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Evidence from research indicates that mothers in different social classes rear their children in different ways. Less is known about the relation between socio-economic classes and attitudes toward childrearing than is known about authoritarianism and child-rearing practices.

This study was intended to compare the attitudes about childrearing in middle- and lower-class families in Greensboro, North
Carolina. Parents were selected to participate in the study if they
met certain criteria. The families consisted of a husband and wife
with at least one child under eighteen years of age at the time the
study was being made.

Each parent responded to the items on the University of Southern California Parent Attitude Survey, a self-inventory type device to measure parent attitudes toward child-rearing practices. The responses from 68 lower-class parents and 68 middle-class parents were compared. The <u>t</u>-test was used in the analyses of the data with the level of significance set at .05.

The findings supported the hypothesis that there would be a social-class differential in attitudes toward child-rearing practices. The lower-class fathers and mothers indicated significantly less favorable attitudes toward child-rearing than the middle-class fathers and mothers. The middle-class mothers had a significantly more favorable attitude than the middle-class fathers in one category.

# A COMPARISON OF ATTITUDES ABOUT CHILD-REARING IN MIDDLE- AND LOWER-CLASS FAMILIES

by

Marion Hawkins Mitchell

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Approved by

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#### APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis 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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#### CHAPTER I

#### INTRODUCTION

Much research has been done on the rearing of children, yet one of the unanswered questions in child-rearing today concerns authority and permissiveness. Less is known about the relation between socioeconomic status and authoritarianism than about child-rearing practices and authoritarianism. There seemed to be greater social freedom and tolerance of physical aggression in the lives of the lower-class children; at the same time the children had experienced a psychologically closed, hierarchical, and quite rigid child-parent relationship. Lower-class parents were seen as relatively mute with their children because of the threat of explosive anger (McCandless, 1967).

It has long been suspected that there is a difference in attitudes and behavior among parents in the various social and economic strata. The stereotyped image is that of harsh punitive lower-class parents with abused and neglected children; whereas, the middle-class parents are seen as permissive (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1964). The results of a study by Davis and Havighurst (1946) were not in aggreement with the stereotype, thus a minor social science revolution was launched. Lower-class (or working class) parents were found to be significantly more permissive than their middle-class counterparts in such activities as feeding and weaning, age of beginning of toilet training, and postponement of forced assumption of responsibility. Data from the Davis and Havighurst study suggested that

any difference in child-rearing that might be associated with ethnic group membership were fairly well overshadowed by social class differences. While investigators have stated that model differences exist between social classes, establishing these differences is a beginning for more refined study of the why and the implications of them. The question to be answered with the present research was what specific categories of attitudes about child-rearing differ between the middle- and lower-social classes.

#### Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was to compare the attitudes toward child-rearing in middle- and lower-class families.

#### Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to two groups of parents in Greensboro, North Carolina. All parents consisted of a husband and wife living together who had at least one child under eighteen years of age at the time the study was made. One group was composed of parents living in a federal housing project and the other group included parents of children enrolled in the University of North Carolina at Greensboro Nursery School.

# Definition of Terms Used

For clarification in the present study the following terms were defined.

Attitude was defined as the sum total of man's inclinations and feelings, prejudice or bias, preconceived notions, ideas, fear, threats and convictions about any specified topic (Thurstone, 1928).

Lower-class group was determined by the fact that the families met the requirements to live in a federal housing project which was constructed as a result of urban renewal.

Middle-class group was determined by education and occupation of the head of the family (father) according to Hollingshead's Two Factor Index of Social Position (Hollingshead, 1957).

Child-rearing attitudes were those attitudes about practices and techniques that have significant impact and influences on the total development of children. The specific attitudes toward child-rearing practices for this study were indicated by the responses to the University of Southern California Parent Attitude Survey (Shoben, 1949). The PAS places the attitudes in three categories: Ignoring, Possessive, and Dominant. A Miscellaneous category included items which did not pertain to child-rearing practices.

#### Assumptions

The assumption was made that the parents were relatively homogeneous within each of the social class groups with respect to other factors as well as social class. Another assumption made was that the parents in each group would be able to respond to the items on the survey.

#### Hypotheses

It was hypothesized that there would be a social class differential in attitudes toward child-rearing practices. It was further hypothesized that there would be more difference toward child-rearing practices between social classes than between mothers and fathers within social classes. It was also hypothesized that fathers in both social classes

would be more rigid in their attitudes than mothers in both social classes.

The level of significance of .05 was accepted.

The null hypotheses were that there will be no significant difference in any of the three categories of child-rearing attitudes on the PAS between:

- 1. Parents in the middle-social class and parents in the lower-social class.
- 2. Fathers in the lower-social class and mothers in the lower-social class.
- 3. Fathers in the middle-social class and mothers in the middle-social class.
- 4. Fathers in the lower-social class and fathers in the middle-social class.
- 5. Mothers in the lower-social class and mothers in the middle-social class.

#### CHAPTER II

#### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The first part of this chapter includes a review of the literature about attitudes and philosophy of child-rearing over several centuries. The review is divided into various eras in an attempt to show chronological changes in attitudes and practices. A final section of this chapter is a review of the research on the relationship between social class and attitudes about practices of child-rearing.

#### History of Child-rearing

The earliest philosophy of child-rearing, if it can be called a philosophy, was primordial, pragmatic and directed toward self-survival and family survival. The father of the family hunted, fought off enemies, and kept a thoughtful eye on his sons, particularly as they reached puberty. When the sons became a threat to him, he fought them and drove them off until he grew too old and tired or until some son sufficiently old and strong drove him off. The expelled son usually managed to find a family of his own. The old tired father became an isolate and eventually died of old age, weakness, illness, starvation, or a combination of such factors. The wives bred, bore, suckled, and murtured the children and helped the father in crises. The wives did not complain about their childbearing. If the family was on the march, particularly in hostile territories, the mother stopped beside the trail, had her baby, and caught up with the group. Otherwise, she and

her infant were likely to perish (McCandless, 1967).

