

COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR MOTHERS' CONTROL  
AS RELATED TO THEIR MOTHERS' CHILD REARING VALUES

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	1
PROCEDURE.....	7
DATA AND DISCUSSION.....	12
CASE STUDIES.....	18
CONCLUSIONS.....	30
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	32
LITERATURE CITED.....	33
APPENDIX.....	35

## INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To gain greater insight into the dynamics of human behavior, it becomes increasingly necessary to utilize new frames of reference. Two very dissimilar points of view may be adopted. Snygg and Combs (1949) state that the traditional view is one of looking at behavior from the standpoint of an external observer who ignores all aspects of the situation except those which can be measured in quantitative objective units. However, another alternative open to those studying human behavior, and one forming the theoretical basis of the present study, is that of looking at human behavior from the viewpoint of the one who is behaving. Snygg and Combs go on to state that in selecting a frame of reference for the study of human behavior, this is the more productive reference point. Hawkes (1957) points out that what happens to the individual is not so important as how he perceives it, because "it is not the physical nature of a stimulus which determines reaction but rather the way in which that stimulus is interpreted by the individual stimulated."

Eronfenbrenner (1951) also recognizes the value of studying behavior from the reference point of the one who is behaving. Broadly defining perception as the way in which a person structures his world and himself, he theorizes that the perception of interpersonal relationships is the principal vehicle for the process of personality development. The study of individual perceptions should yield valuable information on the dynamics of personality

development.

How are individual perceptions acquired? Frank (1948) states that a child develops his individualized way of functioning (i.e. perceiving) to meet parental demands and restrictions. It is largely, but not entirely, through this early experience with his parents that the child develops his own peculiar way of feeling toward them and the world. He goes on to say that the interpersonal relationships existing in the child's primary environment are influential factors in determining how he will perceive his world.

Throughout life the individual does not live in a cultural vacuum, but rather is continuously from the time of birth coming in contact with cultural values. Value, according to Postman (1952) is a concept which plays an important role in determining what activities and goal-objects an individual will seek, and what behavior he will demonstrate during these goal-oriented acts. The values to which we are exposed are determined by the cultural setting of our living, first in the primary home and later the environment in which we choose to live.

Bossard (1948) states that cultural values are evident nowhere more clearly than in the intimate, everyday details of family life. He goes on to say that the cultural differences which enter the child-rearing process from the beginning of the child's life, continue as operating factors as long as the child has any relationship with his family. Thus, cultural values necessarily exert considerable influence on numerous aspects of one's life. Child-rearing values and their expression in practice are two

areas which are greatly influenced by cultural values.

According to Bossard it is in child-rearing practices that one finds the expression of those values which parents deem of greatest worth, values which they want to see internalized within their children. To foster the internalization of values, a number of controls and direction on the part of the parents is required. The more stringent the values, the more stringent the direction and control<sup>1</sup> will have to be on the part of the parents.

Values vary extensively from culture to culture. Some are more demanding upon the individual; some are less so. From numerous investigations conducted within recent years there has come to exist a conception of American middle class culture as one which is rather stringent in its demands upon the individual in regard to behavioral expectations.

Cohen (1955) in a study comparing lower class gang culture with that of the middle class has enumerated those qualities which are highly valued in American middle class culture. They are: (1) ambition, ability to "get ahead", (2) resourcefulness and self-reliance, (3) cultivation and possession of skills, (4) "worldly asceticism"-- a willingness to postpone immediate satisfactions in the interest of future goals, (5) application of rationality and forethought, (6) cultivation of manners, courtesy and responsibility, (7) control of physical aggression and violence, (8) constructive use of leisure, (9) respect for property, and (10) avoiding waste or abuse of material possessions. Cohen continues by

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<sup>1</sup>Control, as defined by Aldous and Kell (1956), means "any attempt to change the child's behavior to conform to the parents' values whether or not the child accepts those values."

saying that the child is constantly aware of what his parents want him to be and to become; and he soon learns the self-discipline and effort necessary to meet parental expectations.

Ericson (1947) in a study of social status and child-rearing practices noted that there are systematic social class differences in regard to the training of children. According to the results of her study, there is more emphasis in middle class child-rearing practices on the early achievement of learning in what she calls the "crucial areas." She includes as "crucial areas": (1) cleanliness training, (2) weaning, (3) controls against aggression, and (4) controls against the exploration of body and of the environment.

