

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

PERMISSIVENESS IN CHILD REARING

A STUDY OF CHILD REARING  
PRACTICES OF FAMILIES SERVED  
BY FIVE WINNIPEG SOCIAL AGENCIES

BEING A REPORT OF A STUDY SUBMITTED IN  
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## ABSTRACT

This study was designed to determine which of non permissiveness, permissiveness or extreme permissiveness prevailed in the child rearing practices of infant feeding, toilet training and sex training of the families who are clients of one or more of the five major social agencies serving families in Winnipeg proper.

The study was based on data obtained in face to face interviews with a sample group of eighty-three families, domiciled in Winnipeg proper, who had living in the home a physically mentally normal child in the six to ten age group and the mother who had reared the child from birth. The researchers sought to learn not only the level of permissiveness in the child rearing practices of infant feeding, toilet training and sex training but also whether this varied with the educational level, age and ethnicity of the mother.

The findings revealed that in each of the areas of infant feeding, toilet training and sex training the majority of mothers were other than permissive, in that the largest percentage in each instance comprised those who were non permissive, extremely permissive and inconsistent. The level of permissiveness varied with the educational level of the mother and to a lesser extent with the ethnic origin but did not vary with the age of the mother. The most striking finding of the study was the marked degree of inconsistency in the child rearing practices of the families studied.



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CHAPTER I  
INTRODUCTION

The profession of Social Work has become aware and concerned about the lack of research which has been done in relation to the clients of and the social agencies themselves which are thought of in terms of public welfare, that is, the social agencies servicing the largest part of our social welfare clientele.<sup>1</sup> Thus the research project assigned by the School of Social Work of the University of Manitoba to the students taking their Master of Social Work Degree in the scholastic year from September 1963 to May 1964, was designed to obtain some specific knowledge about the functioning of the families who were at that time the clients of one or more of the five major social agencies serving families in the City of Winnipeg proper.<sup>2</sup>

The topic of the research project was: The

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<sup>1</sup>Eveline Burns, "What's Wrong with Public Welfare," Social Service Review, Vol. XXXVI, No. 2 (June, 1962), p. 120.

<sup>2</sup>These are: The City of Winnipeg Public Welfare Department; The Winnipeg Regional Office (Mother's Allowance Branch) Province of Manitoba Department of Welfare; The Children's Aid Society of Winnipeg; The Family Bureau of Greater Winnipeg; The Winnipeg Family Court. Henceforth these will be referred to as the five major social agencies serving families in the City of Winnipeg proper.

investigation of the economic practices, kinship relationships and child rearing practices of the families served by the major social agencies serving families in Winnipeg proper, how these vary and with what these variations seem to be associated.

The study here being reported was done by fifteen of the students who chose to do a descriptive study designed to determine which of non permissiveness, permissiveness or extreme permissiveness prevailed in the child-rearing practices of the families who were clients of one or more of the five major social agencies serving families in the City of Winnipeg proper, how this varied and with what this variation seemed to be associated.

This section of the project was chosen by the group because of interest in children and their development into happy adequate adults. Our society which greatly values independence and initiative is disturbed by the possibility that the assistance given through social welfare programs will cause or increase dependency in the recipients.<sup>3</sup>

As social workers we know that there are many kinds of dependency, among them emotional, physical and economic dependency. We know too that in many situations the dependency factors, emotional, physical or economic, are beyond

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<sup>3</sup>Helen Harris Perlman, "Are We Creating Dependency," Public Welfare in Indiana, (December, 1951), pp. 9-14.

the control of the client or worker but it is a fact that social agencies often list several generations of the same families among their clients.<sup>4</sup>

Since it is not within our scope to study agency functions and since we know emotional dependency defined in the psychiatric dictionary<sup>5</sup> as, a form of behavior which suggests an inability to make decisions and a marked inclination to lean on others for advice, guidance and support, to be the type of dependency which social workers most often see in their clients, even in those who are not physically or economically dependent, we decided to study a cause of emotional dependency known to us through our study of Freudian based psychosocial developmental theory, namely, child-rearing practices.<sup>6</sup>

This theory which we accept and assume to be sound teaches that personality structure is affected both by environmental influence and by constitutional endowment; that beginning at birth there are definite progressive developmental stages with emotional needs and tasks particular

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<sup>4</sup>This has come to the writer's attention through her personal contact with public assistance and child welfare agencies in both Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

<sup>5</sup>L. E. Hunsie, R. J. Campbell, Psychiatric Dictionary (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 198.

<sup>6</sup>See for example Erik H. Erikson's "Identity and the Life Cycle," Psychological Issues, Vol I, No.1 (1959). Note particularly Chap. ii which covers the theory outlined in my next paragraph.

to each; and that, child rearing practices either in the direction of expecting too much too soon or expecting too little from the child may cause dependency and/or a hostile attitude toward authority in the personality of the child who will later become an adult. Theory also teaches that the process of child rearing is demanding and is best handled by a mature adult. Therefore we were interested in knowing the kind of child rearing practices going on in the homes of our clients and whether according to the tenets of Freudian based psychosocial development theory these fell into the attitudinal category of permissive, non-permissive or extremely permissive on the part of the parents.

The researchers realized that they could measure attitudes only as they were reflected in actions, and that there is a continuum involved in this measurement with a wide range of shading toward and away from each locus on the scale. However we have had to adopt arbitrary points, which we have chosen to call non-permissive, permissive and extremely permissive, the optimum being permissive, so that we could classify actionally reflected parental attitudes and draw conclusions.

Though it may not be possible to alter the dependency patterns of many of the adults on our present case-loads, this information can be valuable as a guide to social workers in their present casework with parents, and as an

indication of the great need for preparental counselling. The latter is in line with the profession's present accent on its recent realization of the necessity for it to adopt a preventive as well as a remedial role in society.

This study then focused on non-permissiveness, permissiveness and extreme permissiveness as observed in the child rearing practices of infant feeding, toilet training and sex training, which, according to the developmental stages delineated by psychosocial developmental theory, occur within the first six years of the child's life. These particular areas of child rearing were selected because the theory upon which our study is based indicates that these are very important in relation to the promotion of dependence or independence in the personality.<sup>7</sup>

We know from our theory that the time when the baby's dependency needs are greatest is during the first year of life. At this time love and food are equated and the need for each, in terms of the future personality characteristic of dependency, is more significant than it will ever be again. If the baby's needs for food, love, and comfort are not met during the first year of life he will always be over dependent, over demanding and mistrustful. Thus the importance of infant feeding practices.

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<sup>7</sup>This material and that in the three paragraphs which immediately follow is based primarily upon the work of Erikson, Op. Cit. For further elaboration of this theory see also Chap.ii of this study.

During the toilet training period the first demands for conformity to society's ways are made upon the child. The child learns that though he is not as omnipotent as once he thought he was, he can say no, but only with some loss to himself. If a battle between parent and child ensues if the child does not choose to conform in order to win his parent's love, or if he does conform but only because of fear, his future personality will be shadowed with rebelliousness toward authority and with the inability to confidently make a decision for himself.

Sex training though not so overtly associated with dependency was selected because the proper handling of the child's needs and problems during this the genital stage of his development enables the child to make the identification proper to his or her sex, and thus to develop into an integrated mature personality.

In this study the sample included only those families who had living in the home a physically, mentally normal child in the six to ten age range and the mother who had raised the child from birth. The questions were asked of the mother in regard to a particular child and where there were several children in this age group all questions were asked in regard to the child closest to age six years. The child was accepted as physically and mentally normal if considered as such by the mother.