Man eventually became civilized. Plato in the <u>Republic</u>, thought of youth as eminently teachable, particularly the boy child from an aristocratic family. Plato's notions of child-rearing were intellectual, that is, bring the boy up to be a man of the most sophisticated and knowledgeable type, willing and able to bring his education and talents to the service of his state (McCandless, 1967).

#### Mid 1700s to the Civil War

In the one hundred years between the mid 1700s and 1860, there was a decline of techniques for breaking the child's will and the beginning of the attacks on corporal punishment (Miller and Swanson, 1958). McCandless (1967) cited a study by Sunley during this era which indicated that the training of children was considered a rational, conscious process. It was believed that if parents would apply the correct methods, the results they sought would inevitably appear. Three broad and conflicting attitudes toward children were present in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The first attitude was associated with Calvinism in which the new infant was seen as damned with all mankind in Adam's fall. This depraved, degenerated creature was full of rebellion against God and His Laws.

The child's evil, impulsive will had to be broken for his own good and for "God's glory (Miller and Swanson, 1958)."

A second view came from the teaching of John Locke and Jean Jacques
Rousseau which set forth a philosophy of child-rearing that disturbed
the aristocratic society of the late eighteenth century. Rousseau

believed that the child should mature in total freedom until around pubescence and then begin his education. He stressed the need for allowing natural development rather than preparation for later life (McCandless, 1967).

The third of these conceptions of the child stood in sharp contrast to the other two in its insistence that children be led, not driven, persuaded, or commanded. Encouragement and reward were called the most important method for guiding the juvenile behavior. Corporal punishment was opposed because it was considered ineffective and because it was thought to crush the tender child. It was believed that children are like flowers opening to the sunshine and that parents should water them with affection and support and protect them from damaging experiences. Of the three conceptions, the first was most prevalent in this era. The second seemed to have had less acceptance. The third, though not widespread, gained acceptance in Europe and America (Miller and Swanson, 1958).

#### The Victorian Era.

In the late nineteenth century, children were thought of as miniature adults. Their roles were to be seen but not heard, to be obedient, to be little ladies or little gentlemen. The Victorian theory of child-rearing was genetic. The child's parents took the point of view that if a child turned out well he "takes after us." If he turned out ill, then "he takes after Uncle Ned or Aunt Elizabeth or his father's family (McCandless, 1967)."

Social-learning theory, perhaps among the above beliefs about

child-rearing, has most in common with Plato, except that more than Plato, it took into account emotional as well as cognitive learning. According to social-learning theory, man cannot only be optimized; his potential can be stretched by the learning experiences with which he is provided (McCandless, 1967).

## Child-rearing Practices in the Early Twentieth Century

Most of the child-rearing advice up to this time grew out of philosophical writings. Just before the turn of the nineteenth century adult attitudes toward children were being surveyed (Stogdill, 1933).

Stogdill (1933) developed scales for the measurement of attitudes toward the parental control of children and toward social adjustment of children. He used one of his scales to compare the attitudes of parents, advanced college students in a class in psychology, and well-recognized authorities in child guidance and mental hygiene. The results of the comparison indicated that parents and students differed considerably from the mental hygienists than did the parents. Enlightened attitudes toward children were found to be associated with high socio-economic status, special education in social or psychological sciences, and favorable home training.

In the 1930s there was a concern about parent education at the University of Iowa where a series of studies was made with parents of elementary school children. Ackerly (1935) constructed and administered objective and knowledge tests covering generalizations rated as highly important in the thinking of parents of elementary school children. She concluded that all attitude tests used in the study revealed parental opinions that were outside the range of scores which the experts considered

an intelligent attitude. Another study by Ackerly (1936) compared information obtained from interviews as well as information from attitude scales. The results indicated that attitude scales can be substituted for the personal interviews without much greater error than that which arises with specially trained interviewers.

#### Child-rearing Practices in the Mid-twentieth Century

In the 1940s little research in the attitudes about child-rearing practices of parents was done, probably because it became popular to let the child set the age at which he was ready to be disciplined, weaned, and trained to use the toilet (Miller and Swanson, 1958).

Brown (1942) did an experimental study of parental attitudes and their effects upon child adjustment. He used the Stogdill Scales of Attitudes Toward Child Behavior and Attitudes Toward Parental Control. His subjects were thirty-six mothers of "well-adjusted" and thirty-seven mothers of "poorly adjusted" children. He reported the finding that there were significant differences between the mean scores of the mothers of the two groups.

The growth of the computers in the 1950s led to the use of larger samples and more complex statistical procedures in attempting to identify the multiple influences on child-rearing practices. During this period, the research community belatedly acknowledged that the father was a parent, too, by including him in research (Hoffman and Hoffman, 1964). It is relatively different and relatively rare in the literature to obtain data on both parents as well as on their offspring. In attempting to find the parental attitudes related to socially deviant

behavior in preadolescent boys, Winder and Rau (1962) were able to obtain data on such family constellations. Social deviance was measured by the Peer Nomination Inventory (PNI). Their sample consisted of mothers, fathers, and their children. The results of their findings indicated that children who experience relatively intense frustration in their interactions with their parents will come to exhibit with considerable intensity a diverse set of maladaptive behavior. The maladaptive behaviors will ordinarily include aspects of hostility, aggression, overdemanding and inappropriate bids for attention, withdrawal from friendly interactions with peers, and such manifestations of sadness and distress as frequent crying (Winder and Rau, 1962). Sears, Maccoby, and Levin (1957) performed a factor analysis of ratings and judgments based on a large number of interviews about child-rearing practices with mothers of fiveyear-old children. They identified eight factors that appeared to underlie a wide variety of distinct parental behavior. These eight factors were (a) permissiveness-restrictiveness; (b) general family adjustment; (c) warmth of mother-child relationship; (d) responsible child-training orientation; (e) aggressiveness and punitiveness; (f) perception of husband; (g) orientation toward child's physical well-being; and (h) pattern of control or discipline used by the mother. Sears, Maccoby, and Levin postulated that social learning is paramount in the development of personality. The eight child-rearing factors were found to interact with each of five developmental aspects (feeding and weaning, elimination, sex, dependency, and aggression) of child-rearing.