Some of the findings in the preceding study were verified by Davis and Havighurst (1946) in a study of social class and color differences in child-rearing. These investigators noted that middle class parents were concerned with training their children for feeding and cleanliness habits, in learning responsibility and in curbing any activity that would lead to poor health, waste of time or bad moral habits according to middle class views.

Sears, et al. (1957) conducted a study concerned with social class differences in child-rearing practices which was somewhat comparable to the preceding study by Davis and Havighurst. Havighurst and Davis (1955) made a comparison of the results of the two studies. Disagreements between the findings of each were substantial and important. Inadequacies of sampling, changes in child-rearing ideology between 1943 and 1952, and the problem of interpreting the statements of mothers answering identical



questions about their children who were exposed to quite different environmental stimulation were considered to be influential factors accounting for the differences in results of the two studies.

Contrary to findings in earlier studies of social class differences in child-rearing, Maccoby and Gibbs (1954) in a study of upper-middle class and upper-lower class mothers of kindergarten children noted there was a tendency for the upper-middle class mothers to be more permissive and less severe in their child training than the upper-lower class mothers. This held when the mother's education, age or ethnic origin remained constant. The investigators in this study state that their findings do not necessarily invalidate earlier studies by Ericson, Havighurst and Davis and others. They do emphasize, however, the desirability of making finer social class distinctions than merely "middle-class."

How can investigators secure subjective information such as the attitudes, values, and perceptions of individuals? Cannell and Kahn (1953) state that when this type of information is desired, the most direct and often the most fruitful approach is to ask the individuals themselves. They go on to say that perceptions, attitudes, and opinions which cannot be inferred by observation are accessible through this method. Maccoby and Maccoby (1954) also note that the interview method is particularly valuable in social research in that it is focused on subjective experiences and individual perceptions.

The effectiveness of an interview in eliciting desired information depends to a great extent on the techniques employed by the

interviewer. Rogers (1949) feels that the qualities of (1) warmth and responsiveness, (2) a genuine interest in the respondent and acceptance of him as a person, (3) permissiveness in regard to expression of feeling, and (4) freedom from any type of pressure or coercion are vital in a successful interview.

The types of questions to be asked during the interview period have need of special consideration. Standardized and unstandardized interviews are widely used by social scientists. The distinguishing characteristic of the two types is flexibility of question wording and order. Merton and Kendall (1946) advocate the use of a semi-standardized interview which they call the "focused interview." This type of interview consists of an interview guide with a list of objectives and suggested questions, rather than an inflexible form to be rigidly followed. It gives the subject more freedom to express himself about matters of significance to him rather than those presumed to be important by the interviewer. In a study of perceptions of child-rearing values by a group of college students Nelson (1956) found that an interview schedule constructed by Aldous and Kell (1956) and based on suggestions from Merton and Kendall was fairly successful in eliciting the desired information.

The interview schedule used in the Nelson study was first used by Aldous and Kell (1956) in an exploratory study of the perceptions of a group of students and their mothers. They hypothesized that mothers having 75 per cent or more traditional middle class child-rearing values would have children perceiving them as overly circumscribing the children's behavior. On the basis of



this limited group the findings supported the hypothesis. It was thought worthwhile to conduct another study using a larger group of students and mothers.

This present study had its basis in the findings of the exploratory study conducted by Aldous and Kell (1956). The objectives were to (1) find the percentages of middle class child-rearing values expressed by a group of mothers, (2) find whether the children of these mothers perceived their freedom of behavior to have been circumscribed by their mothers, and (3) find the relationship, if any, between the percentages of middle class child-rearing values expressed by the mothers and their children's perceptions of their freedom of behavior having been circumscribed.

#### PROCEDURE

The subjects of this investigation were 40 students enrolled as juniors at Kansas State College during the academic year 1955-56 and the mothers of these students. For the purposes of the investigation it was necessary to have a homogeneous group. In order to assure maximum homogeneity the following criteria were specified: students must (1) be 21 years of age or under, (2) be single, (3) have at least one sibling, (4) be living away from their home, and (5) have both parents living at home.

To reduce the expense involved in interviewing mothers, the group was limited to those living within the area of the following counties: Clay, Geary, Dickinson, Riley, Pottawatomie, Morris, Wabaunsee, Sedgwick, or Shawnee. College juniors were chosen as

subjects because it was felt that they had lived away from home long enough to have achieved a certain amount of objectivity in perceiving their family relationships.