We realized that our study was limited by the fact

that we could not take into account the effect on parents of social casework services presently being or previously received. We realized too that many conditions and variables affect the parent's reaction to the child's behavior, such as, the financial situation in the home; the physical and mental health of the parent; the degree of maturity of the parent; the presence or absence of the father; the quality of the emotional relationship between the parents and between the parent and child; the size of the family; the ordinal position of the child; the sex of the child and many others. The fact that all these variables could not have been individually considered is a limitation to this study regretted by this researcher. In this study then these factors are assumed to be constant.

Chosen as variable factors affecting child rearing practices within the scope of this study were the educational level, age and ethnicity of the parent. It was thought that mothers with a higher level of education are more likely to have read some articles or books on child rearing by popular authorities, such as Dr. Benjamin Spock.<sup>8</sup> Thus they have some knowledge at least tinged with valid

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<sup>8</sup>Dr. Benjamin Spock, Baby and Child Care, (Cardinal Giant Edition; Montreal:Pocket Books of Canada, Limited, 37th Printing, 1961); or, any other of his writings which are featured in women's magazines such as the Ladies Home Journal, etc.



current child psychology. It is also generally accepted that education provides opportunity for ego development. Studies, which will be particularly mentioned in the following chapter, reveal that the lower the level of education the more authoritarian the parent, and that, there has been since World War II a general increase in permissiveness among parents as well as in the general level of education achieved.<sup>9</sup>

Age was considered a significant factor because our theory base teaches that there is an appropriate stage in life for the rearing of children which comes after the turbulent adolescent period and before the near onset of the menopausal change in women. It is true that perfect permissiveness is not expected in parents but generally speaking during the years of young adulthood, approximately from the early twenties until the late thirties, the mother emotionally and physically is best suited to the task of child rearing. The immature, upset, adolescent parent, often little better than a child herself, with many needs and confusions of her own, will tend to reject the child born to her at this time and to be non-permissive with the young child who makes so many

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<sup>9</sup>M. Zuckerman, B. B. Barrett, R. M. Braziel, "The Parental Attitudes of Parents of Child Guidance Cases," Child Development, Vol. XXXI (1960) pp. 401-417; E. E. Macoby, R.K. Gibbs, "Methods of Child Rearing in Two Social Classes," Readings in Child Development, ed. W. E. Martin, C. B. Stendler (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1954), pp. 380-396.

demands on her. Whereas, the older parent, especially the parent close to or within the menopausal age who becomes pregnant, will just as likely reject the child but this rejection may be expressed either by being non permissive or by being extremely permissive. In each instance the improper handling of the child's dependency needs will result in excessive dependency and/or a hostile attitude toward authority in the resultant personality.

Our knowledge of sociology indicated culture as an important determinant of child rearing practices. The concept of culture is complex and includes not only ethnic origin but also socio-economic status and length of residence in Canada. Since it was assumed that the families in the sample group were in the same socio-economic class, and since it was thought impossible to hypothesize in terms of each ethnic group, it was decided to note the ethnic background of the mother to see if any significant differences in the child rearing practices of the various ethnic groups could be observed. It was acknowledged that the stress factor of acculturation might affect the parents in their child rearing causing them to be either non-permissive or extremely permissive rather than permissive in their child rearing practices.

From the reading done, the thinking done and the discussions held, the deductions and decisions stated were achieved from which it was hypothesized that:

A greater proportion of the families studied would

show non-permissiveness or extreme permissiveness rather than permissiveness in their child rearing practices and this would vary with the educational level, age and ethnic origin of the parent.

1. A greater proportion of the families studied would show non-permissiveness or extreme permissiveness rather than permissiveness in their feeding practices of their children under two years of age.
2. A greater proportion of the families studied would show non-permissiveness or extreme permissiveness rather than permissiveness in their toilet training practices.
3. A greater proportion of the families studied would show non-permissiveness or extreme permissiveness rather than permissiveness in the sex training of their children.
4. The proportion of the families who were permissive would increase as the educational level of the mother increased.
5. Among the families studied who fell into the non-permissive and extremely permissive groups the greater proportion of mothers would be found to be younger or older than the mothers in the permissive group.

Throughout the study non-permissiveness meant making the demands for self-control placed upon the child greater than what could be expected of him at his developmental level. Permissiveness meant making the demands for self-control placed upon the child to correspond with his developmental level. Extreme permissiveness meant making the demands for

self-control placed upon the child less than what could be expected of him at his developmental level.

Infant feeding practice was considered as the reactions of the parents toward the behavior of the child relating to the child's intake of food. Toilet training practice was considered as the reactions of the parents toward the behavior of the child relating to his transition from the involuntary to the voluntary mode of elimination. Sex training practice referred to the reactions of parents to the inquisitiveness and the masturbatory activities of children aged three to six years.

There were assumptions underlying this study, namely, as has been mentioned already, the assumption that the Freudian based theory of psychosocial development is valid; that non-permissiveness, permissiveness and extreme permissiveness on the part of the parents exist in child rearing practices and can be measured; that our focus on the child rearing practices of infant feeding, toilet training and sex training would reveal the parental attitude as non-permissive, permissive or extremely permissive. We assumed also that the personalities of the interviewers would not significantly affect the responses elicited from the sample group and that the expressed responses corresponded to the actual behavior of the parents. We assumed also that most of the families studied were at the same socio-economic level or that any variations were not significant to this study.

Lastly we assumed that our sample was representative of the client population served by the major family agencies of Winnipeg but not necessarily representative of the general population.

The method of our study was to draw a stratified random sample of over three hundred families from the caseloads of the five aforementioned social agencies of the City of Winnipeg Proper and in January 1964 to interview the mother in each family to determine her age, educational level, ethnic origin and how she had proceeded with the infant feeding, toilet training and sex training of one child now between the ages of six and ten years. The families were individually interviewed and a specially designed schedule administered in order to secure the specific information required since it was considered impossible to obtain this from agency records.

The response to each question answered was rated as non-permissive, permissive or extremely permissive. The schedules were rated as non-permissive, permissive, extremely permissive, or inconsistent for each of the three child rearing practices and then globally on the bases of the ratings of their three sections. The global ratings were then charted in regard to the independent variables of age, education and ethnicity of the mother.

It is hoped that the findings of this research group will be some value to the family agencies in Winnipeg Proper

and that it will stimulate further research in this most important area namely, child-rearing practices. A review of the background literature follows in Chapter II.

CHAPTER II  
BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The children of today are the adults of tomorrow, thus the future of a society to a great extent rests in its children. This obvious truth is one of the reasons why children and their needs have been and are the centre of much interest, concern and research including this study.

From the writings of such authors as Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedek and Erik Erikson we know that child-rearing practices differ in different societies. Erikson writes:

There is some intrinsic wisdom some unconscious planning and much superstition in the seemingly arbitrary varieties of child training: What is 'good for the child', what may happen to him, depends on what he is supposed to become and where.<sup>1</sup>

In the context of the above it is necessary for us to reflect a moment on our present society and its values. We live in a Judeo-Christian, democratic, urban-industrial society. These epithets tell us much about the general values of our society. They tell us that it recognizes

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<sup>1</sup>Erik H. Erikson, "Identity and the Life Cycle," Psychological Issues, Vol. I, No.1 (1959), p.58.

