude scale selected for this study was designed to be used only with mothers. It does not ask mothers what they specifically do, but rather asks what they feel and believe about childrearing responsibilities. Researchers have stated a need for this kind of an approach (Becker & Krug, 1965). What mothers feel and believe may be more relevant to their attitudes than the behaviors they report or actually exhibit in given situations (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Cohler et al., 1970).

The study's methodological strengths were its simple, straightforward analytic design, employing a small number of variables, each categorized at only two levels. In such a context, the researcher hoped for statistical interpretations both intelligible and reflective of the data.

Inasmuch as the instruments employed are not notably vulnerable to administrator bias, the use of a single investigator for all subjects was viewed as, on balance, a methodological strength, as maximizing the consistency of experimental conditions and the reliability of the results.

Limitations

A limitation of the present study was that while it focused on an interesting and difficult-to-reach group, its access to this group may have been biased to an unknown extent by the self-selection of the participating mothers.

The study is methodologically weak in that the two-level categorization employed for all independent variables may have masked potentially interesting variability in the results. This possible limitation derives from what may be a more general weakness of the study--a small sample size that may underestimate the actual range of variation found in this population for the variables under study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Attitude, Behavior, Language, and Socioeconomic Status Relationships

Theoretical Perspectives

Results of studies attempting to show that attitudes predict behaviors and abilities are generally mixed (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Information on a person's attitude may tell little as to whether that person will perform a behavior in a given circumstance. However, knowledge of the person's attitude can tell something about the overall pattern of that person's behavior. The Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) review concluded that many theorists have not given up the assumption of a direct link between attitude toward an object and an action with respect to that object. Much of the research on maternal attitudes has related attitudes directly to maternal and child behavior. Some theorists, however, are critical of this approach. Moss (1965) stated that the study of attitudes in this way represents only an indirect method of studying socialization and, therefore, may be of limited value. Attitudes may better be described and understood through direct measurement of what the subjects think, feel, and believe (Cohler et al., 1970).

According to McGillicuddy-Delisi (1980), to understand the role of parental belief systems or attitudes, the cultural assumptions of

that group must be included in the analysis. With an awareness of parental beliefs or attitudes, interventionists may be better equipped to enter the family with educational and counseling programs. Parental attitudes vary with family configuration, socioeconomic status, sex of parent and child, and also fall into patterns (McGillicuddy-Delisi, 1980). These variables may be independent contributors or they may serve as moderators of any attitude-behavior relationship.

To explain differences in maternal attitudes, Bronfenbrenner (1958) suggested that access to expert opinion on childrearing tends to vary with social class. The higher the socioeconomic level of the parent, the more likely that parent would have been exposed to developmental theories reflecting the need for a more positive attitude toward childrearing practices. Parents exposed to child-development information would be more likely to assimilate this information into their attitudinal belief systems than would parents not having an opportunity. According to Bronfenbrenner (1958), many lower-socioeconomic-level mothers may not be exposed to current developmental theories or may not be able to assimilate these ideas should they have been exposed. In part, this may be related to language abilities.

Language and its relationship to thoughts, perceptions, and beliefs has long been a persistent problem for theorists. Early behaviorists tended to believe that thoughts are motor movements of the larynx. Early German psychologists proposed that thoughts can occur without images or speech. The Russians believe that in

childhood, language and thinking are related but separate in adulthood. Piaget has proposed that language and thought develop separately. Clearly, there is no definitive answer. By assessing one aspect of language abilities for possible relationships to attitudes, possibly more can be learned about attitude formation.

Bronfenbrenner's hypothesis of parental exposure to child development information attempted to explain attitudinal differences between lower- and middle-class mothers. Since the literature permits the assumption that language differences exist between these two groups, it seems reasonable to assess language abilities for possible relationships to differences in maternal attitudes. One method for accomplishing this is to use a vocabulary test such as the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (Dunn & Dunn, 1981). Bronfenbrenner's explanation with its possible relationship to language abilities may also pertain to attitudinal differences within a relatively homogeneous lower socioeconomic group.

In summary, a mother's childcare attitudes seem to be influenced by her situation in life and possibly by her own abilities and opportunities. To understand more of the role of maternal attitudes, it would appear beneficial to understand more about what contributes to attitude formation.

Research on Variation in Maternal Attitudes Between Socioeconomic Groups

Rutter (1974) commented that we do not know the precise qualities necessary for adequate mothering. There has as yet been no

definitive assessment of the degree of deprivation that can possibly lead to a failure to form bonds, a distortion of relationships, and cognitively limited developmental growth. There is, however, considerable evidence that social class is related to degree of deprivation and that childcare attitudes are related to social class (Becker & Krug, 1965; Emmerich, 1969; Ernhart & Loevinger, 1969; Garfield & Helper, 1962; Jordan, 1970; LaPerriere, 1962; Moss, 1967; Ninio, 1979; Ramey & Campbell, 1976; Tulkin & Cohler, 1973; Tulkin & Kagan, 1972). In fact, there seems to be no evidence in disagreement with this. With increasing social and economic status, mothers tend to have attitudes reflective of greater competency, self-confidence, potential for impact, and reflective of more democratic as opposed to authoritarian behaviors. They are more accepting and encouraging of reciprocal interactions, and they attribute greater cognitive capabilities to their developing child.

Research on Variation in Maternal Attitudes Within Lower Socioeconomic Groups

Differences in maternal attitudes within an economically depressed group of mothers have not been as firmly established. There is, however, some evidence that differences more reflective of positive attitudes than previously thought can be found in this group. Not all economically depressed mothers have negative attitudes (Greenberg & Davidson, 1972), nor do they all have similar attitudes (Ramey & Brownlee, 1981; Ramey, Farran, & Campbell, 1979).

To determine significant factors contributing to school success and failure, Greenberg and Davidson (1972) investigated two groups of disadvantaged black children. A 54-question parent interview assessed dimensions of parental behavior and success. Five categories were considered: (1) structure and orderliness of the home, (2) awareness of the child as an individual, (3) parent's concern for education, (4) broader aspects of general school awareness, and (5) rationality of discipline. Substantial differences between the families of high and low achievers were revealed. With the exception of the one dimension of rationality of discipline surrounding poor school marks, the quality of family life and parent attitude of high achievers was superior on all dimensions. Parental interest, as expressed through attitudes, and an orderly home environment (both of these being family influences similar to those associated with achievement in middle-class youngsters) were strongly correlated with school achievement in lower-class children. Evidence indicated variation in parental attitudes within lower socioeconomic groups and a need for similar investigations with parents of younger children.

Ramey and Brownlee (1981) compared maternal attitudes between a group of children who remained stable in intelligence and a group who declined in intelligence by 24 months. All mothers were black, had low levels of formal education, fairly low intelligence, and very low income. Children within normal limits at 24 months had mothers who, at six months, scored as more democratic and more verbally intelligent. Higher scorers at 24 months were also relatively higher

scorers at six months and of better temperament. Analysis revealed three predictors (mother's democratic attitudes, child's temperament, and amount of time spent outside the home) to be the most efficient at discriminating between these two groups. Results suggest that future research efforts need to examine more thoroughly the diversities in maternal attitudes within this group of mothers.

Ramey, Farran, and Campbell (1979) reported a study of 57 black children from families at risk for producing children who test within the mildly retarded range of intelligence when they reach school age. One important finding was significant diversity in maternal attitudes and behavior within this deprived group. More evidence is needed to firmly establish the presence of differences in specific maternal childcare attitudes within this relatively homogeneous, lower socioeconomic group, and to identify factors responsible for these differences.

Research on Family Size and Maternal Attitudes

Just as lower socioeconomic-level mothers have been found to hold authoritarian attitudes toward their children, so has the larger family been found characterized by authoritarian parental attitudes and practices. Research has shown that the larger the family, the more likely the parents will employ restrictive parental practices and corporal punishment (Bossard & Boll, 1956; Clausen, 1966; Elder & Bowerman, 1963; Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957). Parental role playing in families with more than three children has been

characterized as increasingly stressful suggesting a decrease in attitude toward parenting with an increase in number of children (Bossard & Boll, 1956; Campbell, 1970; Nye, 1951; Willie & Weinandy, 1963).

Nye, Carlson, and Garrett (1970), in an analysis of data specific to mothers' attitudes toward their maternal roles, found that mothers with only one child were the most content and held more positive attitudes toward their mothering responsibilities. Attitudes declined with increasing numbers of children until four, at which point professed attitudes began to show an increase in positivity. Their data suggested that mothers of small and large families seem to hold more positive attitudes regarding their mothering responsibilities than do mothers of intermediate sized families. Social class in this study, however, was not held constant.

Generally speaking, research has shown that the number of children in a family can impact on parental beliefs (McGillicuddy-DeLisi et al., 1979), and that stress, restrictive parental practices, and corporal punishment tend to increase with the number of children in the family. What has not been as firmly established is the relationship of increasing numbers of children in low-socio-economic-level families to the attitudes the mothers in these families hold toward their childrearing responsibilities.

Research on Language Abilities, Attitudes,
and Socioeconomic Status

One of the strongest statements relating attitudes and language comes from research by Oller, Baca, and Vigil (1977). These researchers studied both the attitudes and language development of non-English-speaking adults (Mexicans) through their acquisition of English as a second language. Although these adults were involved in a program of job training and preparation, with the study and expected proficiency of English and eventual employment being the goal of the program, the results have implications for the study of maternal attitudes.

An important aspect of the study was the investigation of relationships between attained proficiency in English as a second language and attitudes toward self. Psychoanalytic theory has long assumed that attitudes toward self can influence attitudes toward others, especially toward one's children. Consequently, this study, which admittedly documented changes in attitude toward self with increased proficiency in English, seemed relevant to the present investigation's hypothesis that language abilities are related to maternal attitudes toward childcare responsibilities. A mother's feelings about herself as a person and her experiences affect the manner in which she develops her relationship with her child (Davids, Holden, & Gray, 1963; Deutsch, 1945). Mothers with greater language proficiency could be expected to have more positive self-attitudes, and therefore, more positive attitudes toward their children and toward childrearing than would mothers with poor language proficiency.

The Oller et al. (1977) study took place over a substantial period of time, and that period of time was also a time of change in the individual. Therefore, changes in attitudes and proficiency could be documented. One important result for the present study was the documentation of a positive increase in attitudes toward self with the attainment of proficiency in English.

In a study including mentally ill and well mothers, Cohler et al. (1980) reported maternal verbal intelligence correlating with maternal attitudes on control of aggression, encouragement of reciprocity, and acceptance of emotional complexity in childcare for mentally ill mothers but correlating only with attitudes regarding control of aggression and acceptance of emotional complexity in childcare for the well mothers. The mothers in this study were, however, all married and middle-class. The authors offered no interpretation of these results as the study was concerned primarily with maternal attitudes as they relate to the cognitive development of young children.

Moerk (1980) identified language-development differences in children to be a consequence of input deprivation or stimulation. In reviewing data originally collected by Brown (1973), Moerk found differences in deprivation of input between socioeconomic groups to be as high as 45 percent. The review concluded that frequency of input to the child was highly related to frequency of production by the child. Not only did the data indicate socioeconomic differences in input, but associated parental deprivation with the improper use of language. The child eventually models the construction of the language, as well as the specific vocabulary.

Further reference to deprivation as a function of delayed language development and socioeconomic status is reflected in work by Hart (1975). Hart raised the question of whether an incorrect or deviant response from a child is due to the child's incompetency to produce the correct response, or to the fact that the stimulus material is not appropriate to elicit it from the child. The study concluded that lower-socioeconomic parents expand their children's sentences less frequently than do more middle-class parents, leaving the child with limited experience with expansion as a cue for appropriate responding. Hart's research assumed all children held the same capacity for linguistic skills in order to test for response to cues. The findings demonstrated that limitations in language competence were a result of limitations in cues, with socioeconomic differences cited as deficits in performance rather than potential ability.

Ervin-Tripp (1971) applied the same conclusion to the rules of language, and found that children differ in the rate of mastery of shared rules depending on the exposure to those shared rules through parental preferences for linguistic rule. Ervin-Tripp stated that socioeconomic groups differ in both the uses to which they put speech and the value or attitude they place on skill in these different uses, supporting the conclusions of studies relating attitudes and speech patterns.