A list of subjects meeting the above criteria was obtained from files in the Office of the Registrar. Letters of explanation (Appendix) were sent to 92 students, and from this group 55 interviews were made. Forty students, to whom letters were sent, were excluded from the group for the following reasons: (1) thirteen students had no sibling, (2) ten refused to be interviewed, (3) three were over the required age limit, (4) three were living at home, (5) three could not be contacted, (6) two were married, (7) two lived out of the specified county area, (8) the family of one was incomplete because of the father's death, (9) one had dropped out of school, (10) one was excluded because of apparent insincerity during the interview, and (11) one interview did not record. From the group of 55 students interviewed, 40 were included in the present study, 19 boys and 21 girls.

The purpose of the letter was to inform the prospective subjects of the type of information that was desired and to request their cooperation. In the letter they were assured of the anonymous nature of any information that would be disclosed. Appointments with the student subjects were made by telephone; a post-card enclosed with the letter sent to the mothers (Appendix) served as a means for making their appointments.

A semi-standardized interview schedule (Appendix), developed in State Project #341 and designed to elicit information on the students' perceptions of their family life, was used in the

present study. A similar schedule, also developed in State Project #341, was used in interviewing the mothers (Appendix). Before proceeding, both schedules were pretested and minor revisions made.

Students' interviews were conducted in the Family and Child Development Research Office, a quiet room relatively free of interruption. The interviewer sat facing the student with the recorder on a desk in full view of both. After the first few minutes of the session, very few respondents seemed visibly aware of the tape recorder. Length of student interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour and a half; the average interview lasted an hour. The mothers' interviews were conducted within their homes, the interviewer taking the tape recorder with her. No data as to the length of time of the mothers' interviews was recorded. The investigator who interviewed the mothers did not interview students. This was planned in order to avoid any biasing effect.

Both interviewers were impressed with the spontaneity and sincerity of students' and mothers' expressions. Validity of information received was indicated by willingness on the part of students and mothers to express hostile and anti-social attitudes. Validity is also reinforced by the fact that much information expressed in a student's interview was indicated in the mother's.

At the close of each interview, the subjects completed an information sheet (Appendix) which supplied factual data. In addition to information obtained through the interview and face sheet, the investigators recorded their impressions of each session. These records contained information on the subjects'

sincerity of expression, ease in speaking in presence of a tape recorder, and other information thought to be helpful in obtaining a clearer picture of the students' perceptions of their family life.

Transcripts of the interviews were typed directly from the tapes, and checked for accuracy by playing the recorded interview and proof-reading the typed protocol. Students' interviews ranged from 13 to 32 type-written pages with a mean of 21 pages; mothers' interviews had a range of seven to 21 type-written pages with a mean of 13 pages. To insure anonymity, numbers were used to identify both the students' and mothers' protocols.

The students' protocols were analyzed to determine whether they perceived their freedom of behavior to have been circumscribed by their mothers. This was done by selecting statements from each interview that indicated the subject's feelings with reference to the control his mother exerted over him. The statements selected were rated according to a system for analyzing qualitative material suggested by Lazarsfeld and Robinson (1940). In this system a  $\neq$  1, 0, or -1 rating is given to each statement. Each rating indicates, respectively, that the subject did not feel his behavior was circumscribed, felt neutral as indicated by the statement, or did feel that his behavior was circumscribed. By averaging the ratings for each protocol, the investigator was able to rank each subject on a continuum as to the degree to which he felt his freedom of behavior to have been circumscribed by his mother. The statements for each subject were rated by the investigator and one judge and a percentage of agreement reached. Out

of a total of 593 statements to be rated, the judges disagreed on 72, resulting in a percentage of agreement of 88 per cent. Regarding the nature of the disagreements: (1) 79 per cent were of a 0 to  $\neq$  1 or -1 type, and (2) 21 per cent were a  $\neq$  1 to a -1 disagreement, a more serious type of disagreement.

Statements indicating the mothers' child-rearing values were selected from the mothers' protocols. These were categorized by two judges as to whether they were primarily traditional middle class child-rearing values or others. If 75 per cent or more of each mother's child-rearing values were judged to be traditional middle class, it was stated that she possessed primarily traditional middle class child-rearing values. The two judges reached a degree of agreement on the values by conferring with one another. It was found they disagreed on 14 out of the 40 mothers' interviews. The difference between the categorizations given by each judge for the mothers ranged from 1 per cent to 11 per cent with a mean of 5 per cent. In calculating percentages for Tables 4 and 5, the investigator's figures were used.