God, values religion, and sees man as an intelligent being capable of knowing and loving. It believes that each human being has worth and dignity and should not be exploited. It believes too in man's ability to use and control inanimate matter, and through science and technology to bring about progress. Achievement and success have priority value and necessitate that man has personal characteristics of independence and initiative.<sup>2</sup> Our society regards the family as its basic social institution which has as its essential functions the procreation, the rearing and the induction into society of children.<sup>3</sup> Freudian psychology, on which this study is theoretically essentially based, opened the way for all the further insights into the personality of man and its development which have occurred since the turn of the century. A major one of these insights has been that:

The most important components of personality, those on which later progress depend, come into being in the give-and-take of family life, and that many of the customs, ideas, beliefs, and values of the society are transmitted to children by their parents. . . . It is in and through the family that the main components of a child's personality develop.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Harold L. Wilensky, and Charles N. Lebeaux, Industrial Society and Social Welfare, (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1958), pp. 33-40; A Healthy Personality for Every Child, A Digest of the Fact Finding Report to the Mid-Century White House Conference on Children and Youth, (Health Publications Institute, Inc., 1951), pp. 13 and 16.

<sup>3</sup>Helen Leland Witmer, and Ruth Kotinsky, Personality in the Making, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), pp. 174 and 177.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 174.



Though we know there are many illegitimate births in our society today Witmer and Kotinsky say the fact remains that:

The value of the family in providing a setting of supporting affection is increasingly evident as knowledge about child development grows. To foster and sustain a developing sense of individuality and worth, children require not only physical care but also love, response and personalized attention. For this task the family has advantages over any other social institution.<sup>5</sup>

Witmer and Kotinsky note that the significant family unit consists of husband, wife and minor children which unit is originated by marriage. Husband and wife are expected to have separated themselves physically and to a great extent emotionally from their own families and it is their duty to bring up their children to do the same, thus, children are early urged toward independence.<sup>6</sup>

Erikson says that marriage should occur only after a boy and girl have achieved a sense of "intimacy" by which he means capacity for psychological, interpersonal mutuality as well as sexual intimacy.<sup>7</sup> Parenthood, however, requires further personality development and the acquisition of "generativity" which implies the wish "to combine their personalities and energies in the production and care of common offspring".<sup>8</sup> Witmer and Kotinsky call this interest in producing and caring for children of one's own

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p.178.    <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p.186 and p.197.

<sup>7</sup>Erik H. Erikson, Op.Cit., p.95;    <sup>8</sup>Ibid., p.97

"parental sense" and say its "essential element is the desire to nourish and nurture in its essence what has been produced."<sup>9</sup> Thus we see that the conditions necessary for the optimum performance of the parental role imply emotional maturity on the part of the parents.

Freudian psychology teaches that the human offspring comes into the world completely immature and dependent but with innate capacity for growth and development. This development, commonly called psychosexual or psychosocial (these terms are used almost interchangeably), takes place in stages and is influenced by constitutional and environmental factors. The adults, hopefully the parents, to whose care the child is committed are to a great extent responsible for the resultant personality of the child.<sup>10</sup> Josselyn writes:

It is in childhood that the gradual evolution of the personality should take place, culminating in emotional maturity coincident in time with physical and social maturity.<sup>11</sup>

Erikson, who out of a Freudian orientation, writes so ably about child development says:

. . . it is important to realize that in the sequence of his most personal experiences the healthy child, given a reasonable amount of guidance, can be trusted to obey inner laws of development, laws which create a succession of potentialities for significant interaction with those

<sup>9</sup>Witmer and Kotinsky, Op. Cit., pp. 23-24.

<sup>10</sup>Stuart M. Finch, Fundamentals of Child Psychiatry, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1960), pp. 11 and 13.

<sup>11</sup>Irene M. Josselyn, Psychosocial Development of Children, (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1948), p.19.

who tend him. While such interaction varies from culture to culture, it must remain within the proper rate and the proper sequence which govern the growth of a personality as well as that of an organism. Personality can be said to develop according to steps predetermined in the human organism's readiness to be driven toward, to be aware of, and to interact with, a widening social radius, beginning with the dim image of a mother and ending with mankind, or at any rate that segment of mankind which 'counts' in the particular individual's life.<sup>12</sup>

Erikson designates the first component of a healthy personality to be "a sense of basic trust which is an attitude toward oneself and the world derived from the first year of life."<sup>13</sup> This first developmental stage, sometimes called the Oral Stage, has as its task the acquisition of this basic sense of one's own trustworthiness which is accomplished largely as the result of the quality of mothering the child receives, which is evidenced at this time, for the most part, in the feeding of the babe. The baby's needs for love and food are equated, inseparable, and of tremendous importance in regard to future personality. Erikson writes:

. . . . the firm establishment of enduring patterns for the balance of basic trust over basic mistrust is the first task of the budding personality and therefore first of all a task for maternal care. But it must be said that the amount of trust derived from earliest infantile experience does not seem to depend on absolute quantities of food or demonstrations of love but rather on the quality of the maternal relationship.<sup>14</sup>

Josselyn writes:

The early dependency period is of real significance in terms of the ultimate personality pattern. Lack of gratification during this period does not result in growth but rather in a continual search for satisfactions that are not forthcoming. . . . Inadequate

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<sup>12</sup>Erikson, Op. Cit., p. 52.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 55-56. <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

gratification of the early dependency needs tends to arrest the individual at that level.<sup>15</sup>

Infants, as has been indicated, have their dependency needs met first on a physical basis. If the parent gratifies these physical needs and at the same time gives an emotional warmth of response that is broader than the mere physical experience the child gradually divorces the physical from the emotional and develops the capacity to receive love independent of physical gratification.<sup>16</sup>

By the above discussion and quotations I hope I have both reviewed some of the literature and established the relationship between society's value of independence, the source of dependency as a personality trait and the choice of maternal attitudes as reflected in infant feeding practices as a focus for research by this group.

The second stage of the child's personality development which usually occurs in the period from one to three years has as its task the development of autonomy and centers in the child-rearing practice of toilet training. Erikson says that the greatest significance of this stage lies in the maturation of the muscle system and the child's consequent ability to coordinate the conflicting action patterns of holding on and letting go which endows him with an autonomous will.<sup>17</sup> The child's testing ground for this newly acquired power is the toilet training process which is society's first imposition of socialization upon him. Erikson says if the training is

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<sup>15</sup>Irene M. Josselyn, Op.Cit. p.41.      <sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>17</sup>Erik Erikson, Op.Cit., p.66.

too rigid or too early, thus, robbing the child of his attempt to gradually control his bowels and other functions by his own choice, he is faced with defeat and rebellion ensues.<sup>18</sup> During the training period the child must be helped by the parent to achieve self-control without loss of self-esteem from which comes a lasting sense of autonomy and pride. From parental overcontrol and a sense of muscular and anal impotence, of loss of self-control, come a lasting sense of shame and doubt.<sup>19</sup> The muscle control Erikson speaks of does not occur and affect the sphincter muscles until the child is walking well.<sup>20</sup>

In regard to the child's development of a sense of shame and doubt Erikson raises a further point when he says, "much of the indignity and uncertainty which is aroused in children is a consequence of the parents' frustrations in marriage, in work and in citizenship."<sup>21</sup> Symonds expresses in a positive way this same idea when he says, "to give the growing child security parents should be stable, happy, individuals, free from worry and anxiety, who have a task in life and a respected place in the community."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>20</sup>Irene M. Josselyn, Op. Cit., p. 52.

<sup>21</sup>Erik Erikson, Op. Cit., p. 73.

<sup>22</sup>Percival M. Symonds, The Dynamics of Parent Child Relationships, (New York: Teacher's College, Columbia University, 1949), p. 2.

In regard to the successful resolution of the conflict of this developmental stage Witmer and Kotinsky write:

Those who would guide the growing child wisely, then will avoid shaming him senselessly and avoid causing him to doubt that essentially he is a person of worth. They will be firm and tolerant with him so that he can rejoice in being a person of independence and can grant independence to others.<sup>23</sup>

Erikson says:

The sense of autonomy which arises, or should arise in the second stage of childhood is fostered by a handling of the small individual which expresses a sense of rightful dignity and lawful independence on the part of the parents and which gives him the confident expectation that the kind of autonomy fostered in childhood will not be frustrated later.<sup>24</sup>

Thus in the light of their concern about emotional dependency as a personality characteristic of the clients of social agencies the researchers involved in this study selected for their investigation of the second stage of child development the important area of toilet training.