Hess and Shipman (1965) succeeded in relating language and verbal communication styles to socioeconomic status and indirectly to maternal attitudes. These investigators designed a study to deal

with the question: What is cultural deprivation? Employing a research population of 163 black mothers and their four-year-old children, they outlined four different social levels based on years of education and occupation. In an interaction session between mother and child, verbalizations by the mother to the child were recorded and compared and contrasted across the four social levels. A gross disparity in quantity and quality of verbal output was detected between the highest social-status group and the lower three. Mothers in the highest social class spoke more to their four-year-olds. There was also a noted difference favoring the highest social-status group in the mothers' tendency to use abstract words and in the tendency to use complex syntactic structures.

Mothers in the lower social-class groups verbally interacted with their children in a manner suggesting a restricted rather than an elaborated communication code. Restricted codes were defined as general clichés or readily understood statements eliminating the need for complex thought, possibly reflecting an attitude of passivity or compliance and the tendency to reach solutions impulsively rather than to reflect, compare, and then choose among alternatives. Restricted speech forecloses the need for the reflective weighing of alternatives and consequences, and is, furthermore, associated with family control systems appealing to status or ascribed role norms.

Robinson (1971) identified a full spectrum of differences in socioeconomic status and language with regard to the ability of higher socioeconomic groups to use both elaborate and restricted codes in verbal communication. Lower socioeconomic-level parents

were more confined to restricted and constricting codes with regard to development and parental attitudes toward childrearing. Robinson concluded that lower-socioeconomic-level mothers use language as one of a variety of control strategies and tend to respond to children's questions in terms of control. Middle-class mothers tended to convey more information to children, to use discipline as an opportunity to give out information, and to encourage curiosity. The result is that middle-class children tend to develop a more elaborate system of communication, both verbal and nonverbal, while lower-socioeconomic-level children are more limited in their exposure to vocabulary and expression itself. The educational level of parents was the most obvious influence.

In summary, many poverty-level mothers have themselves been reared in deprived environments. Knowledge of a person's attitudes can tell something about the overall pattern of that person's behavior. There is evidence that maternal attitudes about self and children are related to word knowledge and usage. Attitudes might be changeable by increasing word knowledge and usage, thereby fostering attitudes toward self-efficiency. Establishing a basal level of word knowledge in deprived mothers, while at the same time having access to their current attitudes toward childcare responsibilities, could document relationships between language and socioeconomic status to attitudes. Perhaps more appropriate intervention strategies could be implemented. Intervening with mothers by expanding their word knowledge may result in more positive attitudes toward self, children, and childrearing responsibilities. Mothers and children, through

increased and shared language abilities, may increase their reciprocal social and emotional interactions, facilitating not only child and maternal language development but positive maternal attitudinal changes.

Hypotheses

The three independent variables used in the analyses included AFDC status, number of children, and maternal-receptive vocabulary. The dependent variable was maternal attitudes. The study was designed to demonstrate the existence of significant individual differences in maternal childcare attitudes within a relatively homogeneous group of mothers of low socioeconomic status. The differences tested for are specified in the following three correlational hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Within a relatively homogeneous group of mothers low in socioeconomic status, mothers not receiving AFDC funding have maternal childcare attitudes significantly more positive in nature than do mothers receiving AFDC funding.

Hypothesis 2. Within a relatively homogeneous group of mothers low in socioeconomic status, mothers with greater numbers of children have childcare attitudes significantly less positive in nature than do mothers with responsibilities for fewer numbers of children.

Hypothesis 3. Within a relatively homogeneous group of mothers low in socioeconomic status, mothers achieving significantly higher scores on a test of receptive-vocabulary abilities have significantly more positive childcare attitudes.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate maternal attitudes toward childcare responsibilities in families of relatively low socioeconomic status. The study was descriptive in nature, utilizing a questionnaire and home-visit format.

Subjects

All subjects were mothers of two- to five-year-old children, self-selected from the Wake County Public Health Department and the Wake County Head Start Program, Thompson Street Center, both located in Raleigh, North Carolina. Health Department clients were approached directly at regular Pediatric Nurse Supervisory Clinics, having first been identified as possible subjects by the resident pediatrician. Head Start children took home a letter to parents giving a brief description of the study (see Appendix A). Subjects indicated their approval and agreement for participation by signing a consent form and returning it to their child's Head Start teacher (see Appendix A). The Health Department was the primary provider of mothers of two-year-old children, while Head Start provided subjects with children between three and five years of age. Health Department clients who agreed to participate were asked to give their names, addresses, and telephone numbers, along with preliminary information that

included directions to their homes, the best time to call for an appointment, and where they would prefer to be interviewed.

The study employed 75 subjects. The majority of subjects (53) were from the Health Department (71 percent). Head Start provided 22 subjects (29 percent). An attempt was made to have approximately equal numbers of mothers of male (42 or 56 percent) and female (33 or 44 percent) children.

Educational levels of subjects and numbers of children are shown in Tables 3 and 4. The educational level of the sample was primarily twelfth grade (high school diploma or graduate equivalency diploma) or less (70 percent). The subjects were of lower socioeconomic status; the number receiving AFDC funding was 25 (33.3 percent). Forty subjects (53 percent) were single parents; 57 subjects were nonwhite (76 percent). The typical subject was either unemployed or working in an unskilled factory production or clerical position. Average age of subjects was 26.8 years; the age range varied from 18.5 years to 44.2 years. The distribution of subjects' ages is shown in Table 5.

Materials and Tests

One questionnaire, one test, and one interview record form made up the materials and tests necessary for the investigation.

Measure of Maternal Childcare Attitudes

The Maternal Attitude Scale (Cohler et al., 1970) is a 233-item scale using the Likert technique of summed ratings across a six-point item scale: strongly agree, moderately agree, slightly agree,

Table 3
Distribution of Educational Levels of the Sample

Educational Level	N	Percentage
Less than Seventh Grade	1	1
Seventh to Eighth Grade	1	1
Ninth to Eleventh Grade	24	32
Completed High School or Achieved a Graduate Equivalency Diploma	27	36
Federal Job Training, Technical Training, or Some College	18	24
Completed College	3	4
Some Graduate Work	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Totals	75	100

Note. \bar{X} = Completed high school or graduate equivalency.

Table 4
Distribution of Number of Children of the Sample

Number of Children	N	Percentage
1	18	24
2	29	39
3	17	23
4	8	11
5	1	1
6	0	0
7	1	1
8	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
Totals	75	100

Note. $\bar{X} = 2.4$ children.

Table 5
Distribution of Subjects' Ages of the Sample

Maternal Age (in years)	N	Percentage
Less than 20 Years	3	4
20 to 25 Years	40	53
26 to 30 Years	18	24
31 to 35 Years	9	12
36 to 39 Years	3	4
Greater than 39 Years	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
Totals	75	100

Note. \bar{X} = 26.8 years.

slightly disagree, moderately disagree, strongly disagree. The scale was constructed in response to methodological criticisms of other maternal attitude scales (Becker & Krug, 1965). Contrary to prior work in this area, Cohler et al. (1970) constructed a scale that does not mix attitudinal and behavioral items. The scale does not ask a mother what she does, but inquires about what she believes about childrearing. The authors incorporated the affective component of attitudes by constructing items that tap feelings regarding child-rearing. The authors also believed it important to construct a scale acknowledging that mothers may have different beliefs and attitudes than people who are not mothers. A generality for maternal attitudes

toward childcare responsibilities among various populations was not assumed. The scale was written specifically to assess the attitudes of mothers. (See Appendix B for sample Maternal Attitude Scale.)

Details on scale construction including reliability and validity are described by Cohler et al. (1970) and by Cohler (1976). The scale was developed after extensive pretesting that included middle- and lower-socioeconomic-level mothers. It is computer-scored and based on norms from more than 200 mothers of young children. Factor analysis of the entire item pool making up the Total Maternal Attitude Scale yielded five independent subscales. Table 6 presents a listing of the factors contributing to the formation of each of the subscales, assignment of individual items to the various factors, and directionality for the most adaptive response. For each subscale, scores usually range from a low of minus two to a high of plus two.³ Table 7 presents a schematic portrayal of the five subscales (Cohler et al., 1980).

Results of the completed Maternal Attitude Scale were scored to obtain the five factor scores (referred to as subscales in this study): (I) appropriate versus inappropriate control of child's aggression, (II) encouragement versus discouragement of reciprocity, (III) appropriate versus inappropriate closeness with the child, (IV) acceptance versus denial of emotional complexity in childcare, and (V) feelings of competence versus lack of competence in perceiving and meeting the baby's needs.

Table 6
Assignment of Scale Items to the Factors Included
in Each of Five Subscales of Total Maternal
Attitude Scale

Subscale	Factors Contributing to Subscales	*Mothers With Adaptive Attitudes Will:					
		Agree (Item Numbers)			Disagree (Item Numbers)		
I Appropriate versus Inappropriate Control of Child's Aggression	1. Period of self-assertion: Extent to which child can establish self-assertion in interaction with mother and at what cost; negativism and initiative, and pull of forces between mother and child.	52	116	180	35	154	
		55	122	200	139		
		106	163	213	153		
	2. Period of instructive action: Extent to which child can carry out destructive aggression in his mother's presence and with what consequences; can mother modify the aggression while preserving the intent with which it was initiated.	103	193		85	164	218
		124			98	174	
		134			151	183	
	3. Period of challenge to mother: Extent to which child can challenge mother's actions and limits and the point in the challenge at which the mother can take a stand; how much emotional expression will the mother allow when directed against her.	94			45	131	161 184
		114			105	143	170 199
		129			109	146	175
					112	160	177
	4. Period of consolidation of body image: The degree to which the child plays with or asks questions about parts of his or her parents' bodies and the extent to which the mother either verbally or physically suppresses such body play and conversation.	69	150		127	206	
		84	155		132	211	
		88	195		189		

Table 6 (Continued)

Subscale	Factors Contributing to Subscales	*Mothers With Adaptive Attitudes Will:															
		Agree (Item Numbers)				Disagree (Item Numbers)											
I (Continued)	5. Maternal control of threatening impulses.	94					45	100	143	160	184						
							81	105	145	170	199						
							85	131	153	177							
							98	140	154	183							
	6. Support and acceptance of child's impulses.	52	114	165	178	83											
55							129	167	197	211							
67							134	173									
II																	
Encouragement versus Discouragement of Reciprocity	1. Period of reciprocal exchange: Mother's ability to both stimulate and respond to stimulation; reciprocal active-passive alternations in the interchange interaction.	3	16			8	20	60									
	2. Period of early directed infant activity: Degree to which infant is successful in opening up new areas of reciprocity with the mother; mother can respond to infant's initiative for social interchange on a reciprocal basis such as in baby's demand for play.	26	46	51		56	79										
	3. Period of widening reciprocal interchange: The degree to which the child will initiate autonomous exploratory activities and the degree to which the mother will both reinforce and stimulate such activities.	96	121	141	191		17	125									

Table 6 (Continued)

Subscale	Factors Contributing to Subscales	*Mothers With Adaptive Attitudes Will:					
		Agree (Item Numbers)			Disagree (Item Numbers)		
II (Continued)	4. Comfort in the feeding situation.	15	76		8	32	89
		54	200		11	41	
					12	83	
	5. Well-differentiated maternal satisfaction.	99			15	76	
		162			54	88	
		190					
	6. Maternal anxiety.	15			5	11	27
					8	12	40
					9	13	41
							60
	7. Encouragement of positive interaction.	2	50	148	8	20	71
		3	93	149	9	35	72
		22	111	163	11	56	75
				200			137
							172
							203
III Appropriate versus Inappropriate Closeness With the Child	1. Period of focalization on mother: Extent to which child will succeed in his demand that mother alone fulfill his needs; does baby bind mother to him; can she limit his needs and preserve reciprocity.				30	75	99
					42	82	108
					49	92	
	2. Female sexuality.	57			25	162	
					36	169	
	3. Childbirth	172			48	138	176
		186			59	159	

Table 6 (Continued)

		*Mothers With Adaptive Attitudes Will:												
Subscale	Factors Contributing to Subscales	Agree (Item Numbers)				Disagree (Item Numbers)								
III (Continued)	4. Motherhood as suffering.	222					8	31	59	138	218			
							11	42	60	172				
							20	47	126	186				
	5. Maternal satisfaction.						12	49	110	172				
							29	60	126	176				
							31	99	138	190				
							42	100	140	209				
							48	108	162	217				
	IV Acceptance versus Denial of Emotional Complexity in Childcare	1. Period of early sex-role differentiation: The extent to which the child is able to make and act upon a culturally defined sex role and gender distinction and the degree to which the mother contributes to and supports discrimination.	23	135	194	233	95							
	2. Lie Scale (Defensiveness).						18	86	168					
							37	111	196					
							64	136						
	3. Consolidation of body image.	69	150	195					127	206				
									84	155	132	211		
									88	165	189			
	4. Concern with regard to childrearing.		5	92	134	232		8	73					

Table 6 (Continued)

Subscale	Factors Contributing to Subscales	*Mothers With Adaptive Attitudes Will:							
		Agree				Disagree			
IV (Continued)	5. Acceptance of hostility toward child.	2	72	163		8	35	83	139
		3	137	200		9	56	89	155
		22	148	203		11	71	93	172
		50	149			20	75	111	
V Feelings of Competence versus Lack of Competence in Perceiving and Meeting the Baby's Needs	1. Period of Initial adaptation: Appropriateness of the mother's behavior to the baby's state and the cues he gives of it; meshing of mothering activities with the baby's needs as reflected in the cues he gives.	15				11	32	126	
		54				27	41		
		76				31	42		
	2. Comfort in the feeding situation.	15	76			8	32	89	
		54	200			11	41		
						12	83		
	3. Well-differentiated maternal satisfaction.	99	190			15	88		
		162				54			
						76			
	4. Maternal flexibility and satisfaction.	28				15	63	93	151
						26	76	97	158
						54	77	101	174
						181	208	222	
						195	210		
	5. Concern regarding performance of the maternal role.	47	118	215		5	60	92	226
		94	134	232		8	64	119	
		106	167			14	71	196	
						18	73	208	

*Items included are those with the highest factor loading on that particular subscale.