Sewell, Mussen, and Harris (1955) studied child-rearing practices using methods similar to those of Sears, Maccoby, and Levin (1957).

First they interviewed a large sample of mothers of five-year-olds and six-year-olds. They made ratings and judgments about child-rearing practices and then performed a factor analysis of their results. The three researches secured information about thirty-seven aspects of child-rearing and also attempted to tap some parental attitudes and practices. The biggest overlap between the Sewell, Mussen, and Harris study and the Sears, Maccoby, and Levin study was their agreement that at least one very important variable in child-rearing practices was the degree of permissiveness or strictness that a mother shows toward her children. Sewell, Mussen, and Harris believed that they failed to find any true common denominator of different child-rearing practices, such as a general acceptance or rejection of the child, or even consistency from one area of child-rearing to another.

Crandall and Preston (1955) used statistical techniques other than factor analysis in an effort to get at meaningful dimensions of child-rearing practices. They worked with a smaller number of mothers whose children differed widely in age, also using interview techniques. They reported four major dimensions of maternal behavior, affection, protective, coactive control, and coercive control.

# Summary of the Brief History of Change in American Child-rearing

The study of child-rearing began with the decline of practices which broke the youngster's will. Such practices were almost extinct by the time of the Civil War. Beginning early in the nineteenth century, there occurred the struggle against parental domination of their children's lives. The child was to have a life of his own; his parents could not live it for him. When this campaign was won by the reform movement at

the turn of the century, it was followed by vigorous new measures to teach the child to be self-sufficient and independent and to adapt skill-fully to the demands of a shifting society. Another change in child-rearing practices emerged after the end of the second world war. It has been summarized in the slogan, "Do what seems natural" in training your child and be sure the child is ready before you urge him to acquire new skills (Spock, 1954).

# Social Classes and Child-rearing Practices

The study of American social classes has been complex. Americans do not like to think of their society as being characterized by social class. Even so, the United States population is often stratified by sociologists, educators, and psychologists. Child-rearing attitudes and practices of parents were found to be in part a function of the socioeconomic class to which the parents belong. Class membership means many things, of course. Different class levels involve difference in income, in occupation, and in education (Byrne, 1966). In nearly all of the research on child-rearing practices, evidence reveals that parents are concerned with setting limits and the development of their children. A gap in research was in the interaction of fathers and their children (McCandless, 1967).

Miller and Swanson (1958) reported that there has been evidence that mothers in different social classes do not rear their youngsters in the same way, and that techniques of child care peculiar to particular social classes come into use as soon as a baby is born. They did not find in their study any significant differences between lower-class whites and

Negroes with the respect to the aspects of training children. This finding is in keeping with the conclusions of Davis and Havighurst (1946).

Middle- and lower-class Negro families were compared with white families of similar social classes in Chicago. The likeness of the Negro and white families in their respective socio-economic groups hold for such characteristics as number of children, ages of parents when married, and child-rearing practices and expectations of children (Miller and Swanson, 1958).

During the years between 1932 and 1957, Bronfenbrenner (1958)
made a survey and reanalysis of fifteen studies of child-rearing practices in various parts of the country. As reported by him, the major focus of the studies during the period of infancy was on feeding, weaming, and toilet training practices. Middle-class mothers rather faithfully followed the changing fashions in child-care recommendations by "experts." They were less likely to offer the breast at all but were more likely to offer it on a fixed schedule when they did offer it. They were more likely to wean the infant early and to begin and complete bowel and bladder training at earlier ages than lower-class mothers. Middle-class mothers were likely to be more supportive and permissive in the feeding and training of their children than lower-class mothers. Lower-class mothers were significantly more likely than middle-class mothers to thwart their children's exploratory and self-assertive actions.

Davis and Havighurst (1946) published the results of a Chicago survey which conflicted with the stereotyped image of the harsh and punitive lower-class parent with abused and neglected children. Their results showed that, in such practices as feeding and age of beginning

elimination training and the postponement of forced assumption of responsibility, lower-class (or working class) parents were significantly more permissive than their middle-class counterparts. Data in this study also suggested that any differences in child-rearing that might be associated with ethnic group membership were fairly well overshadowed by social class differences.

Klatskin (1952) used a questionnaire to acquire data on childrearing techniques. His work was with 223 parents of middle- and lowerclasses. Maccoby and Gibbs (1954) worked with 198 middle-class and 174
lower-class mothers. The findings of these two studies did not support
the findings of the earlier Davis and Havighurst (1946) work that lowerclass mothers were more permissive than middle-class mothers.

The work of Kohn (1959) found working-class parents stressing
"obedience to parents" as the most important value. The middle-class
parents considered obedience to be less important than self-control and
considerateness of others. Middle-class parents were more likely than
working-class parents to resort to physical punishment of their children
when the latter seem to reveal an intent to violate standards that their
parents thought should be internalized. Working-class parents were
triggered into physical punishment more often by the immediately descriptive consequences of their children's wild play or fights with siblings. The mothers in this class were much less likely to punish their
sons for refusing to do what they were told and were more likely to
punish their daughters for such behavior.

According to Friedman (1969) it has been a widely held belief in the behavioral sciences that there in an intimate relationship between child-rearing practices of parents and social behavior in children. He said that it is only recently, however, that interest has been broadened to include empirical studies of the interaction process. Friedman further indicated that since the actual child-rearing practices, the intimate day-to-day interaction between parents and their offsprings, are so difficult to observe and assess, a higher level of abstraction would hypothesize a syndrome of basic underlying attitudes toward child-rearing patterns which are probably the determinants of the child-rearing patterns themselves. During the formative preschool years this influence, which makes its impact on the child's sense organs and nervous system, is brought to bear primarily by his parents. Parental influence continues to play a major role in the lives of older children, but in a more diluted form. Central, then, to an understanding of development in the early years of childhood is a study of child-rearing practices (McCandless, 1967).