The third stage known as the genital stage occurring approximately during the three to six year span of life necessitates that the child resolve a painful psychological conflict, identify with the parent of his own sex and emerge with a sense of initiative as a basis for a high yet realistic sense of ambition and independence.<sup>25</sup> Erikson further describes this stage when he writes:

<sup>23</sup>Witmer and Kotinsky, Op.Cit., pp.13-14.

<sup>24</sup>Erik Erikson, Op.Cit., p.73.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 74 and 75.

This is also the stage of infantile sexual curiosity, genital excitability, and occasional pre-occupation and overconcern with sexual matters. This 'genitality' is of course, rudimentary, a mere promise of things to come; often it is not particularly noticeable as such. If not specifically provoked into precocious manifestation by especially strict and pointed prohibitions ('if you touch it, the doctor will cut it off') or special customs (such as sex play in groups), it is apt to lead to no more than a series of fascinating experiences which soon become frightening and pointless enough to be repressed.<sup>26</sup>

The child in the genital stage is bound to ask questions about sex and birth and when these occur the experts are in agreement that the questions should be answered only as they come up, and then, frankly, truthfully, patiently and without embarrassment.<sup>27</sup> In this stage then the child:

develops the prerequisites for masculine and feminine initiative, that is, for the selection of social goals and perseverance in approaching them. Thus the stage is all set for entrance into life, except that life must first be school life.<sup>28</sup>

Witmer and Kotinsky express the same idea when they say:

If during this preschool period the child can get some anticipatory sense of the various roles and functions that he can perform as an adult, he will be ready to progress joyfully to the next stage, in which he will find pleasurable accomplishment in activities less fraught with fantasy and fear.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p.78; O. Spurgeon English and Gerald H. J. Pearson, Emotional Problems of Living, Avoiding the Neurotic Pattern, (Revised Enlarged Edition; New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1955), p. 89.

<sup>28</sup>Erik Erikson, Op. Cit., p.78.

<sup>29</sup>Witmer and Kotinsky, Op. Cit., p.16.



Parental responses in regard to the normal sexual curiosity and masturbatory activity of this stage of child development was also selected by this research group as part of their study.

This research group were interested in determining the parental attitude rather than the specific child-rearing practice, because of the import of this attitude. Symonds points out that:

Parental attitudes may also be relative to the particular function involved. Some mothers may be especially rejecting or overanxious with regard to feeding. Others may wage the battle around toilet and cleanliness training. Other mothers will be specially sensitive to manifestations of sexual behavior and will repress curiosity or autoerotic practices. . . . Sometimes the parental attitude may be limited to a specific function, at other times the child's total self may be involved.<sup>30</sup>

This would lead us to expect some inconsistency in the reactions and attitudes of parents during child-rearing.

However Symonds summed up the principles on which the researchers based their approach when he wrote:

All the signs seem to be that basic personality is usually, if not always, formed through human relationships within the family circle. Subsequent experience in casework has strengthened the hypothesis that a definite relationship exists between parental attitudes and the way parents behave toward a child and that child's own attitudes and behavior.<sup>31</sup>

In this study the variables selected for investigation

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<sup>30</sup>Symonds, Op. Cit., p.8

<sup>31</sup>Percival M. Symonds, The Psychology of Parent-Child Relationships, (D. Appleton - Century Company, Inc., 1939) p.54.



included the age and the education of the mother, and the cultural factor of ethnicity, particularly in the light of stress involved in acculturation. In cross classification these are held to be independent of each other.

From what we know about the tasks and the turbulence of the adolescent period<sup>32</sup>; the necessary attainment of generativity for successful performance of the parental role as set forth by Erikson<sup>33</sup>; and our knowledge of the physical and emotional changes which take place in a woman at the time of her menopause, in addition to the expected changes which occur in her social role<sup>34</sup>; we have postulated that very young and rather older mothers are rejecting of child-bearing and child-rearing. We anticipated that the very young mothers express their rejection in non-permissiveness whereas the older mothers resort to the more defensive form of rejection namely extreme permissiveness.

Sears and his associates in their extensive study Patterns of Child Rearing, found that younger mothers were more severe with their children. They were more irritable quicker to punish, more likely to express an underlying feeling of hostility toward their children. They suggest the reasons for this maternal attitude of severity and the

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<sup>32</sup>Stuart M. Finch, Op. Cit., Chap. xv.

<sup>33</sup>Erik Erikson, Op. Cit., p.97.

<sup>34</sup>English and Pearson, Op. Cit., Chap. xiv.

resultant behavior to be due to a feeling of loss and regret that the glamorous days of courtship were over, a general sense of frustration with their life situation and a lack of experience and maturity in interpersonal relations.<sup>35</sup>

Zuckerman et al in their study found a significant drop in authoritarian controlling factors in the thirty-five to thirty-nine age group relative to the younger and older group.<sup>36</sup>

There was quite a bit of evidence available in the literature in support of our hypothesis that mothers of lesser education are more severe in their attitudes towards their children. Zuckerman et al, Porter, Platt and his associates, Maccoby and Gibbs all found that there was a relationship between the educational level of the mother and her attitudes toward her children.<sup>37</sup> Mothers of lesser education tend to be less accepting, more authoritarian

<sup>35</sup>Robert R. Sears, Eleanor E. Maccoby, Harry Levin, Patterns of Child Rearing, (New York and Evanston: Row Peterson and Company, 1957), p. 437.

<sup>36</sup>M. Zuckerman, B. H. Barrett, R. M. Brazier, "The Parental Attitudes of Parents of Child Guidance Cases," Child Development, Vol. XXXI, (1960), pp. 401-417.

<sup>37</sup>M. Zuckerman et al, Ibid.: B. M. Porter, "The Relationship Between Marital Adjustment and Parental Acceptance," Journal of Home Economics, Vol. XLVII, pp. 157-164; H. Platt, G. Jurgensen, S. P. Chorost, "Comparison of Childrearing Attitudes of Mothers and Fathers of Emotionally Disturbed Adolescents," Child Development, Vol. XXXIII, (1962), pp. 117-122; E. E. Maccoby, R. K. Gibbs, "Methods of Childrearing in Two Social Classes," Readings in Child Development ed. W. E. Martin, Celia B. Stendler, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1954), pp. 380-396.

suppressive or hostile toward their children. Rapp, in his study of "Childrearing Attitudes of Mothers in Germany and the United States," through his finding that the German mothers, who had significantly less education than the American mothers, were consistently more authoritarian than American mothers in their child rearing, drew the conclusion that the more education the mother has the less controlling are her child rearing attitudes.<sup>38</sup> Zuckerman also notes that the more highly educated mothers are likely to be more familiar with and accepting of the current democratic permissive childrearing ideals and techniques put forth by psychologists and educators, because of their exposure to this through schools and the communication media particularly women's magazines.<sup>39</sup>

The last independent variable included in our study was culture in the terms of ethnicity and stress of acculturation. Apler in his study "The Influence of Ethnic and Class Subcultures on Child Care" says this:

Practically no anthropologist believes culture moulds children directly into fixed invariable patterns of behavior. Most agree that culture as an elaborate and perhaps the chief adaptive mechanism of whole groups of people embodies a considerable range of learned patterns of traditional behavior in which class and status variants in child care are only two of a series

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<sup>38</sup>Don W. Rapp, "Childrearing Attitudes of Mothers in Germany and the United States," Child Development, Vol. XXXII (1961), pp. 669-678.