Source: Adapted from Cohler, Weiss, and Grunebaum, n.d.

Table 7

Schematic Description of Childrearing Attitude

Factors: Maternal Attitude Scale*

Factor	Adaptive Attitude	Maladaptive Attitude
(I) Appropriate versus inappropriate control of child's aggression.** Sample item: good mothers keep a tight hold on their child's expression of angry feelings.	Intent of aggressive impulse should be recognized, but it is important to modulate expression of aggression by providing alternate channels.	Overly restrictive attitude or, less commonly, overly permissive.
(II) Encouragement versus discouragement of reciprocity.** Sample item: a mother and her five-month-old baby should be able to understand each other fairly well.	Babies can communicate with their mothers, and mothers should encourage development of a relationship between mother and child.	Babies cannot communicate with their mothers and are unable to develop a reciprocal social relationship or to respond to appropriate cues from their mothers.
(III) Appropriate versus inappropriate closeness with the child. Sample item: a one-year-old child does not feel his mother is "with him" if she is doing other things at the same time.	A mother can enjoy and care for a baby without sacrificing herself, without becoming overly binding or overly protective, and without yielding to the baby's demand for an exclusive relationship (Mahler et al., 1975).	Pregnancy, delivery, and child care are seen as burdensome, depleting, and destructive of self, vacillation between the wish to be the sole caretaker and perpetuate the mother-infant symbiosis, and the wish to relegate all aspects of child care to others, a pattern similar to that described by Levy (1943) as the "overprotective mother."

Table 7 (Continued)

Factor	Adaptive Attitude	Maladaptive Attitude
(IV) Acceptance versus denial of emotional complexity in child care. Sample item: mothers never worry about what their children will turn into when they grow up.	Acceptance of ambivalent feelings about child care, of some feeling of inadequacy as a mother, and of uncertainty regarding some aspects of child care without loss of self-esteem.	Denial of any concerns or doubts regarding child care and of inadequacy in the maternal role, together with highly conventional and stereotyped beliefs and the feeling that mothers require little child-care assistance from others.
(V) Feeling of competence versus lack of competence in perceiving and meeting the baby's needs. Sample item: It is a terribly frustrating task to care for a newborn infant because he cannot let you know what he needs.	Mothers can understand the infant's physical needs and meet them adequately.	Babies are unable to let others know what their physical needs are, and mothers find it very difficult to understand and meet these needs.

*Factor scores are expressed in standardized form based on a larger normative sample, with mean = 0.000 and standard deviation = 1.000.

**Scores on the first two factors have been reflected so that a positive score indicates more adaptive attitudes.

Source: Cohler, Gallant, Grunebaum, Weiss, and Gager, 1980, p. 36.

The format suggested by the author for coding the data was followed and the data were processed and analyzed by the author, B. Cohler, Ph.D., University of Chicago.

Determination of AFDC Status, Number of Children, and Demographic Variables

The System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment, a comprehensive child-assessment tool developed by Mercer and Lewis (1977), evaluates the child as a multidimensional individual. The assumption is that the child is undergoing socialization within a particular sociocultural setting. The subscale of this instrument entitled Sociocultural Scale was chosen for this study, because it provided an efficient interview method for determining AFDC status, number of children, and other demographic variables.

Measure of Maternal Receptive Vocabulary

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised (Dunn & Dunn, 1981), a nationally normed and widely used test of receptive vocabulary, is quickly and easily administered and scored. In the revised edition, great care was taken to approximate a cross-section of the national population. The authors contend that for most individuals, the test has the attraction of curiosity. They state that subjects are usually stimulated to participate and challenged by the procedure. These motivational features were believed important for this study as the questionnaire portion of each home visit (the Maternal Attitude Scale) was quite lengthy, requiring commitment and effort on the part of the subject. Although the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised

measures hearing vocabulary, which is just one aspect of the complex linguistic and cognitive domains, there is some evidence that vocabulary may be related to maternal attitudes (Robinson, 1971).

Validity and reliability have been established for its use with both children and adults. It correlates strongly with other vocabulary tests and with vocabulary subtests of individual intelligence and psycholinguistics tests (overall median coefficient value = .71, based on 55 correlations) (Dunn & Dunn, 1981). Correlation with the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale is reported at .62 with scores on the Stanford-Binet being, on the average, 6.84 points higher than on the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised IQ's. Correlation with the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Full Scale (WAIS) indicated a median of .72. With the Slosson Intelligence Test (an abbreviated Stanford-Binet), the median correlation was .59 (Dunn & Dunn, 1981). Form "M" of this test was used to determine receptive vocabulary scores. Table 8 presents the distribution of maternal receptive-vocabulary scores of the sample.

Research Design

The hypothesized relationships between the variable maternal childcare attitudes and the variables--AFDC status, number of children, and maternal receptive vocabulary--were assessed through a three-factor analysis of variance design. Five separate three-way ANOVAs examined the relationships between each of the five subscales of the maternal attitude instrument as a dependent variable and independent

Table 8
Distribution of Maternal Receptive Vocabulary
Scores of the Sample

Maternal Receptive Vocabulary Scores	N	Percentage
36 to 52	5	6.6
53 to 69	18	24.0
69 to 84	26	35.0
85 to 100	19	25.0
101 to 115	5	6.6
116 to 131	<u>2</u>	<u>2.6</u>
Totals	75	100.0

Note. $\bar{X} = 78.37$

variables--AFDC status, number of children, and maternal receptive vocabulary--as well as interactive effects. In addition, a three-way ANOVA was conducted using a single, composite maternal attitude score (Total Maternal Attitude Scale) as the dependent variable with the same set of independent variables.

An additional analytic perspective on the data was afforded by six stepwise multiple regression analyses using, as above, each of the five subscale scores of the Maternal Attitude Scale, as well as scores from the Total Maternal Attitude Scale as dependent or criterion variables. The variables AFDC status, number of children,

and maternal receptive vocabulary were examined for their relative power as predictor variables in these analyses.

For computer analysis, the researcher used subprogram ANOVA and Regression of the SPSS analytic package (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, & Bent, 1975). The ANOVA analyses employed a 2 x 2 x 2 factor design. The two levels of each of the three independent variables were as follows:

1. AFDC status (yes or no)
2. Number of children (one child; more than one child)
3. Maternal receptive vocabulary abilities (high or low).

Maternal receptive vocabulary abilities were expressed in standard score equivalents with "high" representing a score of 84 or above and "low" representing a score of less than 84. On national norms, a score of 84 or above represents minus one or greater standard deviations from a mean of 100, and thus, discriminates between mothers considered average or above in receptive vocabulary abilities and mothers considered below average.

Procedure

Data were collected during a home parent interview arranged by the investigator and held at the convenience of each subject. If she preferred, the interview took place at the Head Start center or at the Health Department offices. Four subjects elected to be interviewed outside the home. Home visits for interviews usually took no longer than one and one-half hours. Subjects were asked to respond

to the questions in compliance with the recommended procedures for each of the three assessments: (1) the Maternal Attitude Scale, (2) the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-Revised, and (3) the System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment (Sociocultural Scale). Final scores were tallied upon termination of the interview after the investigator left the home.

Completion of the Maternal Attitude Scale can be tedious and difficult for some subjects as it is quite lengthy and requires slightly more than a minimum level of reading skill. An approximate sixth-grade reading ability is required for successful response. An assumption was that most subjects would be at or close to this level. For subjects demonstrating difficulty, the investigator made every effort not to influence responses by assisting with value-free, helpful comments. The three subjects who were unable to read the statements had them read by the investigator.

The format for each home-parent interview was to vary slightly with the investigator counterbalancing the order of tests to control for order effects. The six sequence permutations of the three measures were randomly assigned to subjects through the use of a random number table. One-third of all subjects were to have the Maternal Attitude Scale administered first; one-third, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test first; and one-third, the System of Multicultural Pluralistic Assessment (SOMPA), Sociocultural Scale first. This procedure was followed for 44 subjects (59 percent). The 31 subjects for whom data-collection procedures did not include counterbalancing test order had been included in the study prior to the incorporation

of this procedural suggestion. Unfortunately, time constraints of the sponsoring agency, to whom the researcher was accountable, required that data collection commence at a time that later proved premature for full compliance with this aspect of the study's procedure. An inspection of the means of the Total Maternal Attitude Scale showed that this difference in mode of administration of the instrument had no systematic effect on the scale scores.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the study are presented and summarized as they pertain to the hypotheses presented in Chapter II.

Review of Measures

AFDC Status

AFDC status was determined through home-visit interview, using the SOMPA, Sociocultural Scale (Mercer & Lewis, 1977) as the interview guide. Twenty five (33 percent) of the 75 mothers were receiving AFDC funding at the time of the home visit.

Number of Children

Number of children was also determined through home-visit interview, using the SOMPA as the interview guide. The median number of all subjects' children was two with a minimum of one and a maximum of eight. Eighteen mothers had only one child (24 percent), while 57 mothers had more than one child (76 percent).

Maternal Receptive Vocabulary Abilities

Maternal receptive vocabulary was measured by the PPVT, Revised (Dunn & Dunn, 1981). As noted previously, the mean standard score was 78.37 with a minimum of 44 and a maximum of 124. Forty nine of

the 75 mothers (64 percent) scored below minus one standard deviation from the mean on the PPVT, Revised, placing them in the group labeled "low." The mean mental-age equivalency derived from the standardized score was 15.2 years with a minimum of 7.8 years and a maximum of 33.6 years. Considering the overall relatively low scores on the PPVT-R, the decision to place the cutoff at the point discriminating between mothers average or above (minus one or above standard deviations from the mean) and those below average (below minus one standard deviations from the mean) proved appropriate. Figure 1 presents mean total maternal attitude scores for AFDC status, number of children, and receptive vocabulary abilities for all mothers.

Maternal Attitudes

Maternal attitude scores for each subject for each subscale were calculated using the factor scoring matrix developed by Cohler et al. (1970) for form DD of the Maternal Attitude Scale. This resulted in a positive or negative maternal attitude score for each subject, for each of the five subscales. For all mothers, means, ranges, and standard deviations for each of the five subscales--I, appropriate versus inappropriate control of child's aggression; II, encouragement versus discouragement of reciprocity; III, appropriate versus inappropriate closeness with the child; IV, acceptance versus denial of emotional complexity in childcare; and V, feelings of competence in perceiving and meeting the baby's needs--and the sixth factor representing an algebraic sum of all five subscales and referred to as Total Maternal Attitude Scale are presented in Table 9.