Brim (1959) has done a notable service to our understanding of parent behavior. In reviewing the overall trends of the data he found that reliance on breast feeding was decreasing while self-demand schedules were becoming more common. With respect to class differences on the practices of weaning, of bowel and bladder training, and of both breast feeding and self-demand scheduling, he found that while these were less common among the middle-class or white-collar wives before World War II, the directions reversed and the middle-class mother was relatively more permissive than the lower-class. In relation to the changing trends of child-rearing practices, Bronfenbrenner (1958) pointed out that middle-class mothers are more likely to read publications on child care than are

working-class mothers. He concluded that these mothers not only read materials on child care but take them seriously and over time are influenced by them.

Yarrow (1968) concluded that childrearing research is a curious combination of loose methodology that is tightly interwoven with provocative hypotheses of developmental processes and relationships. The compelling legend of maternal influences on child behavior that has evolved does not have its roots in solid data, and its decisive verification remains in many respects a subject for future research.

#### CHAPTER III

#### PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to compare attitudes of parents in low-income families with parents in middle-income families concerning child-rearing. The subjects in this study were parents who came from a population of families (a) who lived in Greensboro, North Carolina; (b) who had at least one child under the age of eighteen years; and (c) in which both parents of the child lived in the same household. The two groups selected to participate in the study were a lower-class group and a middle-class group. The lower-class group was made up of fathers and mothers from a federal housing project in Greensboro. The middle-class group was made up of fathers and mothers of children enrolled in the Nursery School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

# Selecting the Subjects

The lower-class group was selected after several conferences with the social worker and two of the social aides of the federal housing units in Greensboro, North Carolina. The purpose of the study and the eligibility of the participants were discussed with the social worker and the social aides because they had had some contacts with the lower-income families of the city. The social workers of the federal housing units had direct contact with all families in the

federal housing projects. The investigator and two of the social worker aides screened the records of the families in the Ray Warren Project and Hampton Homes Project to get at least 40 eligible families to participate in the study. The income level of all of the occupants of the federal housing projects in Greensboro was deemed about the same because all of the families had met the federal requirements to live in the lower-rent housing units. After screening the records of the families in the Ray Warren and the Hampton Homes Projects, only the husbands and their wives who had at least one child under age eighteen years and were living in the Hampton Homes Project were selected. Hampton Homes was selected because of proximity to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

The middle-class group was selected through the Nursery School of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Conferences were held with the director of the Nursery School to find the eligibility of this group for participation in this study. These parents met the following requirements: (a) at least one child enrolled in the Nursery School; (b) at least four years of college by at least one parent; (c) family income level between \$6,000 and \$14,000; (d) place of residence located in the Northwest section of Greensboro; and (e) both parents living together at the time they were selected to participate in this study.

## Instrument Used

Data for the lower-income group and the middle-income group were the scores obtained by parents' responses to the Southern

California Parent Attitude Survey (see Appendix B). This instrument is a paper and pencil self-inventory scale developed by Shoben (1949) to measure parent attitudes toward their children. This survey consists of eighty-five items or statements of general attitudes toward children to which the subject responds by indicating that he strongly agrees, mildly agrees, mildly disagrees, or strongly disagrees. The eighty-five items are classified into three subscales of parent attitude toward child-rearing: (a) The Ignoring Subscale reflects parental tendency to disregard the child as one who demands least parental time, and to disclaim responsibility for the child's behavior; (b) The Possessive Subscale reflects parental tendencies to pamper a child, to overemphasize bonds of affections between parent and child, to encourage a child's dependency upon the parent, and to restrict a child's activities to his own family group; and (c) The Dominant Subscale reflects parental tendencies to put a child in a subordinate role, and to expect him always to conform completely to parental wishes under penalty of severe punishment. A Miscellaneous Subscale consists of ten emotionally-toned statements about a variety of subjects regarding religion, sex, and socio-economic differences not considered to be child-rearing practices.

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The reliability coefficients for the survey, determined by the split-half method raised by the Spearman-Brown formula were .95 for the Total Scale, .91 for the Dominant Subscale, .84 for the Ignoring Subscale, and .90 for the Possessive Subscale, thus indicating a high degree of consistency in the survey.

Shoben computed validity coefficients for his original group of

fifty mothers with problem children and fifty mothers with non-problem children. He then computed validity coefficients for a new group of twenty mothers of problem children and twenty mothers of non-problem children.

Validity coefficients were determined for both administrations by using the point-biserial coefficient of correlation. The validity coefficients were as follows: Total Scale .769; Dominant Subscale .623; Possessive Subscale .721; and Ignoring Subscale .624. This method of determining validity was employed because: (a) no attitude scale of proven validity was available with which to make a comparison; and (b) one of two variables being compared, child adjustment, was dichotomous whereas the other, parent attitude scores, was continually and normally distributed. Shoben found that the results of the two administrations showed that the PAS has value in the assessment of parent attitudes toward child-rearing.

Shoben stated that the four possible responses to each item on the survey were weighted according to the differential contribution to discrimination among the four response categories. Scores for each scale were obtained by summing the weights for each item within the subscale. The total attitude survey score for an individual was found by summing the totals for the four subscales. The high score indicated less favorable attitudes in child-rearing practices, while a lower score indicated a more favorable attitude. The range of scores for the "ideal" parent for each scale was considered to be the following:

(a) Ignoring, 35 to 44; (b) Possessive, 72 to 88; (c) Dominant, 142 to 149; and (d) Total, 275 to 297. The Miscellaneous Scale was

not included.

These "ideal" scores were obtained by asking eight clinical psychologists to fill out the PAS according to what each thought was an "ideal" parent. They agreed to a marked extent. Their scores also agreed more with scores of parents with non-problem children.

#### Collection of Data

The Southern California Parent Attitude Survey (see Appendix B) and a letter (see Appendix A) were distributed to the homes of the lower-income group by the investigator. The mother of the family or an older child in the family usually accepted the questionnaire. They were told that after the questionnaires had been completed they would be collected on a specified date. The letter informed the parents that they had been selected to participate in the study and that all information would be held confidential. The investigator collected most of the questionnaires from the homes of these parents. The others were taken or sent by the parents to the social aides' office which was located in the main office of the Hampton Homes Project.