<sup>39</sup>Zuckerman et al, Op. Cit., p. 414.

of significant differences.<sup>40</sup>

Sears, Maccoby and Levin say that cultural factors operating in the life of the mother are to some degree responsible for her child rearing practices.<sup>41</sup> Eric Larrabee in "Childhood in Twentieth Century America" writes that "child training is an expression of culture, just as much as sonnets or postage stamps".<sup>42</sup> The Fact Finding Report to the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth has the following to say in regard to culture:

Culture is powerful and pervasive, changing the expression of our biological drives, affecting our thinking, our emotions, and our perceptions.<sup>43</sup>

As did the writers of the aforementioned report, the researchers involved in this study here being reported felt that the cultures (in terms of ethnic origin) within the City of Winnipeg were too numerous to be described singly in terms of hypotheses though we wished to recognize this factor as important and decided to note any significant variations between the different ethnic groups.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>M. K. Opler, "The Influence of Ethnic and Class Subcultures on Child Care," Social Problems, Vol. III, (1955), p.13.

<sup>41</sup>Sears, Maccoby and Levin, Op.Cit., p. 12.

<sup>42</sup>Eric Larrabee, "Childhood in Twentieth Century America," The Nation's Children, ed. Eli Ginzberg, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 203.

<sup>43</sup>Op.Cit., p.61. <sup>44</sup>Ibid., p.64; M.K.Opler, Op.Cit. p.16.

Opler also says that though the cultural background of child care practices influences the individual through his life course and implants in him such notions as those of duty, obligation and sexual role, all these phenomena are open to the effects of acculturation.<sup>45</sup> One of the effects of acculturation is the stress it often engenders in those undergoing the process and this writer believes that this stress felt by the parents will be reflected as non-permissiveness in their child rearing practices.

Kuhn in "American Families Today: Development and Differentiation of Types" writes:

It is obvious that the family always exists in some social setting and in some kind of cultural context. Sometimes the family is so inclusive that it is almost coterminous with its society and culture; in other instances, and particularly under the influence of urbanization, industrialization, and specialization, it becomes much less important within the scope of the larger whole.<sup>46</sup>

To thoroughly cover the available literature on families, children and child rearing would be a formidable task and not within the opportunity of this writer. I have attempted to review my readings which were done of necessity rather selectively in the course of this research project. There is one further aspect of this

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p.18

<sup>46</sup>Manford H. Kuhn, "American Families Today: Development and Differentiation of Types," Family, Marriage and Parenthood, ed. Howard Becker and Ruben Hill, (Second Edition; Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1955), p.167.

study upon which I would like to comment and in so doing make mention of some studies which have at least some kinship with this one.

This study chose to focus on non-permissiveness, permissiveness and extreme permissiveness as reflected in the child rearing practices of infant feeding, toilet training and sex training. There have been many other studies with a somewhat similar approach to child rearing at least to the extent that they too in some way refer to permissiveness and take into account the same areas of child rearing. Sears, Maccoby and Levin's comprehensive study Patterns of Child Rearing previously referred to by this writer has become a most important text on child rearing. Though they stated their findings as somewhat inconclusive they did find evidence in favor of permissive child rearing.

In G. A. Milton's study of forty-four parental child rearing behaviors the five dimensions which emerged as stable dimensions relevant to development theory were in line with the thinking on which this study is based. These were non-permissiveness, general family interaction, warmth of mother child relationship, responsible child training orientation, aggressiveness and punitiveness.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>G. A. Milton - "A Factor Analytic Study of Child-Rearing Behavior," Child Development, Vol. XXIX, (September, 1958), p. 381-392.

Calvin Settlage in his study "The Values of Limits in Child Rearing" says:

In general, we know that rigid child training tends to beget either a stifling of initiative or rebellion. We also know that the child-rearing philosophy generally described by the term 'permissiveness' arose out of protest against rigid and harsh discipline. What I wish to convey in the term 'setting limits' is the concept of 'freedom within limits'.<sup>48</sup>

This "freedom within limits" is I think the meaning of the permissiveness urged by such experts as Erikson and Josselyn. It is in this sense that permissiveness is used in this study.

In Chapter III the method by which the study was conducted and the findings analysed will be presented.

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<sup>48</sup>Calvin F. Settlage, "The Values of Limits in Child Rearing," Children, Vol. V, (September, 1958), p.176.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

To secure the data for this study a stratified systematic random sample was drawn from the cases active in December 1963 with the agencies previously listed.<sup>1</sup> In January 1964 the sample group were individually interviewed for the purpose of completing a specially designed schedule. Each interviewer administered to those he interviewed the schedules of the three groups involved in the total research project.

The schedule pertaining to the investigation of child rearing practices, that is, this section of the project, could only be administered to the families where there was a mother and a physically mentally normal child in the six to ten age group, who had been raised from birth by the mother present.

A sample population of 2,701 resulted when the families not domiciled in Winnipeg Proper were eliminated from the total client family populations of the five agencies. From this a project sample was drawn by the method of stratified systematic random sampling which was considered the simplest way of obtaining a statistically valid sample. The total sample was set at a figure considered large enough to be representative of the client population yet within the limits of the research-

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<sup>1</sup>See the footnote on Page 1 of this study.



chers opportunity to interview. Of the total sample drawn approximately 50% was from the two public agencies and 50% was from the three private agencies involved in the study. The sample began at 369 of which 146, or one-ninth of the agency's sample population of 1,310, were from The City of Winnipeg Public Welfare Department; 70, or one-sixth of the agency's sample population of 420, were from the Children's Aid Society of Winnipeg; 45, or one-ninth of the agency's sample population of 395, were from The Winnipeg Regional Office (Mother's Allowance Branch) Province of Manitoba Department of Welfare; 63, or one-seventh of the agency's sample population of 441, were from Winnipeg Family Court; and 45, or one-third of the agency's sample population of 135, were from The Family Bureau of Greater Winnipeg. Of the total sample drawn, 54 were known to be childless thus at their worker's request were eliminated and not invited to participate; 62 could not be located; and 77 refused to take part. Of the resultant sample group of 176, 93 did not have a child in the six to ten age group reared from birth by the mother present in the home, thus, the total sample secured by the group researching child rearing practices was 83.

The questions of the schedule were developed out of the theory on which this study is based with the assumption already stated that this theory is valid, that all children pass through the same developmental stages and have certain basic needs which are best handled in certain ways.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>2</sup>See Chapter ii of this study.

questions in regard to infant feeding, toilet training and sex training were framed as simply as possible and aimed at the aspects of these developmental periods which are theoretically considered most significant in terms of dependence and independence in the later personality. The open ended questions used were designed to elicit responses which would reveal the underlying maternal attitude as well as the particular child rearing practice involved without the interviewer leading the interviewee. A preamble to each of the three sections of the child rearing schedule was drawn up to assist the interviewer in placing the interviewee at ease, thus, to secure more accurate responses. (See Appendix A).

In administering the schedule a casework-like approach was to be used and the questions were to be read as written. Those who were to administer the schedule were instructed in its use.

The schedule was tested by means of a pilot project conducted in December 1963 when, from a total project sample of 45, 30 schedules pertaining to child rearing practices were obtained. After examination of these some of the questions were rephrased to achieve greater clarity of meaning.

A limitation to this study was recognized in that it was deemed necessary to limit the number of questions because of the length of time involved for both the interviewer and

interviewee in completing the three schedules of the total research project. Further limitations were imposed in that the child rearing schedule was administered by persons other than those doing this particular study and by the factor of the distance in time from the events the mothers were being asked to describe, which distance does, at least in some cases, cause inaccurate recall of the affect associated with the event.