Figure 1
Mean Total Maternal Attitude Scores for AFDC
Status, Number of Children, and Receptive-
Vocabulary Abilities in a Group of Low-
Socioeconomic Mothers

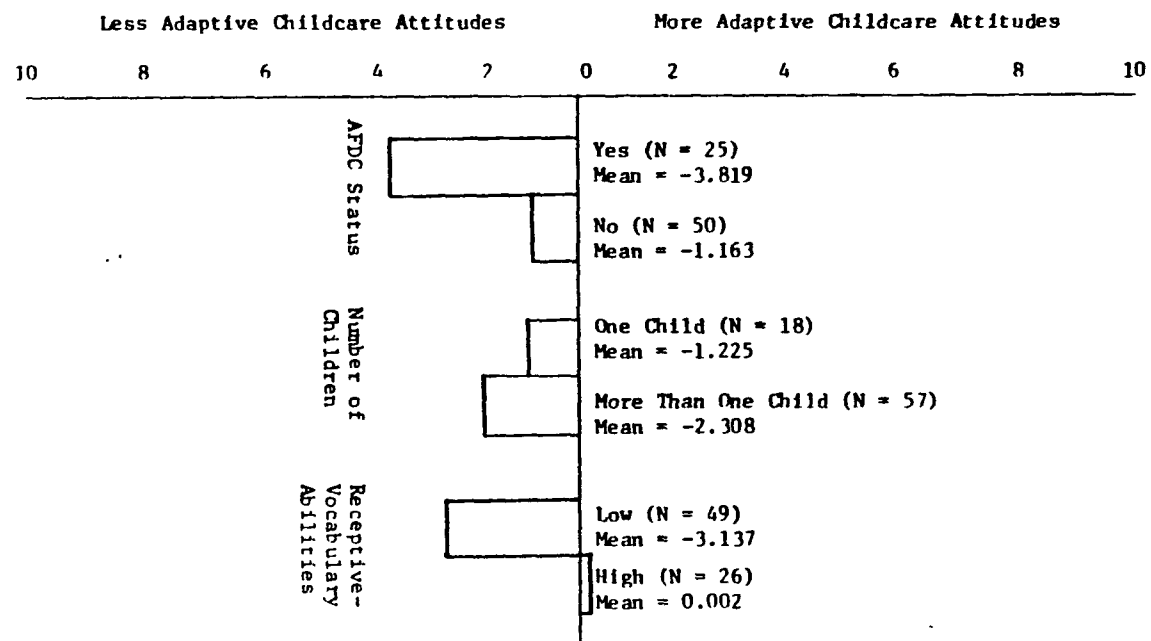


Table 9
Means, Standard Deviations, and Maximum and
Minimum Scores for the Entire Sample on
Each Dimension of the Maternal
Childcare Attitude Scale*

Subscale	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
I Appropriate versus inappropriate control of child's aggression	-0.587	0.940	-2.814	2.110
II Encouragement versus discouragement of reciprocity	-0.377	0.705	-1.930	1.121
III Appropriate versus inappropriate closeness with the child	-0.451	1.034	-2.852	2.502
IV Acceptance versus denial of emotional complexity in childcare	-1.047	1.811	-6.947	1.745
V Feelings of competency versus lack of competency in perceiving and meeting the baby's needs	0.413	0.601	-0.841	2.277
Total Maternal Attitude Scale	-2.049	3.141	-9.373	4.874

*The higher (positive) the score on childcare attitudes, the more adaptive the attitude.

Note. N = 75.

As can be seen from Table 9, mean scores for the first four subscales and for the Total Maternal Attitude Scale fell in the negative, less adaptive domain (between -2.049 and -0.377 from a scaled score mean of zero, negative numbers indicating negative or less adaptive childcare attitudes). The mean score for subscale V, feelings of competence versus lack of competence in perceiving and meeting the baby's needs, was the only subscale with a positive mean (+0.413).

The range of scores for subscales I, II, III, and V fell generally within the expected range of scores (between plus two and minus two). The range of scores for subscale IV, acceptance versus denial of emotional complexity in childcare, proved to be an exception. The minimum score for this scale was -6.947. Inspection of all individual responses on this fourth subscale revealed ten mothers scoring more strongly negative than minus two on this subscale. Subscale IV measures a mother's willingness or ability to admit to, or perhaps recognize, the emotional complexities encountered between mother and child during the years of early childrearing responsibilities. Personal communication with the scale author supported the impression that these mothers responded to the items on this scale (which Cohler also refers to as a "Lie Scale") in a very unusual and highly denying manner (Cohler, 1982).

Results of Analyses of Variance

Means and standard deviations of the subjects' maternal attitudes for all five subscales and the Total Maternal Attitude Scale for each of the three independent variables are presented in Table 10. The results of the three-way analysis of variance for each subscale and for the Total Maternal Attitude Scale are presented in Tables 11 through 16. Tables 17 through 22 present frequencies, means, and standard deviations for the main effects of each of the three independent variables (AFDC status, number of children, and maternal receptive vocabulary) for each of the five subscales and for the Total Maternal Attitude Scale. The means presented in Tables 17 through 22 show that the significant differences in maternal attitudes presented in Tables 11 through 16 are in the direction of prediction for all subscales except for the fifth which measured the mothers' feelings of competency in perceiving and meeting her baby's needs.

Tables 11 through 16 show no significant three-way interactions among the independent variables--AFDC status, number of children, and maternal receptive vocabulary. This suggests that the relationship between AFDC status and the number of children remained constant over both levels of receptive vocabulary for all five subscales and for the Total Maternal Attitude Scale. Additionally, these same tables indicate no significant two-way interactions between any two of the three independent variables for any of the five subscales nor for the Total Maternal Attitude Scale. The discussions to follow,

Table 10
Means and Standard Deviations of Maternal Attitudes
(Five Subscales and Total Maternal Attitude
Scale) for Each Combination of the AFDC
Status, Receptive Vocabulary, and
Number of Children Factors

Number of Subjects	AFDC Status							
	Yes				No			
	Low Vocabulary		High Vocabulary		Low Vocabulary		High Vocabulary	
	One Child	>One Child	One Child	>One Child	One Child	>One Child	One Child	>One Child
	4	18	1	2	7	20	6	17
Subscale I								
\bar{X}	-1.520	-0.857	-1.360	-1.063	-0.711	-0.683	0.053	-0.041
SD	(0.519)	(0.748)	(0)	(0.122)	(0.716)	(0.856)	(1.510)	(0.900)
Subscale II								
\bar{X}	-0.778	-0.753	0.472	-0.939	-0.239	-0.337	-0.091	-0.068
SD	(0.764)	(0.696)	(0)	(0.609)	(0.736)	(0.709)	(0.634)	(0.545)
Subscale III								
\bar{X}	-0.987	-1.035	-0.845	-0.400	0.154	-0.541	0.022	0.001
SD	(0.671)	(1.292)	(0)	(1.002)	(1.282)	(0.838)	(0.615)	(0.717)
Subscale IV								
\bar{X}	-0.425	-2.127	-0.451	0.776	-1.187	-1.663	0.052	0.073
SD	(0.785)	(2.006)	(0)	(0.071)	(1.629)	(1.847)	(1.118)	(1.119)
Subscale V								
\bar{X}	0.794	0.464	0.050	-0.428	0.666	0.443	0.123	0.350
SD	(0.622)	(0.658)	(0)	(0.584)	(0.315)	(0.588)	(0.506)	(0.622)
Total Maternal Attitude Scale								
\bar{X}	-2.916	-4.310	-2.113	-2.054	-1.318	-2.761	0.161	0.313
SD	(1.916)	(2.517)	(0)	(2.390)	(3.614)	(2.777)	(3.667)	(2.237)

Table 11
 AFDC Status by Number of Children by Maternal
 Receptive Vocabulary Analysis of Variance
 of Maternal Attitudes: Subscale I,
 Appropriate versus Inappropriate
 Control of Child's Aggression
 (N = 75)

Source	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
AFDC	2.987	1	2.987	3.867
Number of Children	0.415	1	0.415	0.537
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary	4.202	1	4.202	5.441*
Main Effects Total	10.937	3	3.646	4.721**
AFDC x MRV	1.290	1	1.290	1.671
AFDC x Number of Children	0.870	1	0.870	1.126
MRV x Number of Children	0.084	1	0.084	0.109
Two-Way Interaction Total	2.704	3	0.901	1.167
Three-Way Interaction	0.026	1	0.026	0.034
Explained	13.668	7	1.953	2.528*
Residual	51.741	67	0.772	

Note. Multiple $R^2 = 0.21$.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 12
 AFDC Status by Number of Children by Maternal
 Receptive Vocabulary Analysis of Variance of
 Maternal Attitudes: Subscale II,
 Encouragement versus Discourage-
 ment of Reciprocity (N = 75)

Source	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
AFDC	2.747	1	2.747	6.142*
Number of Children	0.122	1	0.122	0.272
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary	0.899	1	0.899	2.010
Main Effects Total	5.558	3	1.853	4.141**
AFDC x MRV	0.000	1	0.000	0.001
AFDC x Number of Children	0.133	1	0.133	0.297
MRV x Number of Children	0.087	1	0.087	0.195
Two-Way Interaction Total	0.177	3	0.059	0.132
Three-Way Interaction	1.091	1	1.091	2.438
Explained	6.825	7	0.975	2.180*
Residual	29.971	67	0.447	

Note. Multiple $R^2 = 0.18$

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 13
 AFDC Status by Number of Children by Maternal
 Receptive Vocabulary Analysis of Variance of
 Maternal Attitudes: Subscale III,
 Appropriate versus Inappropriate
 Closeness with the Child

Source	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
AFDC	5.898	1	5.898	6.165*
Number of Children	0.953	1	0.953	0.996
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary	2.161	1	2.161	2.259
Main Effects Total	13.272	3	4.424	4.624**
AFDC x MRV	0.046	1	0.046	0.049
AFDC x Number of Children	0.952	1	0.952	0.995
MRV x Number of Children	1.204	1	1.204	1.259
Two-Way Interaction Total	1.709	3	0.570	0.595
Three-Way Interaction	0.015	1	0.015	0.015
Explained	14.996	7	2.142	2.239*
Residual	64.098	67	0.957	

Note. Multiple $R^2 = 0.19$.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 14
AFDC Status by Number of Children by Maternal
Receptive Vocabulary Analysis of Variance of
Maternal Attitudes: Subscale IV, Accep-
tance versus Denial of Emotional
Complexity in Childcare

Source	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
AFDC	0.377	1	0.377	0.142
Number of Children	3.829	1	3.829	1.447
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary	42.572	1	42.572	16.084**
Main Effects Total	56.908	3	18.969	7.167**
AFDC x MRV	0.444	1	0.444	0.168
AFDC x Number of Children	1.254	1	1.254	0.474
MRV x Number of Children	2.587	1	2.587	0.977
Two-Way Interaction Total	5.792	3	1.931	0.729
Three-Way Interaction	2.708	1	2.708	1.023
Explained	65.408	7	9.344	3.530*
Residual	177.343	67	2.647	

Note. Multiple $R^2 = 0.27$.

* $p < .01$
** $p < .001$

Table 15
 AFDC Status by Number of Children by Maternal
 Receptive Vocabulary Analysis of Variance
 of Maternal Attitudes: Subscale V,
 Feelings of Competence versus
 Lack of Competence in Per-
 ceiving and Meeting the
 Baby's Needs (N = 75)

Source	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
AFDC	0.087	1	0.087	0.247
Number of Children	0.137	1	0.137	0.390
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary	1.495	1	1.495	4.259*
Main Effects Total	1.617	3	0.539	1.535
AFDC x MRV	0.825	1	0.825	2.351
AFDC x Number of Children	0.151	1	0.151	0.430
MRV x Number of Children	0.335	1	0.335	0.954
Two-Way Interaction Total	1.438	3	0.479	1.365
Three-Way Interaction	0.161	1	0.161	0.457
Explained	3.215	7	0.459	1.308
Residual	23.522	67	0.351	

Note. Multiple $R^2 = 0.12$.