The same survey and letter were mailed to the Nursery School parents with a stamped, self-addressed envelope for returning the completed survey. They were returned to the director of the Nursery School at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and picked up from the Nursery School by the investigator.

Of the 100 surveys mailed to the middle-class families, 46 fathers and 46 mothers returned completed forms. This was a 92 percent return from the middle-class group. Seventy-one forms were returned from the parents of the federal housing project as against 100 given;

34 were from fathers and 37 were from mothers. In order to have an equal number of mothers and fathers in each group, 34 parent pairs were taken from the lower-class group. Thirty-four parent pairs were randomly selected from the 46 parent pairs in the middle-class group.

# Procedure for Analyzing the Data

This study was designed to compare the attitudes toward childrearing practices between parents in two social classes, lower and middle. Further comparisons were planned between:

- (1) fathers and mothers in the lower-social class,
- (2) fathers and mothers in the middle-social class,
- (3) fathers in the lower-social class and fathers in the middlesocial class, and
- (4) mothers in the lower-social class and mothers in the middle-social class.

Comparisons were made in each of the four subscales, Ignoring, Possessive, Dominant, and Miscellaneous, as well as with the responses for the Total survey. The t-test was used as the appropriate statistic for these comparisons (Courts, 1966). The level of significance of .05 was accepted.

#### CHAPTER IV

#### FINDINGS

The results of a comparison of responses to the Southern
California Parent Attitude Survey (see Appendix B) between parents in
lower-class families and parents in middle-class families are presented
in this chapter. More specific comparisons of responses are between
(a) fathers in the lower-class and fathers in the middle-class; (b)
mothers in the lower-class and mothers in the middle-class; (c) fathers
in the lower-class and mothers in the lower-class; and (d) fathers in
the middle-class and mothers in the middle-class. The null hypothesis
was made for each comparison.

The PAS is divided into four Subscales: (a) Ignoring, (b) Possessive, (c) Dominant, and (d) Miscellaneous. Only the first three subscales are concerned with child-rearing practices; therefore, the five comparisons noted above are limited to the scores on these first three subscales and the total scores. The t-test was used to find any significance in difference between scores. The level of significance accepted was .05, however, anything significant at a higher level was reported.

# Comparison of the Parents' Mean Scores with the "Ideal" Mean Scores

The "ideal" mean score and range for each of the three subscales and the total are given in Table 1. Also in Table 1 are the mean scores in all four subscales and the total for all parents in this research.

In every instance where there is an "ideal" score given, the parents'

mean scores were higher; however the score of the parents in the middle-social class were closer to the "ideal" than were the scores of the parents in the lower-social class. The "ideal" scores were obtained from the responses of eight clinical psychologists who marked the PAS in 1949 in the way they thought an "ideal" parent would mark the items. A higher than mean "ideal" score indicates a less favorable attitude to-ward child-rearing. A lower than mean "ideal" score indicates a more favorable attitude toward child-rearing.

TABLE 1
Mean Scores of Parents on the Parent Attitude Survey

	Subscales					
	Ignoring	Possessive	Dominant	Miscellaneous	Total	
Middle Social Class						
Mothers $(n = 34)$	57.03	76.80	154.18	39.35	330.18	
Fathers (n== 34)	58.00	80.47	159.74	38.50	307.29	
Lower Social Class	(= 0(	700 70	202 12	11 01	200 00	
Mothers $(n = 3l_1)$	67.26	100.12	187.47	44.94	399.09	
Fathers $(n = 34)$	66.94	99.38	186.03	44.94	397.32	
"Ideal" Range	35-44	72-88	142-49		275-97	
"Ideal" Mean	39.88	79.38	146.12		286.38	

An experiment done near Greensboro by Johnson (1970) using the PAS as the dependent variable with lower-social class parents who were not living in a federal housing project indicated the following mean scores on each Subscale prior to any treatment:

Ignoring	62.00
Possessive	81.86
Dominant	163.28
Total	349.14

It seems that nearly all mean scores on the PAS in the last decade are considerably higher than the mean scores from comparable groups in the 1940s when Shoben first divised the instrument. Therefore, the "ideal" means or range do not seem to have a great deal of value. The mean scores of parents in Johnson's (1970) study are more nearly like those in this present study than are Shoben's scores. In fact the scores in Johnson's study fall between the scores of the parents in the lower-social class and middle-social class in the present study.

Hawkins (1963) administered the PAS to five groups of parents near Greensboro before and after a parent education course. Two of the groups were comparable to the middle-social class group in the present study. The scores of one of the groups prior to the course are given below:

	Group A
Ignoring	59.0
Possessive	82.5
Dominant	160.3
Total	343.5

# Comparison of the Mean Scores of Parents in the Lower-social Class and Parents in the Middle-social Class

The mean score of the parents in the lower-social class were significantly higher on the Ignoring, Possessive and Dominant subscales (Table 2). These findings were significant at the .001 level. This finding lends support to the notion that parents in the lower-social class have less favorable attitudes toward child-rearing than do parents in the middle-social class.

TABLE 2

Means and t Values of Responses of Parents in the Lower-social Class and Parents in the Middle-social Class

		Subscales				
		Ignoring	Possessive	Dominant	Miscellaneous	Total
Mothers and Fathers in Lower-social Class (n = 68)	™ S.D.	67 <b>.10</b> 6 <b>.</b> 43	99•75 <b>7•</b> 44	186.75 10.91	44.94 2.65	398.21 22.73
Mothers and Fathers in Middle-social Class (n = 68)		57.51 7.15	78.63 7.02	156.96 12.22	38.93 3.80	333.44 18.55
	<u>t</u> =	8.22*	17.03*	15.00*	10.70*	18.21

t = 3.29

# Comparison of the Mean Scores of Fathers in the Lower-social Class and Fathers in the Middle-social Class

Table 3 indicates that fathers in the lower-social class had significantly less favorable attitudes toward child-rearing than fathers in the middle-social class. There was a significant difference at the .001 level between the two groups of fathers on the Ignoring, the Possessive, and the Dominant Subscales. The fathers in each social class, then, contributed to the difference found between the social classes when both the fathers' and mothers' scores were used.