The data was analyzed in the light of working definitions set up so that the responses to the questions of each section could be classified as permissive, non permissive or extremely permissive. These working definitions were as follows:

#### Infant Feeding

1. Permissive infant feeding meant feeding the child according to a flexible schedule; allowing the child to eat between meals but not to impair his appetite for regular meals; encouraging the child to eat at meal time but not forcing him to eat; encouraging the better performance in the handling of food and indicating disapproval in a non-punitive manner when food was deliberately spilled.
2. Non permissive infant feeding meant rigidly adhering to a schedule; never feeding the child between meals; forcing the child to eat at mealtime; and punishing the child for spilling.
3. Extremely permissive infant feeding meant feeding the

infant whenever he cries; feeding the child whenever he wanted to eat without regard to mealtime; being indifferent if the child refused to eat at mealtime; and ignoring the child when he spilled food.

### Toilet Training

1. In the toilet training process we considered the mother to be permissive if she began toilet training at the time the child was walking well by himself or during the following six months; when she encouraged the child to produce when he was placed on the pot but was flexible in this demand; when she recognized the child's inability to control his bladder function during the night but indicated to him that in time change was desirable; if she showed disapproval when the child soiled his pants and encouraged the child to perform this function on the pot.
2. In the toilet training process the mother was considered to be non permissive if she began toilet training before the child was able to walk unaided; if she adhered to an inflexible schedule of toilet training and punished or scolded the child for not producing on the pot; if she punished the child for wetting during the night after he was regarded as toilet trained; if she severely scolded or punished the child for soiling his pants.
3. In the toilet training process the mother was considered to be extremely permissive if she began the training six months or more after the child had begun to walk unaided; if

she did not encourage the child to perform on the pot; if she was indifferent to the child's bed wetting after she considered him trained; if she ignored or was indifferent to the child's soiling his pants.

### Sex Training

1. Permissiveness in sex training was an understanding and guiding response on the part of the parent to the child's curiosity about sex. A permissive response was shown by getting the child who had removed his clothes to put them on and discouraging this type of behavior; answering the child's questions about sex truthfully but simply; discouraging and diverting the child from sex play with other children and with his own body.
2. Non permissiveness in sex training was a punishing or scolding response on the part of the parent to the child's taking off his clothes; sex play with himself or with others; and it was refusing to answer, scolding or giving a dishonest response to the child's questions about sex.
3. Extreme permissiveness in sex training was a parental response which ignored or encouraged the child to run around without clothes; to engage in sex play with himself or with others; and it was giving too many facts or dwelling on the child's questions about sex.

The schedules were numbered and then each response rated as permissive, non permissive or extremely permissive

according to the working definitions. On the basis of the total number of questions answered, by the method of simple majority, the three sections were then rated as non-permissive, permissive, extremely permissive or inconsistent. The latter category was found to be necessary. The results obtained which relate to the major hypothesis of this study will be presented in the text of Chapter IV in terms of numbers and percentages, the latter being used rather than proportions throughout Chapter IV.

The results as to permissiveness, non-permissiveness, extreme permissiveness as found in the individual sections of infant feeding, toilet training and sex training will also be presented in Chapter IV as numbers and percentages in tabular form, which table relates to the three sub-hypotheses particular to the child rearing practices being investigated. A category of incomplete was found to be necessary on this table since there were some of those interviewed who blocked completely on the questions about sex.

The schedules were classified as to their global ratings of permissive, non-permissive, extremely permissive or inconsistent in relation to the educational level of the mother. The educational classification used in this study was based on the Manitoba School System thus it contained three educational ranges namely, no education to grade six, grade seven to grade nine and grade ten up. The

results in regard to this independent variable were charted and will be so presented in numbers and percentages in Chapter IV. Similarly the schedules were classified as to their global rating of permissive, non-permissive, extremely permissive or inconsistent in relation to the age of the mother at the birth of the child. Mothers twenty-one years and under were classed as younger, those twenty-two to thirty-five years as middle; and those thirty-six and up as older. The data from this cross-classification will be presented in a table in terms of numbers and percentages in the following chapter.

The results of the two independent cross-classifications were examined and significant interrelationships noted. Thus the sub-hypotheses in regard to age and education were answered.

The last tabulation of data was that of the ethnic origins of the mother the major classifications used for this being Anglo Saxon, West European, East European, Mediterranean, Indian, Oriental and Others in relation to the global rating of permissive, non-permissive, extremely permissive and inconsistent. Sizeable configurations were noted and some conclusions drawn though these were framed in the light of the researchers stated views on ethnicity as being only a part of the total cultural factor.

Chapter IV follows with the specific analysis of data.

CHAPTER IV  
PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

From the one hundred and seventy-six schedules administered by face to face interview in regard to the overall research project, the child-rearing section of the project secured a total sample of eighty-three, since the schedule investigating child-rearing practices could be completed only where there was present a mother and a physically-mentally normal child in the six to ten years age group, who had been raised from birth by the mother.

The group of fifteen researching child-rearing practices together rated each question answered on the eighty-three schedules as permissive, non-permissive, or extremely permissive according to the working definitions for the three areas of child-rearing selected for study, namely, infant feeding, toilet training and sex training. By the method of simple majority each of the three sections was then rated as permissive, non-permissive, extremely permissive or inconsistent, which additional category was found to be necessary. The results secured are presented in Table 1.

It should be noted that in each area the total number of those in groups other than permissive exceeds the number



in the permissive group. It should also be noted that the largest single percentage in infant feeding (40.9) and in sex training (41.5) appeared in the permissive category whereas the largest single percentage in the toilet training section (39.8) was in the non-permissive category.

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILIES BY NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE ACCORDING TO CATEGORIES OF PERMISSIVENESS IN THE THREE AREAS OF CHILD-REARING PRACTICES

	Infant Feeding		Toilet Training		Sex Training	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	83	100	83	100	65 <sup>a</sup>	100
Permissive	34	40.9	20	24.1	27	41.5
Non-Permissive	13	15.6	33	39.8	20	30.8
Extremely Permissive	24	28.9	14	16.8	4	6.0
Inconsistent	12	14.4	16	19.3	14	21.5

<sup>a</sup>18 could not be rated because none of the questions had been answered.

Based upon the rating of their three sections the 83 schedules were then rated globally with the result that 21 families or 25.3% of the sample fell into the permissive category; 16 families or 19.3% of the sample were in the non-permissive category; 8 families or 9.6% appeared in the extremely permissive category; and 38 families or 45% were inconsistent in their child rearing practices. Again it

it was noted that the total number of those in groups other than permissive exceeded those in the permissive group but the single category containing the greatest number was that of inconsistent.

The results of the global rating of the families as to their category of permissive, non-permissive, extremely permissive or inconsistent were looked at in relation to the education of the mother as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2  
DISTRIBUTION OF MOTHERS BY NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE  
ACCORDING TO CATEGORIES OF PERMISSIVENESS  
IN THREE EDUCATIONAL LEVELS

	Total	Elementary School 0-Grade 6		Junior High School Grades 7-9		High School Grade 10 and up	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	83	16	100	44	100	21	100
Permissive	21	3	16.7	10	22.7	8	38.1
Non Permissive	16	2	11.1	11	25.0	3	14.3
Extremely Permissive	8	2	11.1	6	13.6	0	0
Inconsistent	38	11	61.1	17	38.7	10	47.6

The educational levels used corresponded to those of the Manitoba School System. We noted that the percentage of permissiveness increased as the educational level of the mother rose, thus, the hypothesis regarding this independent

variable was supported. It was also noted that there were no extremely permissive mothers in the group with the most education and that in the inconsistent category the highest percentage (61.1) occurs in the group with the least education.