* $p < .05$

Table 16
 AFDC Status by Number of Children by Maternal
 Receptive Vocabulary Analysis of Variance
 of Maternal Attitudes: Total Maternal
 Attitude Scale (N = 75)

Source	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
AFDC	45.190	1	45.190	6.092*
Number of Children	9.045	1	9.045	1.219
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary	95.451	1	95.451	12.868**
Main Effects Total	223.925	3	74.642	10.063**
AFDC x MRV	1.317	1	1.317	0.178
AFDC x Number of Children	0.001	1	0.001	0.000
MRV x Number of Children	7.288	1	7.288	0.983
Two-Way Interaction Total	9.249	3	3.083	0.416
Three-Way Interaction	0.007	1	0.007	0.001
Explained	233.181	7	33.312	4.491**
Residual	496.980	67	7.418	

Note. Multiple $R^2 = 0.32$.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$

Table 17
 Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for
 Each of the Three Independent Variables (AFDC
 Status, Number of Children, and Maternal
 Receptive Vocabulary) for Maternal
 Attitude Subscale I, Appropriate
 versus Inappropriate Control
 of Child's Aggression
 (N = 75)

Independent Variables	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
AFDC status			
Yes	25	-0.999	0.704
No	50	-0.380	0.980
Number of Children			
One Child	18	-0.672	1.133
More Than One Child	59	-0.560	0.880
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary			
High	26	-0.148	1.058
Low	49	-0.819	0.787

Table 18
Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for
Each of the Three Independent Variables (AFDC
Status, Number of Children, and Maternal
Receptive Vocabulary) for Maternal
Attitude Subscale II, Encourage-
ment versus Discouragement of
Reciprocity (N = 75)

Independent Variables	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
AFDC status			
Yes	25	-0.723	0.705
No	50	-0.203	0.644
Number of Children			
One Child	18	-0.270	0.719
More Than One Child	57	-0.410	0.703
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary			
High	26	-0.120	0.596
Low	49	-0.512	0.725

Table 19
 Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for
 Each of the Three Independent Variables (AFDC
 Status, Number of Children, and Maternal
 Receptive Vocabulary) for Maternal
 Attitude Subscale III, Appro-
 priate versus Inappropriate
 Closeness with the Child
 (N = 75)

Independent Variables	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
AFDC Status			
Yes	25	-0.969	1.145
No	50	-0.191	0.875
Number of Children			
One Child	18	-0.198	1.005
More Than One Child	57	-0.530	1.038
Maternal-Receptive Vocabulary			
High	26	-0.057	0.695
Low	49	-0.659	1.126

Table 20
 Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for
 Each of the Three Independent Variables (AFDC
 Status, Number of Children, and Maternal
 Receptive Vocabulary) for Maternal
 Attitude Subscale IV, Acceptance
 versus Denial of Emotional
 Complexity in Childcare
 (N = 75)

Independent Variables	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
AFDC Status			
Yes	50	-1.556	1.972
No	25	-0.792	1.688
Number of Children			
One Child	18	-0.563	1.309
More Than One Child	57	-1.199	1.927
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary			
High	26	0.102	1.049
Low	49	-1.656	1.840

Table 21
 Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for
 Each of the Three Independent Variables (AFDC
 Status, Number of Children, and Maternal-
 Receptive Vocabulary) for Maternal
 Attitude Subscale V, Feelings of
 Competence versus Lack of Com-
 petence in Perceiving and
 Meeting the Baby's Needs
 (N = 75)

Independent Variables	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
AFDC Status			
Yes	25	0.429	0.678
No	50	0.404	0.565
Number of Children			
One Child	18	0.479	0.521
More Than One Child	57	0.391	0.626
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary			
High	26	0.226	0.601
Low	49	0.511	0.583

Table 22
 Frequencies, Means, and Standard Deviations for
 Each of the Three Independent Variables (AFDC
 Status, Number of Children, and Maternal
 Receptive Vocabulary) for the Total
 Maternal Attitude Scale (N = 75)

Independent Variables	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
AFDC Status			
Yes	25	-3.819	2.426
No	50	-1.163	3.101
Number of Children			
One Child	18	-1.225	3.260
More Than One Child	57	-2.308	3.086
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary			
High	26	0.002	2.591
Low	49	-3.137	2.868

therefore, will concentrate only on the main effect tests for hypotheses one, two, and three.

Tests of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

The first-tested hypothesis concerned expected attitude differences between mothers receiving and not receiving AFDC payments. Although both of these groups exhibited negative means for the Total Maternal Attitude Scale, as well as for all dimensions except Subscale V (see Tables 17 through 22), the attitude scores of mothers not receiving AFDC support were significantly higher (i.e., less negative) than those of AFDC mothers on Subscale II, $F(1, 67) = 6.142, p < .05$ (see Table 12), and Subscale III, $F(1, 67) = 6.165, p < .05$ (see Table 13), as well as on the Total Maternal Attitude Scale, $F(1, 67) = 6.092, p < .05$ (see Table 16). No AFDC main effects were found for Subscales I, IV, and V ($p > .05$) (see Tables 11, 14, and 15, respectively). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported when the entire attitude inventory was considered, but this support was not apparent for all subscales.

Hypothesis Two

The second-mentioned hypothesis tested in the present study considered the expectation that mothers with one child would exhibit more positive attitudes toward childrearing than would mothers with two or more children. As can be seen from Tables 18 through 22, the means of the one-child or more-than-one-child groups are in the

predicted direction for Subscales II, III, IV, V, and Total Maternal Attitude Scale. None of these differences, however, nor the difference contrary to prediction on Subscale I, was statistically significant ($p > .05$) (see Tables 11 through 16). Thus, Hypothesis 2 received no support from the present results.

In an attempt to further examine the number-of-children variable, the data were reclassified into the levels of one or two children versus more than two children. Means and ANOVA tables for these subsequent analyses are shown in Tables 23 through 29 (Appendix C). Consistent with the original analyses, no main effect or interaction differences were attributable to the number-of-children variable.

Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis stated that mothers scoring higher receptive-vocabulary abilities would have more positive childcare attitudes than would those scoring low. Both of these groups exhibited negative means with differences in the predicted direction on Subscales I, II, and III (see Tables 17, 18, and 19). In considering the previously mentioned subscales, however, it was only on Subscale I where the attitude scores of mothers scoring higher receptive-vocabulary abilities were significantly less negative, $F(1, 67) = 5.441$, $p < .05$ (see Table 11).

Additionally, a significant main effect for receptive vocabulary was found for Subscale IV, $F(1, 67) = 16.084$, $p < .001$ (see Table 14), and the Total Maternal Attitude Scale, $F(1, 67) = 12.868$, $p < .001$ (see Table 16). On Subscale IV (see Table 20), and the Total

Maternal Attitude Scale (see Table 22), however, mothers scoring high receptive-vocabulary abilities exhibited a positive mean attitude score.

On Subscale V, both groups exhibited a mean score in the positive or more adaptive domain (see Table 21). Contrary to prediction, however, on this fifth subscale, mothers scoring low receptive-vocabulary abilities had a mean attitude score significantly higher than did mothers scoring high receptive-vocabulary abilities, $F(1, 67) = 4.259, p < .05$ (see Table 15). Thus, Hypothesis 3 received support when the Total Maternal Attitude Scale was considered, but this support was obtained only on Subscales I and IV.

Summary

The five separate three-way analyses of variance examining the relationships between each of the five subscales of the maternal attitude instrument as the dependent variable and the three independent variables yielded significant main effects for the first four subscales. Significant main effects for the independent variable maternal receptive vocabulary, in favor of high-scoring mothers were achieved for Subscales I and IV, whereas significant main effects for the independent variable, AFDC status, in favor of non-AFDC mothers were obtained for Subscales II and III. Although the analyses yielded a significant main effect for receptive vocabulary for Subscale V, results were contrary to the direction of prediction. For the Total Maternal Attitude Scale, the analyses yielded significant main effects for both AFDC status (favoring non-AFDC mothers)

and maternal receptive vocabulary (favoring high-scoring mothers). It should be noted that the multiple R^2 based on the combined source of variation due to the three independent variables for the subscales, ranged from a low of .12 for Subscale V (see Table 15) to a high of .27 for Subscale IV (see Table 14). For the Total Maternal Attitude Scale, the multiple R^2 was .32 (see Table 16). Other factors, uncontrolled for this study, have undoubtedly influenced the results and are a matter for further research.

Regression Analyses

Corroboration of the findings of the analyses of variance can be found in the results of subsequent regression analyses. To assess the relative predictive power of the three independent variables, a multiple regression analysis was performed with each of the five subscales designated as the dependent or criterion variable. The sixth multiple regression analysis designated the Total Maternal Attitude Scale as the dependent or criterion variable. Independent (predictor) variables were AFDC status, number of children, and maternal receptive vocabulary. See Table 30 for a summary of regression results for each of the five subscales, plus the Total Maternal Attitude Scale. It should be noted that the combined variables were significantly related to Subscale I, $F(3, 71) = 4.379, p < .01$; Subscale II, $F(3, 71) = 7.564, p < .01$; Subscale III, $F(3, 71) = 6.715, p < .01$; Subscale IV, $F(3, 71) = 8.360, p < .01$; as well as the Total Maternal Attitude Scale, $F(3, 71) = 14.419, p < .01$.

Table 30

Tests of Statistical Significance for Regression
Coefficients (AFDC Status, Number of Children,
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary, and Maternal
Childcare Attitudes)

Childcare Attitudes	Sources	Degrees of Freedom	Sums of Squares	Mean Square	F
(I) Appropriate Control	Regression	3	10.214	3.404	4.379*
	Residual	71	55.194	.777	
	Total	74			
	Note: $R^2 = 0.156^{**}$				
(II) Encouragement of Reciprocity	Regression	3	8.912	2.970	7.564*
	Residual	71	27.884	0.392	
	Total	74			
	Note: $R^2 = 0.242^{**}$				

Table 30 (Continued)

Childcare Attitudes	Source	Degrees of Freedom	Sums of Squares	Mean Square	F
(III) Appropriate Closeness	Regression	3	17.481	5.827	6.715*
	Residual	71	61.612	0.867	
	Total	74			
	Note: $R^2 = 0.221^{**}$				
(IV) Acceptance of Complexity	Regression	3	63.366	21.122	8.360*
	Residual	71	179.385	2.526	
	Total	74			
	Note: $R^2 = 0.261^{**}$				
(V) Meeting the Baby's Needs	Regression	3	2.757	0.919	2.721
	Residual	71	23.980	0.337	
	Total	74			
	Note: $R^2 = 0.103^{**}$				
(VI) Total Scale	Regression	3	276.445	92.148	14.419*
	Residual	71	453.721	6.390	
	Total	74			
	Note: $R^2 = 0.378^{**}$				

* $p < .01$ **All three variables entered into the equation.
Note. N = 75.

Maternal receptive-vocabulary abilities proved to be the most powerful predictor of maternal childcare attitudes being entered for all five subscale equations first. It explained 10.5 percent of the variability of Subscale I (appropriate versus inappropriate control of child's aggression), 18.9 percent of Subscale II (encouragement versus discouragement of reciprocity), 15.3 percent of Subscale III (appropriate versus inappropriate closeness with the child), 26.0 percent of Subscale IV (acceptance versus denial of emotional complexity of childcare), and 5.5 percent of Subscale V (feelings of competence versus lack of competence in perceiving and meeting the baby's needs).

AFDC status entered all five subscale equations second and added an average of five percent of explained variability to each of the first three subscales. AFDC status, however, contributed less than one percent to the explained variability for Subscale IV (acceptance versus denial of emotional complexity in childcare), and no significant additional explained variance for Subscale V (feelings of competence versus lack of competence in perceiving and meeting the baby's needs).

For the Total Maternal Attitude Scale, maternal receptive vocabulary accounted for 32.8 percent of the variability in mean maternal childcare attitudes with AFDC status adding five percent. Number of children failed to contribute significantly to the predictability of maternal childcare attitudes for any of the five subscales nor the Total Maternal Attitude Scale.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to investigate maternal attitudes toward childcare responsibilities in low socioeconomic-status families. As a result of controlling for socioeconomic status, most mothers were of high school education (graduate or graduate equivalency) or less. Slightly over half of the subjects were single parents; slightly over three quarters were nonwhite. All subjects were mothers of two- to five-year-old children with the median number of children being two. The average age of mothers was 26.8 years.

Measurement of Maternal Attitudes

There is much in the literature suggesting that low socioeconomic-status mothers have negative or authoritarian attitudes toward childrearing practices when compared with their middle-class counterparts (Becker & Krug, 1965; Emmerich, 1969; Ernhart & Loevinger, 1969; Garfield & Helper, 1962; Jordan, 1970; LaPerriere, 1962; Moss, 1967; Ninio, 1979; Ramey & Campbell, 1976; Schaeffer & Bell, 1958; Tulkin & Cohler, 1973; Tulkin & Kagan, 1972). Generally speaking, the results of the present study support these findings of negative and authoritarian attitudes in low-socioeconomic-level mothers. In the present study, mean scores for all maternal attitude subscales except the fifth fell into the less adaptive (negative) domain.

There are, however, two general sources of information from the present investigation that would appear to dispute the contention of homogeneity within this population. The first is the wide range of variation of scores on most subscales, and the second is the fact that some types of attitudes vary systematically with various experiential and ability characteristics of these mothers. Thus, while the mean scores are interesting and show a generally maladaptive pattern among respondents in this population, a more interesting and important finding concerns the variability, rather than the central tendency, of the scores for this low socioeconomic group.