To determine the relationship, if any, between the mothers' child-rearing values and their children's perceptions of whether their freedom of behavior had been circumscribed, the value rating of each mother was plotted graphically with each student's position on the continuum. This graph was studied to determine the feasibility of using statistical analysis.

## DATA AND DISCUSSION

In ascertaining whether the majority of students included in the study came from middle class homes, each family was rated according to a modification of Warner's (1949) system of classification into social status groups. This rating is based on the mothers' and fathers' education and occupation. In accordance with Kahl and Davis (1955) occupation is thought to be the best single indication of position in social stratification. The 40 families were classified as follows: (1) thirty-three were decidedly middle class, (2) four were upper middle class, (3) one was lower middle, and (4) two were rated as either lower middle or possibly lower class.

In many respects this group was not homogeneous. Occupations of the fathers varied from business or professional occupations to manual or skilled labor. In allocating the fathers into four occupational groups it was noted that (1) thirteen were business owners or professional men, (2) nine were white collar workers, (3) twelve were farmers, and (4) six were manual or skilled laborers.

The educational backgrounds of the mothers and fathers as noted in Table 1 indicated that (1) seven fathers and one mother completed eight years of school, (2) eight fathers and ten mothers received their high school diploma, (3) six mothers and seven fathers completed work for their bachelors degree, and (4) six fathers and five mothers did some post-graduate work. In the group of parents only one had received a doctorate.



Most of the students' families had resided in their present homes 11 years or more. Three families had been in their homes from one to five years; five families from six to ten years; nine families from 11 to 20 years; and 18 had lived in their present homes for 21 years or more. This information is indicative that the group is not very horizontally mobile. Information based on data from 55 families supports this.

Table 1. Educational backgrounds of the mothers and fathers.

Years of school completed	Fathers	Mothers
Grade school		
0 - 4	2	0
5 - 8	7	1
High school		
1 - 2	3	0
3 - 4	8	10
Vocational	3	5
College		
1 - 2	4	13
3 - 4	7	6
Post Grad.		
1 - 2	4	5
3 - 4	2	

It may be noted in Table 2 that most families had two or three children. The remaining number of children was distributed in families of from four to eight children.

Table 2. Number of children in families of respondents.

No. of children	No. of families
2	17
3	12
4	5
5	2
6	2
7	1
8	1

Students' rank in relation to the siblings in their families finds 13 students placed as the oldest in relation to brothers and/or sisters; seven placed in the middle position; and 15 in the youngest position. Ten students neither being the youngest nor the oldest, were distributed in families with 4 to 8 children. This is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Students' rank in relation to siblings in family.

Position	Boys (19)	Girls (21)	Total
Oldest	4	9	13
Middle	5	2	7
Youngest	7	8	15
3rd of 4	1		1
2nd of 5	1		1
5th of 6		1	1
3rd of 7		1	1
7th of 8	1		1

Table 4 indicates the percentage of traditional middle class child-rearing values of each mother. By defining a traditional mother as one who possesses 75 per cent or more middle class child-rearing values, it may be noted that only three mothers in the

Table 4. The percentage of traditional child-rearing values for each mother.

Interview number	Percentage of middle class child rearing values	Interview number	Percentage of middle class child rearing values
031-M	28	055-M	58
039-M	29	043-M	58
007-M	30	013-M	59
001-M	31	004-M	59
028-M	36	074-M	61
009-M	40	048-M	65
046-M	46	024-M	65
045-M	47	016-M	65
002-M	47	073-M	67
026-M	48	010-M	68
018-M	50	030-M	69
027-M	53	034-M	70
006-M	53	044-M	70
029-M	53	021-M	70
040-M	53	023-M	70
033-M	53	008-M	72
022-M	54	012-M	73
003-M	55	047-M	77
019-M	57	049-M	78
041-M	57	050-M	79

entire group were classified as traditional. A distribution of the mothers according to their percentage of traditional values is as follows: (1) ten mothers expressed between 20 per cent and 49 per cent traditional values, (2) twenty-one expressed between 50 per cent and 69 per cent, and (3) nine mothers had between 70 per cent and 80 per cent traditional middle class child-rearing values. The greater number of mothers fell to neither extreme, but were grouped in the middle with reference to their child-rearing values.