Similarly the results of the global rating of the families as to their category of permissive, non-permissive, extremely permissive or inconsistent were looked at in relation to the age of the mother at the birth of her child with the results as presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF MOTHERS AT THE TIME OF THE BIRTH OF THE CHILD IN DIFFERENT CATEGORIES OF PERMISSIVENESS BY NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE

	Total	Permissive		Non Permissive		Extremely Permissive		Inconsistent	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	82 <sup>a</sup>	20	100	16	100	8	100	38	100
21 years & under	17	6	30	4	25	0	0	7	18.4
22-35 years	52	11	55	7	43.75	7	87.5	27	71.0
36 years & over	13	3	15	5	31.25	1	12.5	4	10.5

<sup>a</sup>The mother's age was not given on one schedule.

It is noted that most of the mothers were in the 22-35 year age group and that of these the greatest number were found

to be inconsistent. The total number of mothers in the younger and older age groups of the extremely permissive and non-permissive categories taken together was not significantly different than the number of mothers in the same age groups who were permissive. Thus there does not seem to be any significant relationship between age and level of permissiveness.

Table 4 shows the global rating of the schedules as to permissive, non-permissive, extremely permissive and inconsistent in relation to the ethnic origin of the mother, ethnicity being handled under five groupings as seen in Table 4. It is noted that there does seem to be some relationship between ethnicity and permissiveness, the highest percentage appearing in the Anglo-Saxon grouping. The percentage showing in the group called Others would not be considered valid because of the very small number on which it is based.

It is noted that the lowest percentage of permissive families and the highest percentage of inconsistent families appear in the West European grouping and that the highest percentages in all ethnic groupings appear in the inconsistent category.

It was thought that tabulation of data in terms of the questions of each section might be of interest and value thus these are presented in Tables I, II and III in Appendix B. It should be noted per Table I that the questions

TABLE 4

DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILIES BY NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE ACCORDING  
TO CATEGORIES OF PERMISSIVENESS IN FIVE ETHNIC GROUPINGS

	Total	Anglo Saxon		West European		East European		Indian		Other	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	82 <sup>a</sup>	35	100	26	100	14	100	2	100	4 <sup>b</sup>	100
Permissive	20	10	27.7	4	16.2	4	26.5	0	0	2	50
Non Permissive	16	9	25.0	5	19.2	1	7.1	1	50	0	0
Extremely Permissive	8	2	5.5	3	11.6	3	21.4	0	0	0	0
Inconsistent	38	15	41.7	14	61.6	6	43.8	1	50	2	50

<sup>a</sup>One schedule did not state the ethnic origin of the mother.

<sup>b</sup>This group consists of 1 Jewish, 1 Italian, 1 South African and 1 Canadian respondents.

of the infant feeding section were well answered. Among the families there was a very high degree of permissiveness (79.5%) in regard to feeding children in between meals.

Table II shows a consistent high degree of non-permissiveness in toilet training. It should be noted that thirty respondents did not answer Question 3 which could indicate that the question was ambiguous.

Table III shows the very high percentage of unanswered questions as we see the incomplete category showing 53% for Question 1, 60.3% for Question 2, 67.5% for Question 3, and 61.4% for Question 4. This may indicate greater significance in terms of the subject matter than the particular questions.

Conclusions resulting from this data both in terms of the hypotheses of this study and otherwise will follow in Chapter V.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

The total sample group for the child rearing section of the research project consisted of eighty-three families since only 83 fulfilled the necessary conditions for the completion of the schedule pertaining to child rearing practices namely, that there be living in the home a physically mentally normal child in the six to ten year age group and the mother who had raised the child from birth.

The responses given to the questions asked about the child rearing practices of infant feeding, toilet training and sex training were rated as non-permissive, permissive or extremely permissive according to the working definitions of these categories of parental attitudes stated in Chapter III of this study. By the method of simple majority the predominant attitude per child rearing practice was rated as non-permissive, permissive, extremely permissive, or inconsistent, which latter category became necessary in view of the findings. Thus the individual hypotheses about infant feeding, toilet training, and sex training were answered as follows.

It was hypothesized that: A greater proportion of

families studied would show non-permissiveness, or extreme permissiveness, rather than permissiveness, in their feeding practices of their children under two years of age. This hypothesis was supported to the extent that 44.5% were non-permissive or extremely permissive as compared to 40.9% who were permissive. By including the inconsistent category it can be said that 58.9% were other than permissive.

In regard to toilet training it was hypothesized that: A greater proportion of families studied would show non-permissiveness or extreme permissiveness, rather than permissiveness in their toilet training practices. This hypothesis was supported by the data since the highest single proportion was in the non-permissive category and the total of those other than permissive was considerably higher than those who were permissive.

It was further hypothesized that: A greater proportion of families studied would show non-permissiveness or extreme permissiveness rather than permissiveness in the sex training of their children. The data obtained in regard to this area of child rearing and this hypothesis was the least conclusive due to the very marked degree of blocking shown by the respondents. Because of the fact that none of the questions re this child rearing practice were answered, 18 of the schedules could not be rated, and of the 65 which were, some were rated on less than the total number of four questions in this section of the child rearing schedule. From the data secured only 36.8% of the families were



non-permissive or extremely permissive while 41.5% were permissive. It is noted however that a large percentage, 21.5%, were inconsistent which brings the group who were not permissive to 58.3%. To this extent it could be said that the hypothesis was supported.

In the light of the rating of the three sections the schedules were then rated globally as non-permissive, permissive, extremely permissive or inconsistent. These global ratings were then cross classified with each of the independent variables of educational level, age and ethnic origin. In regard to the first two of the variables the following hypotheses were answered.

It was hypothesized that: The proportion of families who were permissive would increase as the educational level of the mother increased. The findings of the study conclusively supported this hypothesis with the group of mothers having the most education making up the highest percentage of the families who were permissive, and those with the least education the lowest.

In regard to the age of the mother it was hypothesized that: Among the families studied who fell into the non-permissive and extremely permissive groups the greater proportion of mothers would be found to be younger or older than the mothers in the permissive group. The data revealed no significant association between permissiveness and age.

In the study nothing was hypothesized in regard to

the factor of ethnicity but this factor was to be noted to see if significant differences could be observed among the various ethnic groups. What was most noticeable from the data collected was that in all the ethnic groupings over 50% in each instance were inconsistent in their child rearing practices. There seemed to be some relationship between ethnicity and permissiveness.

Thus in the light of all the findings the major hypothesis of the study was answered. This read: A greater proportion of families studied would show non-permissiveness or extreme permissiveness rather than permissiveness in their child rearing practices and this would vary with the educational level, age and ethnic origin of the parent. The data tended to support this. The major hypothesis of this study was supported to the extent that in each of the areas of infant feeding, toilet training and sex training, the majority of mothers were other than permissive in that the largest percentage in each instance comprised those who were non-permissive, extremely permissive and inconsistent. The level of permissiveness varied with the educational level of the mother, to a lesser extent with the ethnic origin but did not vary with the age of the mother.

Throughout the data the inconsistent category was a major finding. There was a progressive increase in this from the area of infant feeding to toilet training to that of sex training. A certain amount of inconsistency was to be expected but the degree revealed by this study was not.

The researchers acknowledge that due to flaws in and limitations to the schedule some inconsistency may have appeared but the researchers suggest that the inconsistency revealed by the study may have other meaning.