Homogeneity of Maternal Attitudes

The mean score of Subscale I, appropriate versus inappropriate control of the child's aggression, although near zero, was negative (-0.587). In general, the mothers in the present study tend somewhat to favor rigid rather than flexible socialization of the child to prevent the child from acting out what they believe are destructive and aggressive impulses. These mothers revealed a tendency toward a belief in weaning and toilet training their children before the child indicates a developmental readiness. They professed a positive attitude toward forcing or encouraging the child to give up the bottle, sit on the toilet, or behave in a more "grown-up" manner before the child is ready to do so. The tendency toward poorly adaptive attitudes on this subscale suggests that these mothers perceive childrearing as a battle of wills. They believe it is appropriate to force the child against his or her will to behave in a manner the mother desires the child to behave.

In general, the mothers in the present study responded to the items in Subscale I in a manner indicating a belief that if they allow the child to express aggressive or destructive impulses, then the child will do things that may harm himself and possibly others. Consequently, firmness rather than flexibility in socialization is believed necessary for the child's future development. In addition, these mothers tend to believe that if any negative expression of the child's feelings about her decisions is tolerated, the child will become unruly and no longer obedient. The mothers in the present study also responded in a poorly adaptive manner regarding sex education appropriate to the child's age. These mothers, in general, believe that children should not be told the "truth" about sex, and believe that children should not see parents in the nude.

Subscale II, encouragement versus discouragement of reciprocity, also had a near zero, but negative mean (-0.377). This implies that, in general, the mothers in the present study believe that the baby's attempts to make contact with her result in the mother having to do more work and exert more effort in childcare. She does not readily see these overtures from the baby as opportunities to stimulate her baby or to respond to the baby's gestures for stimulation. These mothers indicated a difficulty in interpreting their baby's smile, and they do not generally believe that babies make attempts to reach out to others for social interaction. Rather, they see the baby's active attempts to initiate contact with the environment as a sign of bothersome activity. Overtures from the baby are perceived by the mother as making it more difficult for her to care for her baby.

The mean score of -0.451 on Subscale III, appropriate versus inappropriate closeness with the child, implies that, in general, these mothers, while recognizing that the baby frequently demands her exclusive attention, tend to indicate little to no concern with their own reaction to this demand and the affect their response may have on the mother or the baby. These mothers also generally expressed feelings of dissatisfaction with the experience of childbirth, indicating feelings of neglect and suffering during labor, together with feelings of a lack of support during the childbirth process.

The subscale producing the most negative (poorly adaptive) mean (-1.047) when compared with the other four subscales was the fourth, acceptance versus denial of emotional complexity in childcare. In general, the mothers in the present study scored defensive about their feelings toward their children. They indicated a relative lack of concern regarding the rearing of children and difficulty admitting to worrying about what their children would be like as adults. Their responses indicated that they have trouble admitting that mothers ever have problems with their children and they seem unable to admit that their children themselves may have problems. Cohler et al. (1970) stated that it is not so much that mothers scoring in this manner consciously lie about their attitudes toward childrearing, but only that they are unable to admit, even to themselves, the problems they might encounter in rearing children.

The only subscale with a positive (adaptive) mean (0.413) was Subscale V, the mother's feelings of competency versus lack of competency in perceiving and meeting her baby's needs. In general, the mothers in the present study scored positively regarding their belief in the appropriateness of their behavior to the baby's state and the cues the baby gives indicating the baby's state. There was the overall expression of the belief of a positive meshing of mothering activities with the baby's needs as reflected by the cues the baby gives the mother. In addition, these mothers expressed the belief that they are able to establish a relationship with their child. They profess little or no difficulty in understanding and providing for their child's needs and believe they are able to respond to the child in the manner that the mother believes the child might wish for her to respond. Generally, these mothers believe they are able to provide the kind of stimulation for the baby that the baby wants, and believe they are able to help their children to develop a sense of competence and initiative over the environment.

In summary, the subscale measuring acceptance of emotional complexity had the most negative mean with appropriate control of aggression, appropriate closeness, and encouragement of reciprocity showing slightly decreasing negative mean scores. The subscale measuring the mother's feelings of competency was the only subscale with a positive mean.

Variability of Maternal Attitudes

Only a few researchers (Greenberg & Davidson, 1972; Ramey & Brownlee, 1981; Ramey et al., 1979) have argued that not all economically depressed mothers have negative or similar attitudes. In addition, there has been some criticism (Mueller & Parcel, 1981) of research designs broadly comparing lower socioeconomic groups with their middle-class counterparts. Based upon this research, and given that the selected attitude scale was considered to contain sufficient sensitivity to measure a broad base of attitudes, it was assumed that attitudes of low-socioeconomic-status mothers toward their childcare responsibilities would lie on a continuum ranging from poorly adaptive to adaptive. This assumption proved correct. In fact, scores for all five of the subscales ranged from poorly adaptive to adaptive.

With a range of over eight points (minimum of -6.947 and maximum of 1.745), the subscale showing the widest range in scores and thus the most heterogeneous responding was Subscale IV, acceptance versus denial of emotional complexity in childcare. Scores on Subscale III, appropriate versus inappropriate closeness with the child, ranged from a minimum of -2.852 to a maximum of 2.502 (point spread of 5.354). Scores on Subscale I, appropriate versus inappropriate control of the child's aggression, ranged from a minimum of -2.814 to a maximum of 2.110 (point spread of 4.924). Scores on Subscale V, feelings of competency versus lack of competency in perceiving and meeting the baby's needs, ranged from a low of -0.841 to a high of 2.277. The resulting point spread of 3.118 placed it fourth in

degree of variability. Finally, with a point spread of 3.051, Subscale II (minimum of -1.930, maximum of 1.121), encouragement versus discouragement of reciprocity, showed the least variability. Thus, the present study successfully demonstrated that maternal attitudes within a relatively low socioeconomic group are not homogeneous although they tend to be maladaptive rather than adaptive.

Systematic Variation of Maternal Attitudes

The second source of information disputing the contention of homogeneity within this group derives from the systematic variation of attitudes found associated with the various experiential and ability characteristics of these mothers.

Hypothesis One

The first hypothesis stated that mothers receiving financial aid in the form of AFDC payments would score less adaptively than would those not receiving such aid. Although Hypothesis One received support when the Total Maternal Attitude Scale was considered, it received only partial support when all five subscales were considered separately. AFDC was found to be related to maternal attitudes on reciprocity (Subscale II) and closeness (Subscale III), but not to control of child's aggression (Subscale I), acceptance or denial of emotional complexities in childcare (Subscale IV), or feelings of competency in ability to perceive and meet the baby's needs (Subscale V).

Subscale II measuring encouragement versus discouragement of reciprocity revealed that mothers receiving AFDC payments scored significantly more negative or less adaptive attitudes than did mothers not receiving AFDC payments, supporting Hypothesis One. Research has shown that attitudes are not always predictive of behavior. Yet, there is evidence that when we know what attitudes others hold, an understanding of and explanations for the behavior of others are facilitated (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The results from the subscale measuring attitudes toward reciprocity can, thus, add meaning to studies showing a relationship between reciprocal mother-child interactions and socioeconomic status. For example, Farran and Haskins (1980) found that low socioeconomic mothers terminated more than twice as high a proportion of mutual play episodes when they were compared with middle-class mothers. The mothers in the present study did not score positively on encouragement of reciprocity, and the lower-class mothers (those receiving AFDC payments) scored even more negative attitudes toward reciprocity. Consequently, the Farran and Haskins' (1980) interpretation that very low socioeconomic-level mothers may not be appreciative or aware of possible benefits afforded by fostering reciprocal interactions with their children was supported.

The third subscale measured appropriate versus inappropriate closeness with the child. Mothers receiving AFDC payments scored significantly more negative or less adaptive attitudes on this subscale than did mothers not receiving such aid. In fact, the mean

score for all mothers fell in the negative or less adaptive domain on this subscale. The significance of the difference in attitudes on what constitutes appropriate closeness with the child between low socioeconomic-status mothers and those more severely economically deprived again supports the scant research suggesting that the attitudes of mothers low in socioeconomic status are not the same and, additionally, that AFDC status successfully discriminates between the two groups.

The question remains, however, as to why mothers more severely deprived should score less adaptive attitudes regarding the encouragement of reciprocity and the fostering of closeness between mother and child. One answer may be that AFDC mothers have fewer or less effective coping skills necessary for rearing young children. The fact that they have been identified as AFDC-eligible supports this assumption and implies that they are functioning under greater stress than are those not eligible. It follows that mothers functioning under high levels of stress may feel more strongly that babies and young children make demands on them that lead to unhappiness and frustration for the mother and thus she scores more maladaptive attitudes on these subscales. More so than mothers less economically deprived, these mothers may be left with feelings of depletion and exhaustion resulting from their childcare efforts. These mothers express the belief that their children cannot be left alone or be without their mothers even for a moment, as they easily become upset. The children in these families thus seem to be perceived by their AFDC mothers as one of the reasons the mother feels

depleted. And yet, in the face of this depletion, the mother remains unable to deal with what she believes are the child's excessive demands upon her, except by feeling that she must give even more. Thus, in these families, there may be a tendency for some resentment by the mother toward her child, which resentment may lead to more maladaptive attitudes toward reciprocity and closeness with the child while leaving unaffected her attitudes on the other domains.

With regard to the Total Maternal Attitude Scale, mothers lower in socioeconomic status, as evidenced by their qualifying for financial aid in the form of AFDC payments, scored significantly more negative or less adaptive attitudes than did those not receiving aid. It can be argued that in times of widespread and increasing economic stress, perhaps that finding, conceivably more than others, calls for a cautious interpretation with a conscious avoidance of any cause-and-effect relationship between AFDC status per se and maternal attitudes. The choice of AFDC as the independent variable in the present study was not meant to imply that receipt of AFDC causes poor attitudes but only that AFDC can be used as a discriminator between low and very low socioeconomic-status mothers. Families eligible for receipt of financial aid are, for the most part, more obviously in need of financial assistance to provide support for their children. Only the most seriously deprived families are eligible. These are families whose children have been deprived of parental care and support through death, physical or mental incapacity, or through the continuous absence from the home of one or both parents. The fact that AFDC status was found to discriminate between mothers with

significantly differing levels of maladaptive attitudes on the subscales measuring reciprocity and closeness and not on the subscales measuring control of aggression, emotional complexity in childcare, or feelings of competency in meeting and perceiving the baby's needs is understandable when assuming that mothers receiving AFDC payments are functioning under higher levels of stress, due primarily to the fact that they have found themselves incapable of providing for themselves and their children without public assistance. Feelings of inadequacy stemming from this inability and failure to provide may be projected onto their children in the form of resentment and thus interfere with any ability to feel positive about encouraging reciprocal interactions with their children or to express adaptive attitudes toward developing appropriately close relationships with their children.

That AFDC mothers were found to have attitudes significantly more negative or less adaptive than less deprived mothers on two of the five subscales and on the Total Maternal Attitude Scale supports Mueller and Parcel's (1981) argument challenging the traditional approach which restricts comparisons of lower socioeconomic groups with middle-class groups. Sufficient variation within traditionally defined groups can and does exist such that looking for differences within groups may continue to reveal significant results (Whitman et al., 1967).

By definition, however, the majority of AFDC families are one-parent families. Because of this, it is reasonable to question

whether the noted difference in attitudes between these two groups is related more to the continuous absence from the home by the father or father figure than specifically to the families' AFDC status (very low socioeconomic level).

In the present study of 75 low-socioeconomic-status mothers, 25 were receiving AFDC at the time of the home interview. Of these 25 mothers, only three were married. Of the remaining 22 single AFDC mothers, however, there was evidence that some families had a male present in the household. One AFDC mother reported that she was living with her brother while the father of her children was in prison. Another reported that she was living with her parents. In still other families, the male was reported as the father of some of the children. It can be assumed, therefore, that a father figure was present in a significant number of AFDC families falling in the category of "single." Likewise, with the 50 non-AFDC mothers, 18 of whom were unmarried, there was evidence in more than a few families that a father figure or male was present in the home. Many of the mothers interviewed (both AFDC and non-AFDC) seemed to be living in group situations with unidentified other male and female adults as well as other children not their own. It was not uncommon to find two sisters, each with their own children, living together, sometimes with other unidentified male adults. Considering the difficulties presented by the economic pressures of our times, these nontraditional living arrangements among socioeconomically deprived families is certainly not surprising.