Table 5 places the students on a continuum regarding the degree to which they felt their freedom of behavior to have been circumscribed by their mothers. Out of 40 students only six felt that their mothers had not circumscribed their freedom of behavior. These students are indicated in Table 5 by the figures with a plus sign preceding them. The students were rated as neutral in their perceptions of their mother's control. Actually, these students would not be completely neutral in their perceptions, however, on the basis of limited information they appear to be so. The remaining 32 students, indicated by a minus sign preceding the figure, perceived their mothers as circumscribing in varying degrees their freedom of behavior. It is interesting to note that out of the eight students included in the neutral and non-circumscribed groups, only two were boys.

To determine if any relationship existed between the percentages of middle class child-rearing values expressed by the mothers, and their children's perceptions of having their freedom of behavior circumscribed, these two variables, acting as coordinates,

Table 5. Continuum indicating the degree to which each student perceived his freedom of behavior to have been circumscribed by his mother.

Interview number	Student's place on continuum	Interview number	Student's place on continuum
001	.686	012	.389
021	.291	047	.400
006	.280	050	.417
007	.200	002	.467
053	.143	010	.476
043	.077	026	.500
027	.000	045	.500
033	.000	009	.529
013	.048	040	.529
004	.053	018	.539
019	.067	023	.667
046	.091	039	.667
024	.091	048	.688
e34	.111	029	.706
031	.214	003	.722
016	.250	022	.818
055	.333	054	.857
044	.357	041	.882
028	.364	030	.900
008	.385	049	-1.00

were plotted graphically. On the basis of the group studied and the methods utilized no relationship was found. This is illustrated in Fig. 1. Therefore, it was decided to discontinue any statistical analysis.

It was felt, that by studying in closer perspective those students rated at both extremes of the perception continuum, insight might be gained in regard to factors which determine why some students felt so strongly that their freedom of behavior was circumscribed and others did not.

#### CASE STUDIES

The four student case studies presented here were selected on the basis of their representing both extremes of the perception continuum, two cases from each extreme. No male students were found in either of the two extreme groups. All four families of these students were middle class as judged by the Warner (1949) method. These cases as here presented are disguised especially as to factual background of students.

#### Case #001

This student is the only living daughter in her family. Her mother and father are 52 and 54 years of age respectively. A small grocery store owned by the father has been the family's chief source of income.



Mothers' percentage of traditional values

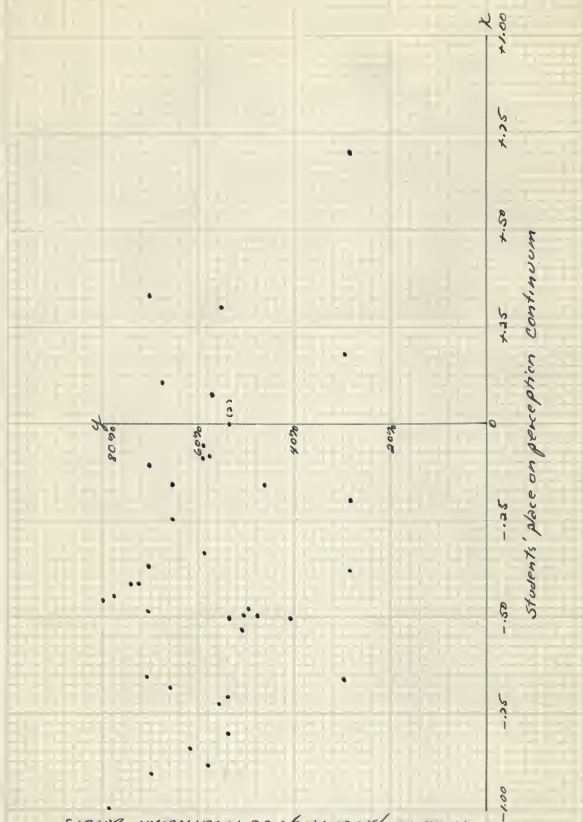


Fig. 1. Students' place on perception continuum as related to mothers' percentage of traditional values.

Significant in this case is the fact that of all students interviewed, this one felt to the least degree that her freedom of behavior was circumscribed by her mother. Statements from the student's protocol give insight into the control aspect of the mother-daughter relationship. This subject perceived herself as having "a free childhood" and she was not aware of supervision being "painful on the inside" or "being a negative thing." She was always given logical reasons for what she was asked to do or forbidden to do. If her plans of action were fairly reasonable, she felt no hesitation in pursuing them and in using her own judgment and ideas.