The problems which bring families to social agencies for help are varied but almost always they are the result of the parents' difficulty in carrying their adult roles. It was thought by the research group that there may be some connection between this and their child rearing practices. Then too there is so much uncertainty throughout the whole of life today. People are constantly subjected to change and stress due to the type of society in which we are living. This uncertainty affects performance of social roles prominent among which is the parental role. It should also be noted that the need for consistency in handling children is stressed by all the authorities on child rearing including those cited in Chapter II of this study. The knowledge of this inconsistency, which causes so much emotional disturbance in children, and which would seem to be so widespread in the families representative of our client population should be of real value to the workers in our major social agencies serving families as well as being a point of interest to future researchers.

In evaluating the schedule and noting the very good response to the questions on infant feeding and the very poor response to those on sex training we can speculate that possibly the general feeling about what is an allowable and

acceptable type of pleasure has some influence here. Eating hence feeding, is a socially acceptable pleasure for all people, whereas the area of sex is a charged one and as was pointed out by Hylan Lewis an area which is not talked about by the lower classes. He says "there is a striking incidence of parental shame and embarrassment about sex. Sex education is almost lacking in these families." He associates this with the high incidence of promiscuity and illegitimacy found among this class and suggests that many are anxious to have things different for their children but just do not know how to proceed. Therefore much can be done in this area on an educational level.<sup>1</sup> I suggest this point as another valuable contribution of this study to the workers in the social agencies involved in this study.

The questions around toilet training were slightly different and asked more specifically about incidents which happen in the normal course of events and the data obtained was possibly the most conclusive because people have more definite ideas about what they should do in regard to these.

A study such as this is always subject to many and severe limitations. One of the limitations most regretted was the fact that the data secured by each of the three sections of the overall research project could not have been amassed, tabulated and correlated per family. From such a

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<sup>1</sup>Hylan Lewis, "Child Rearing Practices Among Low Income Families," Casework Papers 1961, (New York: Family Service Association of America, 1961), pp. 86-88.

picture of the families some more specific and significant conclusions might have been observable.

It is to be hoped that many more research projects of this type will be undertaken in future so that our knowledge of these persons who are clients may grow and we may then learn how better to help them.

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APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE

Part C  
CHILD REARING

Instructions to the Interviewer

This part of the schedule is to be completed only if there is a physically/mentally normal child in the home between the age of 6 - 10 years who has been raised from birth by the mother answering the questions. All questions are to be answered in regard to the same child. If there is more than one child in this age group, the questions are to be answered in regard to the child closest to age six years.

When asking questions, please try to refer to the child by using his name, wherever possible. Ask Mother whether child is retarded or handicapped.

I. We all know that children have different likes and dislikes with regard to food, and the times at which they want to eat. Now,

1. During the first six months when you were feeding your baby, either by breast or by bottle, did you have a system or a routine for feeding him? \_\_\_\_\_

(a) If yes: Can you tell me what this system was and how you knew when to feed him? \_\_\_\_\_

(b) If no: How did you know when to feed him? \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: If response to "a" or "b" was vague, like "on demand" or "when the baby cried", please ask mother what she meant by this, in order to determine how she knew when to feed him.

2. When your child was  $1\frac{1}{2}$  years old and he would not eat his food when he was supposed to, can you tell me what you did? \_\_\_\_\_

3.

(a) When your child was  $1\frac{1}{2}$  years old and wanted to eat between meals, what did you do? \_\_\_\_\_

(b) If answer is "I fed him" ask:

i) Did you feed him whenever he asked? \_\_\_\_\_

ii) Did you also feed him just before a meal(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

4.

(a) When your child was about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  years old and spilled his food, what did you do? \_\_\_\_\_

(b) If response is "I cleaned it up", then ask what did you do about the child? \_\_\_\_\_

II. There are different ways in which people teach their children to use the bathroom and there are many different situations which arise during the training. We would like to know how you handled some of these situations. \_\_\_\_\_

1.

(a) At what age did your child walk without the help of someone else or without holding on to anything? \_\_\_\_\_ (months)

(b) How old was he when you started toilet training? \_\_\_\_\_ (months)

2.

Did you place your child on the pot regularly to train him? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

If yes - if you placed your child on the pot and he did not have a bowel movement, what did you do? \_\_\_\_\_

3.

Did your child ever wet the bed at night after you regarded him as trained? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes - what did you do? \_\_\_\_\_

4.

When your child wet and/or soiled his pants during the day while he was being toilet trained what did you do? \_\_\_\_\_

5. If your child wet and/or soiled his pants after you considered him as toilet trained, what did you do? \_\_\_\_\_

III. As children grow up, it is not unusual for them to be interested in their own bodies and the bodies of others. They often ask where babies come from, play with themselves and sometimes run around the house without any clothes on. Could you think back to when your child was between 3 and 6 years and tell us what you did in the following situations.

1. When your child asked where babies come from or what is the difference between boys and girls, what did you do? \_\_\_\_\_
2. When your child showed curiosity about his own body or the bodies of other children, when they were playing together, what did you do? \_\_\_\_\_
3. When your child took off his clothes and ran around without any clothes on, what did you do? \_\_\_\_\_
4. When your child played with his own body, what did you do? \_\_\_\_\_

These questions to be included on face sheet and in the Child Rearing Section, following the schedule questions.

1. Age. Birth date of mother \_\_\_\_\_  
Age of child being discussed \_\_\_\_\_  
(Child in the home between the ages of 6 and 10 and nearest 6 years).
2. Education. Highest grade completed.  
Mother \_\_\_\_\_
3. (a) Where were you born?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- (b) Where were your parents born?  
i) your mother \_\_\_\_\_  
ii) your father \_\_\_\_\_
- (c) What language was spoken most often in your home when you were a child? \_\_\_\_\_

3. (d) What is your national (Ethnic) origin? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What language do you usually speak in the home?  
English \_\_\_\_\_ Others (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B

TABLE I

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES OF FAMILIES BY NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE IN CATEGORIES OF PERMISSIVENESS TO THE QUESTIONS ABOUT INFANT FEEDING

	Question 1		Question 2		Question 3		Question 4	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	83	100.0	83	100.0	83	100.0	83	100.0
Permissive	32	38.5	13	15.6	63	79.5	15	18.1
Non-Per- missive	19	23.0	9	10.8	6	7.2	40	48.2
Extremely Permissive	32	38.5	40	48.2	13	15.6	24	28.9
Incomplete	0	-	21	25.4	1	1.3	4	4.8

TABLE II

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES OF FAMILIES BY NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE IN CATEGORIES OF PERMISSIVENESS TO THE QUESTIONS ABOUT TOILET TRAINING

	Question 1		Question 2		Question 3		Question 4		Question 5	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	83	100.0	83	100.0	83	100.0	83	100.0	83	100.0
Permissive	28	33.7	51	61.4	16	19.3	16	19.3	14	16.8
Non-Per- missive	41	49.4	22	26.5	16	19.3	42	50.6	38	45.2
Extremely Permissive	12	14.4	9	10.8	21	25.3	22	26.5	12	14.4
Incomplete	2	2.5	1	1.2	30	36.1	3	3.6	19	23.0

TABLE III  
 DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES OF FAMILIES BY NUMBER AND  
 PERCENTAGE IN CATEGORIES OF PERMISSIVENESS TO  
 THE QUESTIONS ABOUT SEX TRAINING

	Question 1		Question 2		Question 3		Question 4	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Total	83	100.0	83	100.0	83	100.0	83	100.0
Permissive	23	27.6	23	27.6	14	16.8	15	18.1
Non Per- missive	15	18.1	9	10.8	12	14.4	14	16.8
Extremely Permissive	1	1.3	1	1.3	1	1.3	3	3.6
Incomplete	44	53.0	50	60.3	56	67.5	51	61.4