It would seem, therefore, that in the population of this study, testing for differences in maternal attitudes between married and unmarried mothers (the data available in this study) would not have been a fruitful approach in determining whether differences in maternal attitudes are related more to the continuous absence from the home by the father or father figure or to the families' very low socioeconomic status. A different procedure for data collection would have to be utilized to address differences in maternal attitudes between families with and without a father or other supportive figure in the home.

Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis Two, stating that mothers with greater numbers of children have childcare attitudes significantly less positive in nature than do mothers with responsibility for fewer numbers of children, was not supported. In this sample of low-socioeconomic-level mothers, there was no significant relationship between differences in maternal childcare attitudes and the number of children in the home. This held true for all five subscales as well as for the Total Maternal Attitude Scale.

Because family constellation factors such as number of children in the home, sex, age, and spacing of children have been cited as having a potential as well as an actual influence on maternal attitudes and beliefs regarding childrearing (McGillicuddy-DeLisi, 1980; Nye et al., 1970; Sigel, McGillicuddy-DeLisi, & Johnson, 1980), the lack of support for this hypothesis was initially perplexing.

Previous studies have employed, however, different parent questions and have compared lower-class with more middle-class subjects. These differences in research tools and design may explain the lack of support for the hypothesis in this study. It should be noted, however, that on the Total Maternal Attitude Scale and on all subscales except the first, the difference in attitudes between mothers with lesser and greater numbers of children, albeit not statistically significant, was in the direction of prediction. Thus, it may be the case that the sample size of the present study was too small with regard to the range of variation in the population, and thus, the study could not successfully delineate relationships between the number of children in the home and maternal attitudes toward child-rearing responsibilities.

Hypothesis Three

The third hypothesis stated that mothers scoring high in receptive-vocabulary abilities have significantly more positive attitudes than do those scoring low. As with the first hypothesis, Hypothesis 3 was supported when the Total Maternal Attitude Scale was considered, but received only partial support when all five subscales were considered separately. A significant difference in maternal attitudes favoring high receptive-vocabulary-scoring mothers was found only on Subscales I and IV. However, a significant difference in maternal attitudes favoring low receptive-vocabulary-scoring mothers was found on Subscale V.

Subscale I concerned the appropriate control of the child's aggression. The mean score for all mothers fell within the negative or less adaptive domain on this subscale. Mothers scoring high in receptive-vocabulary abilities, however, had significantly less negative attitudes regarding the appropriate control of their child's aggression than did the low-scoring mothers. These results are again generally supportive of findings indicating that low socioeconomic mothers hold authoritarian attitudes toward their childrearing responsibilities (Schaeffer & Bell, 1958), while also supportive of the few studies suggesting that the attitudes of low-socioeconomic-status mothers are not the same (Greenberg & Davidson, 1972; Ramey & Brownlee, 1981; Ramey et al., 1979).

Dunn and Dunn (1981) have reported that the PPVT-R, the vocabulary test used in the present study has an overall median correlation coefficient of .71 with tests measuring verbal intelligence. Cohler et al. (1980), although working with a middle-class and married sample, tested for a relationship between verbal intelligence and scores on each of the five maternal-attitude subscales in mentally ill and well mothers. As with the present study, they found verbal intelligence correlating with attitudes on this first subscale in both mentally ill and well mothers. Previous research has demonstrated that deprived mothers use restricted and constricting language in communication with their children (Hess & Shipman, 1965; Robinson, 1971), and that these mothers also tend to have difficulties with expressive and receptive language skills (Ervin-Tripp, 1971; Hart, 1975; Moerk, 1980; Robinson, 1971). The insistence on

compliance to authoritarian and arbitrary rules with limited or no possibility of verbal interaction while emphasizing the role of power has also been associated with deprived mothers in their verbal interactions with their children (Hess & Shipman, 1965). In addition, research has shown that attitudes toward the self improve with increased proficiency in language abilities (Oller et al., 1977). Furthermore, research has established that a mother's feelings about herself affect her ability to develop a positive relationship with her child (Davids, Holden, & Gray, 1963; Deutsch, 1945). The present study's results indicate that mothers with higher receptive-vocabulary abilities, in general, have more positive (although still negative) attitudes toward the appropriate control of their child's aggressive behaviors.

Thus, previous research plus the results from the present study seem to support the following interpretation: mothers scoring low receptive-vocabulary abilities have difficulties with verbal comprehension as well as expression. They may possibly feel some degree of frustration, and have poor self-attitudes. It is feasible that this may lead to feelings of powerlessness in the role of mother. They may thus overcompensate for feelings of powerlessness by demanding from their children a more rigid compliance to the behavioral standards accepted and unquestioned by the mother. It seems logical that these mothers, aided by their authoritarian attitudes to their child's behavior, would then recoup feelings of power, control, and thus competency in their role of mother. That these mothers scored more positively than mothers with high receptive-vocabulary abilities

on the fifth subscale measuring their perception of their ability to meet their baby's needs supports the above interpretation.

As with the first subscale measuring maternal attitudes regarding the appropriate versus inappropriate control of aggression, the fourth subscale measuring the mothers' attitudes regarding acceptance versus denial of emotional complexity in childcare revealed significant results for Hypothesis 3. Mothers scoring high in receptive-vocabulary abilities had significantly more positive attitudes than did those scoring low. Contrary, though, to the previous three subscales, where all mean scores were in the negative or less adaptive domain, only mothers scoring high in receptive-vocabulary abilities for this subscale had a mean score in the positive domain. These high receptive-vocabulary-scoring mothers indicated awareness and acceptance of the emotional complexities encountered in rearing children, and they did not score as defensive regarding their mothering abilities. Mothers scoring low in receptive vocabulary abilities had a mean score in the negative, less adaptive domain, revealing their defensiveness and denial of emotional complexities.

This finding of a positive or more adaptive attitude within a low socioeconomic group supports the few studies positing that not all low socioeconomic-status parents hold poorly adaptive attitudes toward childrearing responsibilities. The strength of the significance of this finding also supports the Cohler et al. (1980) finding, indicating a correlation between verbal intelligence and scores on this subscale. Additionally, the present study supports Robinson's

(1971) conclusion that lower socioeconomic-status mothers may be more confined to restricted and constricted language codes with respect to their attitudes on childrearing. Cohler et al. (1980) posited that this subscale assesses a mother's awareness of differences in affect between herself and her child. It appears, then, that low socioeconomic-level mothers who are also low in receptive-vocabulary abilities would have limited use of language as a method for conveying any awareness of differences in feelings between themselves and their children. In addition to being denying and defensive, therefore, they might also have difficulty relating to items calling for the identification of attitudes acknowledging variation in affect between mother and child, and thus, score less adaptively on this subscale.

As with the fourth subscale measuring attitudes on emotional complexity in childcare and the first subscale measuring attitudes on control of aggression, maternal-receptive vocabulary was found to yield significant results on the fifth subscale measuring the mother's feelings of competency in perceiving and meeting the baby's needs. In fact, this fifth subscale was the only subscale where mean scores for all mothers fell in the positive or more adaptive domain. That these mothers were found to have generally positive or more adaptive attitudes seems, on first glance, to support the few studies concluding that not all low socioeconomic-level mothers hold poorly adaptive or negative attitudes toward childrearing responsibilities. However, and especially for mothers scoring low in receptive-vocabulary

abilities, a positive score on this subscale in combination with poorly adaptive attitudes on the other four subscales suggests that a positive or adaptive score on this subscale may be more maladaptive than adaptive. That is, to have generally maladaptive attitudes on all maternal-attitude domains except on the subscale measuring the mother's perception of her own competencies suggests that these mothers are satisfied with themselves in their role of mother even though they generally express maladaptive attitudes in other maternal-attitude domains. Thus, it would seem that these mothers may be resistant to intervention strategies aimed at changing their generally maladaptive attitudes to more adaptive attitudes.

Cohler et al. (1980) found no correlation between verbal intelligence and this fifth subscale in their middle-class sample. Perhaps, though, of even greater interest is that the results from this subscale, although significant, were not in the direction of prediction. While both high and low-status mothers did score within the adaptive domain, indicating, in general, a tendency to express the belief that they are able to understand their babies' needs and can meet these needs adequately, mothers with high receptive-vocabulary scores did not score as highly positive as did mothers scoring low in receptive-vocabulary abilities. This contrasts sharply with the significant results of Subscale I measuring appropriate control of aggression, of Subscale IV measuring the emotional complexities encountered in childcare, and with the remaining two subscales where, although results were not significant, differences in attitudes were

in the direction of prediction. On these other four subscales, mothers scoring high in receptive-vocabulary abilities indicated more adaptive attitudes than did those scoring low. In fact, it was only on this fifth subscale where significant results were not in the direction of prediction.

As noted previously, results from Subscale IV determined that low receptive-vocabulary-scoring mothers were, in general, denying of the emotional complexities encountered in childrearing and defensive regarding their role as mother. Thus, it may not be surprising that this same group of mothers would also perceive themselves as adaptively competent in their ability to perceive and meet their baby's needs. They must score this way to protect an image of competency. Thus, the results of this study seem quite discouraging. Within this group of low socioeconomic-level mothers, those scoring low in receptive-vocabulary abilities who at the same time score less positively on the other four domains of childcare attitudes (when compared to high receptive-vocabulary-scoring mothers), see themselves as significantly more competent in perceiving and meeting their baby's needs than do mothers scoring high in receptive-vocabulary abilities and more positively on the other four domains of childcare attitudes.

These results may thus be suggesting an inverse relationship between receptive-vocabulary abilities and the mother's perception of her ability to perceive and meet her baby's needs. That low receptive-vocabulary-scoring mothers score defensively about their mothering abilities and denying of the emotional complexities involved in rearing children while at the same time professing a positive

perception of their own competencies in the mothering role, suggests that they may really tend to feel quite the opposite, that is, hopeless and depleted in the mothering role, although unaware that they do so. Otherwise, they would be able to admit to or be aware of the emotional complexities involved in childrearing and would not need to be defensive of their abilities in the mothering role. Thus, these mothers may be overcompensating for their (admittedly assumed) feelings of inadequacy, hopelessness, and depletion. That this seems to be the case, however, is only made evident through an examination of their total pattern of responding when all five subscales are considered.

When maternal attitudes for all subjects for all five subscales were scored and algebraically summed creating the Total Maternal Attitude Scale, the mean score fell into the negative or less adaptive domain. That the mothers in this study were found to have generally negative or less adaptive maternal attitudes agrees with previous research findings, indicating the lower socioeconomic-status mothers tend to have negative childrearing attitudes (Ramey & Campbell, 1976; Schaeffer & Bell, 1958). Only one of the five subscales had a positive mean. This was Subscale V, feelings of competence versus lack of competence in perceiving and meeting the baby's needs. And yet, that this truly represents an adaptive response when all four previous subscales indicated generally maladaptive attitudes remains doubtful.

When frequencies, means, and standard deviations were examined for each of the three independent variables, the only group showing a positive mean total maternal-attitude score was the group composed of mothers scoring high on receptive-vocabulary abilities. As hypothesized, mothers achieving higher scores on a test of receptive-vocabulary abilities did have significantly more positive childcare attitudes. This finding is generally supportive of the Ramey and Brownlee (1981) finding that within a low socioeconomic group, mothers scoring as more democratic on Emmerich's (1969) version of the Parental Attitude Research Inventory developed by Schaeffer and Bell (1958), also scored as more verbally intelligent.

Although receptive-vocabulary abilities measure only hearing vocabulary, the results from this study support the suggestion that vocabulary may be related to maternal attitudes (Robinson, 1971), and that self-attitudes suffer with poor language abilities (Oller et al., 1977). The present study thus provides rationale for concluding that language abilities, a mother's self-attitude, and attitudes toward childrearing are related.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter contains a brief summary of the study's conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Conclusions

There are significant differences in childcare attitudes within this group of relatively homogeneous, low-socioeconomic-level mothers. In general, these mothers were found to hold primarily negative or poorly adaptive childcare attitudes supporting the bulk of the literature on maternal attitudes. As suggested by only a few studies, however, low-socioeconomic-level mothers do not all hold negative or poorly adaptive attitudes toward their childcare responsibilities. Low-socioeconomic-level mothers who score high on a test of receptive-vocabulary abilities, in general, tend to have positive attitudes toward their childrearing responsibilities. Studies on maternal attitudes, comparing low-socioeconomic-level mothers with their more middle-class counterparts, may thus miss opportunities to acknowledge the variation that exists within this group.