Comments from the mother's protocol indicate her perceptions in regard to control. She states that few rules were set up, because she felt that her daughter was "capable and grown-up." She did feel that discipline was necessary on the part of the parents but that it should be administered with much understanding.

The most outstanding impression that one interviewer had of this family is the sensitive home situation in which the student lived. Family members seemed to be extremely sensitive to the feelings of one another, without these feelings necessarily being verbalized. This perception was evident in both the student's and mother's protocol. Stressed again and again by the mother as being of primary importance was the ability to "place oneself in another's situation and understand how he feels." This mother used the words, "to have compassion", quite frequently in reference to treatment of her children.

The student in commenting on the few occasions when misunder-

standings did arise between her mother and herself, felt that these would have been easier to cope with had her mother been more verbal in her directions and rules. She felt that a more structured situation on the part of her mother might have eliminated the few instances in which misunderstandings arose.

The subject's mother is one who showed affection to her children unconditionally; both protocols indicate this. The daughter stated that, "(mother) did show a lot of affection with me" and "(I had) a warm feeling that she was there (in the home) because she wanted to be....and was pretty happy to have me around." She continues by saying, "I knew she was always there and always interested (in me)."

Throughout both interviews there appear expressions of the warmth and closeness of the relationship between mother and daughter.

When this subject was quite young her older sister married and moved away from the home. A few years after her marriage the sister died, leaving a small son to be taken care of in his grandmother's home. This death had a profound influence on the members of the family. To the parents it was a needless loss, and they acutely felt that it happened because the older daughter had not physically taken care of herself. It was not surprising, therefore, that the parents became more concerned for their younger daughter, and increased their attention upon her.

The death of her older sister and her mother's emotional instability - fostered by the loss, matured the student greatly. She was quite understanding of her mother and felt a responsibility

in helping her bear the burden of unhappiness.

If looking without oneself and possessing a sense of responsibility toward others is a requisite of "maturity," this student's home situation was such that she achieved a considerable degree of this quality.

#### Case #054

Student #054 is the younger daughter in a family of two girls. Her sister is 26 years old, and now married. Chief sources of income for this family have been a 70 acre farm and the mother's work outside the home.

This subject believed, even as a child, that she was not wanted by her mother. Her parents wanted a boy at the time of her birth and had evidently commented on this in her presence. She said she did not think her mother loved her, and very strongly feels this now.

Many of the daughter's resentful feelings stem from the fact that she perceived her mother as having an "ideal" which she could not attain. She perceived her sister as one who could fulfill her mother's "ideal," and in the interview the subject stated that she was quite jealous of her older sister. Thus, one daughter was able to meet the approval of her mother and the younger daughter could not.

In personality and physical characteristics the sisters were opposites. The mother often compared the younger girl unfavorably with the older daughter, thereby increasing occasion for jealousy between the two.

The subject found a great source of comfort in the companionship of her father. The two had similar interests and spent time working together out-of-doors. The student felt her mother was jealous of the companionship which she and her father enjoyed, and her resentment toward her mother was increased as a result.

Regarding the control aspect of their relationship, the mother is severely criticized by her daughter for never reasoning with her in what she must do or must not do. It was always "do this or don't do that" with no reasons given. She thought that she had little freedom of individuality and very little freedom of behavior. Her mother's means of discipline were such that the daughter felt "worthless and mean" after being corrected. Follow-occasions for discipline she often felt like "telling mother that I hated her."

The older sister was allowed to work and earn money outside of the home. Since the mother worked it was necessary for someone to share the major responsibility of caring for the home; the younger daughter assumed this duty. This was another point of resentment toward her mother and increased feelings of jealousy toward her sister.

This student has taken several courses in child development and feels that as a result of her studies she has received a measure of insight into her own family situation. She sees her mother as a person who is not emotionally mature and one who takes her feelings out on her children.

The mother's protocol gives little indication as to why her daughter felt so resentful. Child-rearing values as expressed by

this mother were not primarily traditional, and although overt expressions of warmth and affection were not too evident in the relationship, there is little to indicate why the daughter felt so extremely hostile.

During the interview the mother stated that recently she had taken a course in psychology. It may be that she has reviewed some of her child-rearing values and practices, and revised them in the light of new understanding. She felt that she had been too strict with the younger girl, but that it had been necessary because lessons did not get across to her. To be sure the child did understand, she increased the harshness of her discipline, but did not do this with her older daughter.