Means and t Values of Responses of Fathers in the Lower-social Class and Fathers in the Middle-social Class

		Subscales				
		Ignoring	Possessive	Dominant	Miscellaneous	s Total
Fathers in Lower-social Class (n = 34)		99 <b>.</b> 38 7 <b>.</b> 17	186.02		397 <b>.</b> 32 23 <b>.</b> 30	
Fathers in Middle-social Class (n = 34)		58.00 5.42	80.47 7.94	159.74 12.78	38.50 4.34	336.71 20.95
	<u>t</u> =	5.51*	10.30*	8.88*	7.47*	11.28

<sup>\*</sup>p < .001 t = 3.46

# Comparison of the Mean Scores of Mothers in the Lower-social Class and Mothers in the Middle-social Class

A significant difference at .001 level was found on each of the subscales between the mean scores of the mothers in the lower-social class and mothers in the middle-social class (Table 4). Both mothers and fathers contributed to the overall difference between the two social classes. Both lower-social class mothers and fathers have less favorable attitudes toward child-rearing than middle-class fathers and mothers.

Means and t Values of Responses of Mothers in the Lower-social Class and Mothers in the Middle-social Class

			Subscales						
		Ignoring	Possessive	Dominant	Miscellaneous	Total			
Mothers in Lower-social M Class (n = 34) S		67.26 4.88	100.12 7.78	187.47	144.94 2.81	399.09 22.45			
Mothers in Middle-social M Class (n = 34) S		57.03 8.60	76.79 5.47	154.18 11.13	39•35 3•18	330.18 15.41			
<u>t</u>	=	6.03*	14.29*	12.80*	7.68*	14.75			

<sup>\*</sup>p<.001 t = 3.46

# Comparison of the Mean Scores of Fathers in the Lower-social Class and Mothers in the Lower-social Class

There were no significant differences between the mothers and fathers in the lower-social class on any of the subscales -- Ignoring, Possessive or Dominant (Table 5). In fact, the mean scores were almost the same for mothers and fathers. The standard deviations were about the same for the mothers and for the fathers. The hypothesis that fathers would be more rigid was not supported.

Means and <u>t</u> Values of Responses of Mothers and Fathers in the Lower-social Class

			Sub	scales		
		Ignoring	Possessive	Dominant	Miscellaneous	Total
Mothers (n = 34)	M S.D.	67.26 4.88	100.12 7.78	187.47	44.94	399.09
Fathers	M S.D.	66.94 7.76	99•38 7•17	186.03	44.94 2.53	397.32 23.30
	<u>t</u> =	0.21	0.41	0.54	0.0	0.32

# Comparison of the Mean Scores of Fathers in the Middle-social Class and Mothers in the Middle-social Class

Information in Table 6 notes that there was a significant difference at the .05 level in the scores between fathers and mothers in
the middle-social class in the Possessive Subscale. The difference
in scores between mothers and fathers in the middle-social class was
not significant on the Ignoring and Dominant Subscales. These findings
support the hypothesis that fathers in this study would be more rigid
than mothers but only in the Possessive Subscale. The findings do not
support the hypothesis that fathers would be more rigid in the Ignoring
and Dominant Subscales.

Means and t Values of Responses of Mothers and Fathers in the Middle-social Class

			Sub	scales		
		Ignoring	Possessive	Dominant	Miscellaneous	Total
Mothers (n = 34)	M S.D.	57.03 8.60	76.79 5.47	154.18 11.13	39.35 3.18	330.18
Fathers (n = 34)	M S.D.	58.00 5.42	80.47 7.94	159.74	38.50 4.34	336.71
	<u>t</u> =	0.56	2.22*	1.91	•92	1.46

<sup>\*</sup>p<.05 t = 2.00

# Summary and Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study supported all research hypotheses stated in Chapter I except for one. The hypotheses that there would be no difference between mothers and fathers in the middle-class was not supported. When the scores on the PAS of the mothers and fathers in the lower-class were compared with the scores of the mothers and fathers in the middle-class, there was a significant difference on all variables at the .001 level. The scores of the mothers and fathers in the middle-class indicated more favorable attitudes toward child-rearing practices.

There was a significant difference between the scores of the fathers in the lower-class and the scores of the fathers in the middle-class on all variables at the .001 level. The fathers in the lower-class were considered to have had less favorable attitudes toward child-rearing practices.

The difference for the scores of the mothers between the lowerand middle-social class was significant at the .001 level. The lowerclass mothers had significantly less favorable attitudes toward childrearing practices than the middle-class mothers.

The fathers in the lower-social class were compared with the mothers in the lower-social class. There was no significant difference in their scores. The responses of the mothers and the fathers to the PAS were very much alike.

The scores of the mothers and fathers in the middle-class indicated a significant difference at the .05 level on the Possessive Subscale. There were no significant differences between the mothers and fathers in the middle-class on the total scores and the scores on the Ignoring and Dominant Subscales. The higher scores of the fathers on the Possessive Subscale reflect their tendencies to pamper a child, to over emphasize bonds of affection between them and their children, to encourage the child's dependence, and to restrict their children's activities to their own family group than would mothers in the middle-class group.

The findings in the present study lend support to other studies which reported differences between parents in the middle- and lower-classes with respect to child-rearing. The finding that middle-class mothers were less rigid than middle-class fathers in attitudes toward child-rearing in the Possessive Subscale may indicate that these mothers tend to be more achievement oriented for their children.

#### CHAPTER V

#### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since the 1940s there has been evidence that parents in different social classes have different attitudes about techniques and practices for rearing their children. The focus of this study was on the possible differences in the responses to the Southern California Parent Attitude Survey (PAS) between parents in the lower-class and parents in the middle-class. The parents in these two social classes were the husbands and their wives who were living together and had at least one child under the age of eighteen years old. The subjects selected for this study were drawn from families living in Greensboro, North Carolina.