As hypothesized, classifying these mothers into a low and very low socioeconomic group by their AFDC status proved efficient in determining differences in attitudes. AFDC mothers (the lowest group) had significantly more negative childcare attitudes than did

the non-AFDC mothers on the Total Maternal Attitude Scale and on the subscales measuring reciprocity and closeness. The stress associated with severe economic deprivation in combination with childcare responsibilities was cited as being a possible deterrent for these mothers, possibly interfering with their ability to establish more adaptive attitudes or to develop reciprocal relationships with their child and establish more adaptive attitudes toward appropriate closeness.

Classifying these low-socioeconomic-level mothers by the number of their children did not prove efficient in determining differences in maternal childcare attitudes. There were no significant differences in maternal childcare attitudes between mothers with greater or lesser numbers of children. That is, both groups appeared to respond similarly to the statements presented by the Maternal Attitude Scale. Although not statistically significant, there did appear to be a trend toward less positive maternal attitudes in mothers with greater numbers of children. Thus, Hypothesis 2, which stated that within a relatively homogeneous group of mothers low in socioeconomic status, mothers with greater numbers of children have childcare attitudes significantly less positive in nature than do mothers with responsibility for fewer numbers of children, was not supported.

As hypothesized, classifying these low-socioeconomic-level mothers into a high and a low group based on their score on a test of receptive-vocabulary abilities proved efficient in determining differences in maternal childcare attitudes. There was a

statistically significant difference in maternal childcare attitudes between mothers scoring high in receptive-vocabulary abilities and those scoring low in receptive-vocabulary abilities on the Total Maternal Attitude Scale. In other words, receptive vocabulary was a predictive factor. Mothers scoring high on receptive-vocabulary abilities had significantly more positive attitudes toward their childcare responsibilities than did mothers scoring low. In particular, these mothers scored generally positive attitudes with regard to their acceptance of the emotional complexities encountered in childcare and in their feelings of competency in perceiving and meeting their baby's needs. Attitudes of mothers scoring high in receptive-vocabulary abilities, however, were opposite to the direction of prediction on the subscale measuring the mothers' feelings of competence versus lack of competence in perceiving and meeting the baby's needs. Results from this subscale indicated that mothers scoring low in receptive-vocabulary abilities had significantly more positive attitudes than did mothers scoring high in receptive-vocabulary abilities. That is, in this group of low-socioeconomic-level mothers, those scoring low in receptive-vocabulary abilities had less positive childcare attitudes than did high-scoring mothers on all attitude subscales except the subscale measuring attitudes toward competency in perceiving and meeting their baby's needs. This pattern of responding in low-scoring mothers was interpreted as an over-compensation to feelings of inadequacy, hopelessness, and depletion. Thus, their positive score on this subscale was judged maladaptive rather than adaptive.

Recommendations for Further Research

The findings of this investigation indicate several areas of potential for further research. Based on results from this study and issues raised in discussing the results, the following recommendations are made:

1. The present study found no relationship between number of children and differences in maternal attitudes toward childcare responsibilities. In part, this may be attributed to a sample size too small for the actual range of variation in the population. A study employing a larger sample size may reveal relationships between number of children and maternal childcare attitudes.
2. The finding suggesting an inverse relationship between receptive vocabulary and the mother's feelings of competency in the case where mothers scoring low in receptive vocabulary indicate attitudes of defensiveness and denial of emotional complexities encountered in childrearing seems important for a comprehensive understanding of childrearing attitudes in low-socioeconomic-level mothers. Thus, replication of the present study employing a larger sample of low-socioeconomic-level mothers is warranted.
3. This study, because of its methodology, was unable to test for differences in maternal attitudes between families having a father figure in the home and those without a father figure in the home. Because the presence of a father

figure or other supportive person may have an impact on the attitudes a mother has regarding her childrearing responsibilities, it seems worthwhile to repeat the study with the addition of this independent variable.

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APPENDIX A
LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

Dear Head Start Mothers:

As a graduate student in the Department of Child Development and Family Relations at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and as a psychologist with the Raleigh Developmental Evaluation Center, I am interested in finding out more about what mothers think and how they feel about raising children. I believe that a mother's available resources, the number of children she has, and the words she is familiar with may contribute to her feelings about childcare responsibilities.

You as mothers are being asked permission to allow me to spend some time with you in your home or at Head Start to ask you some general questions about you and your children. You will be asked to fill out a questionnaire about your children. I will also need to show you some pictures and ask you to point to those that give the best meaning of the words I will read to you. This interview will take about one hour.

The information you give will be held in strict confidence. The Head Start Director, Parent Involvement Coordinator, and teachers know about this study and have given their permission. Attached to this letter is a consent form for you to sign if you agree to participate. It also includes a request for some preliminary information. Your decision either way will have no effect on your child's continued participation in Head Start.

I believe you will enjoy taking part in this study. I also believe the results will be helpful to a better understanding of some of the things that are important for developing and maintaining good relationships between mothers and their children.

Thank you,

Joyce Vonderweidt, M.A.
Doctoral Candidate

P.S.

If you agree to take part in this study, please sign the attached form and return it to your child's teacher.

Consent Form

I agree to participate in a study of maternal attitudes being conducted by Joyce Vonderweidt, M.A. of the Department of Child Development and Family Relations, UNC-G, and the Raleigh Developmental Evaluation Center. I have been informed about the procedures to be followed, and I understand that I am free to terminate my participation at any time without penalty or prejudice.

____ day ____ month ____ year

Signature of Mother

Preliminary Information

Name of Mother: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____ Home _____ Office _____

Best Time to Call? _____

Where do you want to be interviewed? Check one:

____ At Home ____ At Head Start Center

Name of your Head Start Child: _____

____ Male ____ Female

Child's Date of Birth: _____

IF YOU WANT TO BE INTERVIEWED AT YOUR HOME, PLEASE INCLUDE A BRIEF MAP AS BEST YOU CAN GIVING DIRECTIONS TO YOUR HOME. (USE REVERSE SIDE.)

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO YOUR CHILD'S HEAD START TEACHER

APPENDIX B
MATERNAL ATTITUDE SCALE

PLEASE NOTE:

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APPENDIX C

TABLE 23 THROUGH TABLE 29

Table 23
Means and Standard Deviations for the Independent
Variable Number of Children (Set at the Second
Level) for Five Maternal-Attitude Subscales
and the Total Maternal Attitude Scale

	Number of Children	
	Two Children (N=47)	More Than Two Children (N=28)
Subscale I		
\bar{X}	-0.528	-0.685
SD	(0.867)	(1.061)
Subscale II		
\bar{X}	-0.325	-0.462
SD	(0.719)	(0.685)
Subscale III		
\bar{X}	-0.327	-0.657
SD	(0.975)	(1.112)
Subscale IV		
\bar{X}	-0.985	-1.150
SD	(1.750)	(1.937)
Subscale V		
\bar{X}	0.336	0.540
SD	(0.533)	(0.691)
Total Maternal Attitude Scale		
\bar{X}	-1.829	-2.416
SD	(3.119)	(3.200)

Table 24

AFDC Status by Number of Children by Maternal
Receptive Vocabulary Analysis of Variance of
Maternal Attitudes: Subscale I, Appro-
priate versus Inappropriate Control of
Child's Aggression (N = 75)

Main Effects	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
AFDC	2.772	1	2.772	3.678
Number of Children***	0.391	1	0.391	0.519
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary	4.206	1	4.206	5.579*
Main Effects Total	10.913	3	3.638	4.826**
AFDC x MRV	1.606	1	1.606	2.131
AFDC x Number of Children	0.553	1	0.553	0.734
MRV x Number of Children	1.949	1	1.949	2.586
Two-Way Interaction Total	3.697	3	1.232	1.635
Three-Way Interaction	0.293	1	0.293	0.388
Explained	14.903	7	2.129	2.824*
Residual	50.505	67	0.754	

Note. Multiple $R^2 = 0.23$.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

***Number of children set at the second level: one or two children
versus more than two children.

Table 25
 AFDC Status by Number of Children by Maternal
 Receptive Vocabulary Analysis of Variance of
 Maternal Attitudes: Subscale II,
 Encouragement versus Discourage-
 ment of Reciprocity (N = 75)

Main Effects	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
AFDC	2.728	1	2.728	6.212*
Number of Children***	0.271	1	0.271	0.618
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary	0.951	1	0.951	2.165
Main Effects Total	5.707	3	1.902	4.332**
AFDC x MRV	0.002	1	0.002	0.004
AFDC x Number of Children	0.013	1	0.013	0.029
MRV x Number of Children	0.945	1	0.945	2.152
Two-Way Interaction Total	1.014	3	0.338	0.770
Three-Way Interaction	0.653	1	0.653	1.488
Explained	7.375	7	1.054	2.399*
Residual	29.421	67	0.439	

Note. Multiple $R^2 = 0.20$.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

***Number of children set at the second level: one or two children versus more than two children.

Table 26

AFDC Status by Number of Children by Maternal
Receptive Vocabulary Analysis of Variance of
Maternal Attitudes: Subscale III,
Appropriate versus Inappropriate
Closeness with the Child
(N = 75)

Main Effects	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
AFDC	5.848	1	5.848	6.266*
Number of Children***	1.711	1	1.711	1.833
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary	2.373	1	2.373	2.542
Main Effects Total	14.031	3	4.677	5.011**
AFDC x MRV	0.004	1	0.004	0.004
AFDC x Number of Children	2.435	1	2.435	2.609
MRV x Number of Children	0.109	1	0.109	0.117
Two-Way Interaction Total	2.510	3	0.837	0.896
Three-Way Interaction	0.018	1	0.018	0.019
Explained	16.559	7	2.366	2.534*
Residual	62.535	67	0.933	

Note. Multiple $R^2 = 0.21$.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

***Number of children set at the second level: one or two children versus more than two children.

Table 27
 AFDC Status by Number of Children by Maternal
 Receptive Vocabulary Analysis of Variance of
 Maternal Attitudes : Subscale IV,
 Acceptance versus Denial of
 Emotional Complexity in
 Childcare (N = 75)

Main Effects	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
AFDC	0.462	1	0.462	0.165
Number of Children***	0.616	1	0.616	0.220
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary	43.649	1	43.649	15.573**
Main Effects Total	53.695	3	17.898	6.386**
AFDC x MRV	0.732	1	0.732	0.261
AFDC x Number of Children	0.263	1	0.263	0.094
MRV x Number of Children	0.378	1	0.378	0.135
Two-Way Interaction Total	1.177	3	0.392	0.142
Three-Way Interaction	0.092	1	0.092	0.033
Explained	54.965	7	7.852	2.802*
Residual	187.786	67	2.803	

Note. Multiple $R^2 = 0.23$.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$

***Number of children set at second level: one or two children versus more than two children.

Table 28

AFDC Status by Number of Children by Maternal
Receptive Vocabulary Analysis of Variance of
Maternal Attitude: Subscale V, Feelings of
Competence versus Lack of Competence in
Perceiving and Meeting the Baby's
Needs (N = 75)

Main Effects	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
AFDC	0.127	1	0.127	0.386
Number of Children**	0.789	1	0.789	2.403
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary	1.538	1	1.538	4.683*
Main Effects Total	2.269	3	0.756	2.303
AFDC x MRV	0.665	1	0.665	2.025
AFDC x Number of Children	0.130	1	0.130	0.396
MRV x Number of Children	0.549	1	0.549	1.671
Two-Way Interaction Total	1.675	3	0.558	1.700
Three-Way Interaction	0.787	1	0.787	2.396
Explained	4.731	7	0.676	2.058
Residual	22.006	67	0.328	

Note. Multiple $R^2 = 0.18$.

*p .05

**Number of children set at second level: one or two children
versus more than two children.

Table 29
 AFDC Status by Number of Children by Maternal
 Receptive Vocabulary Analysis of Variance of
 Maternal Attitudes: Total Maternal
 Attitude Scale (N = 75)

Main Effects	Sums of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
AFDC	45.841	1	45.841	6.079*
Number of Children***	5.527	1	5.527	0.733
Maternal Receptive Vocabulary	98.656	1	98.656	13.082**
Main Effects Total	220.408	3	73.469	9.743**
AFDC x MRV	1.266	1	1.266	0.168
AFDC x Number of Children	0.003	1	0.003	0.000
MRV x Number of Children	0.001	1	0.001	0.000
Two-Way Interaction Total	1.267	3	0.422	0.056
Three-Way Interaction	3.235	1	3.235	0.429
Explained	224.910	7	32.130	4.261**
Residual	505.251	67	7.541	

Note. Multiple $R^2 = 0.31$.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$

***Number of children set at second level: one or two children versus more than two children.