This mother and daughter had many unlike perceptions. This is illustrated by information from both protocols. When the girls were younger the mother stated that it was often necessary to discipline the older girl for being mean to the younger daughter. In the student's protocol, however, this situation is perceived as reversed. According to the younger daughter she was often punished for what the older sister did.

There was also misunderstanding between the mother and daughter in regard to the financial status of the family. When the student was told she could not have something, she felt her mother was just being mean and wanted to deprive her. In reality the family just didn't have the money. The daughter always thought that money was in the bank, so evidently there had been no interchange of information with this daughter.



While her daughters were growing up financial security was of major concern to this mother. She felt compelled to work outside of the home during most of the childhood of her daughters. She now feels that this time would have been more valuably spent with her daughters.

Some of this student's strongest feelings of resentment seem to be the result of her mother's having an "ideal" which she could not meet. It is the apparent non-acceptance of the daughter that has engendered the lack of warmth, understanding and communication between the two.

Case #007

Student #007 is the oldest daughter in a family of four children. She has two younger sisters and one younger brother. The family's chief livelihood has been a 200 acre farm. Her mother and father are 53 and 54 years of age respectively. Regarding the educational backgrounds of her parents, the mother has completed one year of college work and the father completed the eighth grade.

This student did not perceive her mother as one who circumscribed her freedom of behavior. Only 30 per cent of her mother's child-rearing values were classified as primarily traditional middle class values. Of the entire group this mother was the most emphatic in stressing the importance of showing love and affection to children. She gave affection to her children unconditionally.

As a child, the subject was quite shy and unhappy in school with other children. Her mother was extremely concerned about

this and did everything in her power to alter the condition. She thought that by giving the daughter various kinds of lessons-- dancing, singing, piano-- her confidence would be increased. Believing that expressions of love were the best means of helping a child acquire confidence, this mother tried very hard to get the "love element" across to her daughter. She realized that children need to feel the supporting effect of a parent's love.

During adolescence the student felt quite free from parental control. She was permitted to make most of her own decisions, and was certainly encouraged to do her own thinking. In many instances the mother was happy to have her daughter disagree with her, as it was quite a change from a shy, unhappy little girl. In spite of the fact that her mother was perceived as one who lost her temper quickly and did not always reason with her daughter, the student expressed that there was closeness and companionship in their relationship. The idea of closeness was referred to by the mother when she stated that she wanted her children to "feel a close partnership within the family."

This mother expressed a certain amount of permissiveness in her child-rearing values. She did not believe in perfection as far as children's behavior was concerned, and she believed that her children, on many occasions, had a right to be mad at her. The most effective discipline was to love your children and get that idea across to them.

Two elements in the mother's child-rearing philosophy-- that of giving support to children when they need it and helping them

develop into happy, independent individuals, are probably important factors in determining why this student did not perceive her freedom of behavior as being circumscribed.

Case #041

This student is the youngest child in a family of five children. She has four older brothers. The one next to her in age is 28 years old, thus her position in the family has been similar to that of an only child. Her mother and father are 60 and 61 years of age respectively. A farm owned by her father enabled the family to enjoy a comfortable living. Neither her father or mother continued their education beyond high school; her father completed through the eighth grade. During the time when the student's brothers were growing up her family did not enjoy the comfortable living that was experienced by the youngest child in the family.

This subject is classified at the extreme negative end of the perception continuum. She felt quite strongly that, as a child, her freedom of behavior was circumscribed by her mother. Her position on the perception continuum was -.882.

The important question is why did this student feel so strongly that her freedom of behavior was circumscribed? A number of factors operating within her family may have contributed to this. There is an evident lack of communication between the daughter and her mother. This is apparent in both interviews. The student stated in her protocol, "We've all been rather reluctant in telling our parents things, even my brothers," and "I've never felt close (to my mother)." A lack of closeness and warmth in the re-

relationship was also evident in the mother's protocol, when she stated, "I've always gotten along better with my boys than I do with my girl. She is so distant with me. I can't get next to her. I never have, even when she was smaller."

Primarily traditional middle class child-rearing values were not expressed by this mother. In spite of the fact that she was not included in the traditional-valued group of mothers, a number of her values were traditional and criticized by her daughter.

An important value stressed by this student's mother is that of showing respect and obedience to elders. This was resented by her daughter, when she was growing up, but is now accepted as being important in child-rearing. The student also perceived her mother as one who disciplined and did not always take time to explain the reasons for her actions. She thought her mother was inconsistent in her child training.