The <u>t</u>-test was used in the analyses of data, with the level of significance set at .05. The major comparisons using the <u>t</u>-test were as follows:

- The mean scores of parents in the lower-social class and parents in the middle-social class;
- 2. The mean scores of fathers in the lower-social class and fathers in the middle-social class;
- 3. The mean scores of mothers in the lower-social class and mothers in the middle-social class;
- 4. The mean scores of the fathers and the mothers in the lower-social class;

5. The mean scores of the fathers and the mothers in the middle-social class.

The investigator hypothesized that there would be a difference in the scores on the PAS between the parents in the middle-scoial class and the parents in the lower-social class to show the middle-class parents as having more favorable attitudes toward child-rearing. That there would be no difference in the scores on the PAS between the parents of their own particular social class was a second hypothesis.

# Major Findings

The major findings of this study were as follows:

- 1. The scores of the mothers and fathers in the middle-social class indicated more favorable attitudes toward child-rearing practices than their lower-social class counterparts. There was a significant difference on all variables at the .001 level.
- 2. There was no significant difference in the scores between the fathers in the lower-social class and the mothers in the lowersocial class. Their responses to the PAS were very much alike.
- 3. The scores of the mothers and the fathers in the middleclass showed a significant difference at the .05 level on the Possessive
  Subscale, but no difference on the Ignoring and Dominant Subscales.

  The higher scores of the middle-class fathers on the Possessive Subscale
  indicated that they tend to pamper their children and they tend to
  encourage the child's dependence.

The findings of this research supported the evidence reported by Miller and Swanson (1958) that mothers in different social-classes

have different techniques and practices for rearing their children. Bronfenbrenner (1958) reported that middle-class mothers usually follow the changing fashions in child-care recommendations by "experts." Middle-class mothers were more likely to be more supportive and permissive in training their children than lower-class mothers. Lowerclass mothers were more likely than middle-class mothers to block their children's exploratory and self-assertive actions. Just as this study indicated evidence that lower-class parents valued "obedience to parents," Kohn (1959) reported findings very much the same. The findings of this study are in accordance with the above mentioned studies. The findings of the Davis and Havighurst (1946) study contended that any differences in child-rearing that might be associated with ethnic group membership were fairly well overshadowed by social class differences. Their study revealed evidence that lower-class parents were significantly more permissive than middle-class parents no matter what ethnic group they were.

# Conclusions

The social-class status of parents in this study does make a difference in attitudes about the techniques and practices used in rearing children. Lower-class parents expressed less favorable attitudes than middle-class parents about child-rearing practices.

# Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations for further research are made:

 Develop some norms for the PAS so that the mean scores will have more validity.

- 2. Construct a more valid and reliable instrument than the PAS for measuring parent attitude toward child-rearing practices.
- 3. Give the PAS to a comparable group of lower- and middleclass parents but control for race.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

June 25, 1969

Dear	Mr.	80	Mrs.	

You have been selected to be a part of a research study. We want to know your feelings about child rearing. This is a community project sponsored by the child development and family relations area of the School of Home Economics at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, North Carolina.

We would like for the fathers to fill out the attached yellow survey sheets and the mothers to fill out the pink survey sheets.

We would greatly appreciate your cooperation and would appreciate having the sheets by July 11th. Your answers will be treated in a confidential and professional manner.

Sincerely,

Dr. Helen Canaday, Director of the Nursery School

Mrs. Marion H. Mitchell, Graduate Student

Please return in the enclosed envelope to:

Dr. Helen Canaday Director of the Nursery School School of Home Economics University of North Carolina at Greensboro Greensboro, North Carolina 27412 APPENDIX B

#### UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA PARENT ATTITUDE SURVEY

Please read each of the statements below. Rate each statement as to whether you strongly agree, mildly agree, mildly disagree, or strongly disagree. There are no right or wrong answers, so answer according to your own convictions. Work as rapidly as you can. Draw a circle around the letter that best expresses your feeling.

			Strongly Agree	Mildly Agree	Mildly Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Ig.	1.	A child should be seen and not heard			4 MD	
Poss.	2.	Parents should sacrifice everything for their children			3 MD	
Poss.	3.	Children should be allowed to do as they please			2 MD	
Ig.	4.	A child should not plan to enter any occupation his parents don't approve of			L <sub>1</sub> MD	
Dom.	5.	Children need some of the natural meanness taken out of them			3 MD	
Dom.	6.	A child should have strict discipline in order to develop a fine strong character			3 MD	3 SD
Ig.	7.	The mother rather than the father should be responsible for discipline			3 MD	SD
Poss.	8.	Children should be "babied" until they are several years old			3 MD	
Dom.	9.	Children have the right to play with whomever they like			5 MD	

Poss.	10.	Independent and mature children are less lovable than those children who openly want and need their parents	6 SA	5 MA	L MI	3 SD
Poss.	11.	Children should be forbidden to play with youngsters whom their parents do not approve of	5 SA	5 MA	3 MD	2 SD
Ig.	12.	A good way to discipline a child is to tell him his parents won't love him anymore if he is bad	6 <b>S</b> A	3 MA	L4 MD	4 SD
Dom.	13.	Severe discipline is essential in the training of children	6 SA	6 MA	5 MD	3 SD
Ig.	14.	Parents cannot help it if their children are naughty	6 SA	5 MA	L4 MD	3 SD
Misc.	15.	Jealousy among brothers and sisters is a very unhealthy thing	4 SA	5 MA	2 MD	6 SD
Dom.	16.	Children should be allowed to go to any Sunday School their friends go to	5 SA	2 MA	4 MD	5 SD
Dom.	17.	No child should ever set his will against that of his parents	6 SA	6 MA	2 MD	4 SD
Dom.	18.		6 SA	4 MA	4 MD	3 SD
Dom.	19.	It is wicked for children to disobey their parents	6 SA	L <sub>1</sub>	L <sub>1</sub> MD	3 SD
Poss.	20.	A child should feel a deep sense of obligation always to act in accord with the wishes of his parents	6 SA			
Poss.	23.	Children should not be punished for disobedience	SA :			
Poss.	22.	Children who are gentlemanly or ladylike are preferable to those who are tomboys or "regular guys"	SA :	5 MA	3	3 SD
Dom.	23.	Strict discipline weakens a child's personality	SA :		4 MD	

Poss.	24.	Children should always be loyal to their parents above anyone else		3 MA		
Dom.	25.	temptations of religious beliefs other		6 MA		
Poss.	26.			3 MA		
Poss.	27.			3 MA		
Dom.	28.	Parents should never try to break a child's will		2 MA		
Dom.	29.	Children should not be required to take orders from parents	SA	5 MA	MD	SD SD
Dom.	30.			3 MA		
Ig.	31.	Children should not interrupt adult conversation		14 MA		
Ig.	32.	in planning the activities of the		2 MA		
Ig.	33•	Quiet children are much nicer than little chatterboxes		L; MA		
Dom.	34.	It is sometimes necessary for the parent to break the child's will				3 SD
Misc.	35.	Children usually know ahead of time whether or not parents will punish them for their actions				4 SD
Dom.	36.	Children resent discipline	5 SA	L <sub>4</sub> MA	3 MD	5 SD
Poss.	37•					4 SD
Dom.	38.	When the parent speaks, the child should obey	5 SA	MA.	MD	SD SD

Dom.	39.	Mild discipline is best	4 3 5 6 SA MA MD SD
Poss.	40.	The best child is one who shows lots of affection for his mother	6 5 3 4 SA MA MD SD
Dom.	41.	A child should be taught that his parents always know what is best	5 5 3 3 SA MA MD SD
Poss.	42.	It is better for children to play at home than to visit other children	6 4 4 3 SA MA ND SD
Dom.	43.	Most children should have more discipline than they get	6 4 3 2 SA MA MD SD
Dom.	114.	A child should do what he is told to do, without stopping to argue about it	6 4 3 4 SA MA MD SD
Dom.	45.	Children should fear their parents to some degree	6 5 4 3 SA MA MD SD
Poss.	46.	A child should always love his parents above everyone else	6 4 3 4 SA MA MD SD
Misc.	47.	Children who indulge in sex play become sex criminal	5 6 4 3 SA MA MD SD
Dom.	48.	Children should be allowed to make only minor decisions for themselves	5 5 3 3 SA MA MD SD
Dom.	49.	A child should always accept the decision of his parents	5 5 3 3 SA MA MD SD
Poss.	50.	Children who readily accept authority are much nicer than those who try to be dominant themselves	6 4 3 3 SA MA MD SD
Dom.	51.	Parents should always have complete control over the actions of their children	5 4 4 3 SA MA MD SD
Ig.	52.	When they can't have their own way, children usually try to bargain or reason with their parents	5 3 4 6 SA MA MD SD
Misc.	53.	The shy child is worse off than the one who masturbates	4 3 5 5 SA MA MD SD
Dom.	54.	Children should accept the religion of their parents without question	5 6 4 3 SA MA MD SD
Dom.	55.	The child should not question the commands of his parents	6 4 3 3 SA MA MD SD

Ig.	56.	Children who fight with their brothers and sisters are generally a source of great irritation and annoyance to their parents				6 SD
Dom.	57.	Children should not be punished for doing anything they have seen their parents do				6 SD
Ig.	58.	Jealousy is just a sign of selfishness	6 SA	3 MA	L4 MD	4 SD
Misc.	59.	Children should be taught the value of money early			3 MD	
Dom.	60.	A child should be punished for contradicting his parents			3 MD	
Dom.	61.	Children should have lots of parental supervision			3 MD	
Poss.	62.	A parent should see to it that his child plays only with the right kind of children			3 MD	
Poss.	63.	Babies are more fun for parents than older children are			L4 MD	
Poss.	64.	Parents should supervise a child's selection of playmates very carefully			2 MD	
Misc.	65.	No one should expect a child to respect parents who mag and scold			5 MD	
Dom.	66.	A child should always believe what his parents tell him			3 MD	
Dom.	67.	Children should usually be allowed to have their own way	6 SA		3 MD	
Misc.	68.	A good way to discipline a child is to cut down his allowance			3 MD	
Dom.	69.	Children should not be coaxed or petted into obedience			6 MD	
Dom.	70.	A child should be shamed into obedience if he won't listen to reason		3 MA		SD
Poss.	71.	In the long run it is better, after all, for a child to kept fairly close to his mother's apron strings			3 MD	

Dom.	72.	A good whipping now and then never hurt any child	6 4 3 2 SA MA MD SD
Misc.	73.	Masturbation is the worst bad habit that a child can form	6 5 4 3 SA MA MD SD
Poss.	74.	A child should never keep a secret from his parents	7 4 3 4 SA MA MD SD
Ig.	75.	Parents are generally too busy to answer all a child's questions	6 4 3 3 SA MA MD SD
Dom.	76.	The children who make the best adults are those who obey all the time	6 5 3 4 SA MA MD SD
Misc.	77.	It is important for children to have some kind of religious upbringing	6 3 2 2 SA MA MD SD
Ig.	78.	Children should be allowed to manage their affairs with little supervision from adults .	5 3 4 5 SA MA MD SD
Dom.	79.	Parents should never enter a child's room without permission	3 3 3 7 SA MA MD SD
Dom.	80.	It is best to give children the impression that parents have no faults	6 5 4 3 SA MA MD SD
Ig.	81,	Children should not annoy their parents with their unimportant problems	6 5 3 4 SA MA MD SD
Dom.	82.	Children should give their parents unquestioning obedience	6 4 4 2 SA MA MD SD
Misc.	83.	Sex is one of the greatest problems to be contended with in children	
Ig.	84.	Children should have as much freedom as their parents allow themselves	6 4 3 6 SA MA MD SD
Dom.	85.	Children should do nothing without the consent of their parents	6 5 3 3 SA MA MD SD