The subject stated that her mother did not make overt expressions of affection for her children. With respect to this the student said, "I just never can remember things like that (showing her affection) when I was real young." The mother is seen as one who gave her love conditionally and feels she gave too much affection to her children. Expressions of affection were in the form of doing things for her children. She thought that they would realize her affection without her doing so much for them. According to the student enough time wasn't spent with them. The mother stated in her protocol that when they were children the young daughter had more of her time than did any of her brothers. In the process of raising so many children the mother realized she

just didn't have the time to spend with each of them. She said, "You just got them washed and dressed and put to bed and fed and you just didn't have time to do that (to sit down and read or play with them). It's just the mistake of having them too fast."

There is apparently a lack of understanding, communication and warmth in the relationship of this mother and daughter. It is also questionable if the mother's feelings of affection were transferred to her daughter.

In attempting to understand factors that may have influenced the perceptions of these two groups of students, it was believed that the observable difference was this: in the group of students who felt least circumscribed there was evidence of freedom of communication between mother and child, understanding of the child's feelings, and a realization of the importance of showing affection to children. In those instances when parents successfully transferred their feelings of affection, the degree to which their children perceived their freedom of behavior to have been circumscribed decreased.

Students who believed their mothers circumscribed their freedom of behavior came from families which lacked a closeness and warmth in relationships. The affection of mother for child was not transferred, and little communication existed between the two. In Case #021 there was, in addition to these factors, an extreme lack of acceptance of the child.

## CONCLUSIONS

Because of the stringent behavioral expectations evidenced in middle class child-rearing values, it was believed that a relationship might exist between the percentages of middle class child-rearing values expressed by a group of mothers and the degree to which their children perceived their freedom of behavior to have been circumscribed by their mothers. No relationship was found to exist between these two variables.

Of the 40 mothers included in the study only three could be classified as having primarily traditional values. With the exception of six, all students perceived their mothers as circumscribing their freedom of behavior. If one excluded the possibilities that (1) no relationship exists and (2) the methods used in analyzing data were unreliable, it would be reasonable to assume that other factors may be operating to determine why some students were so aware of their mother's control.

Case studies representing both extremes of the perception continuum facilitated the study of perceptions of the two extreme groups. Students who were not aware of control, tended to perceive the relationship with their mothers as one in which there was an ease of communication and unconditional affection given the child. The opposite was true of the students who perceived their freedom of behavior as circumscribed. In their relationship there was little evidence of understanding, or of warmth and affection. Noted also was an inability to communicate freely with one another.



It would seem desirable in the future to study the affectional and communicative aspects of the students' home environment, not only with reference to the relationship of mother and child, but also including the father. By doing this, increased insight may be gained as to why some students strongly feel the control of their mothers, and others do not.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

To Mrs. Leone Kell, the writer wishes to express sincere appreciation for the time and interest given in the development of this study. Acknowledgment is also to be given Miss Lucille Nelson for her assistance with interviewing, Mrs. Verna Hildebrand for acting as judge of material, and to the students and mothers for their willing cooperation.

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## APPENDIX

## Letter Sent to Students

The Department of Family and Child Development here at Kansas State College is doing a study of parent-child relations. This project is sponsored by the Kansas State College Agricultural Experiment Station. We are trying to find out the ways mothers and fathers bring up their children--this is where you can be of immense help.

Your part would be to let one of us interview you about your childhood. Everything you say will be of importance, therefore we hope you will answer all questions just as freely and completely as possible. And, of course, all information will be kept in strict confidence.

You probably are wondering how we got your name for this study. We are asking college juniors, who are single and not over 21 years old, to help us. Your name falls within this group and so we hope you will consent to the interview. Truly, it should prove as interesting for you as it is informative for us.

Within the next few days one of us will telephone you so that a convenient time for the interview may be arranged.

Your help with this part of the study will be greatly appreciated; and we would like to thank you in advance for the information you will be able to give us.

Sincerely,

(Mrs.) Leone Kell  
Professor of Family and Child  
Development and Family Economist,  
Agricultural Experiment Station

Martha Garrett  
Graduate Research Assistant

LK/mg





## STUDENT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Miss  
Hello, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. I am \_\_\_\_\_. Won't you sit down? I would just like to say how much Mrs. Kell and I appreciate your taking the time and trouble to help us. I'd like to emphasize again that anything you say will be kept confidential. It will never be used in any way identifying you with it. Because anything you say is important and we want you to answer the question as fully as you can. I'm tape-recording what you say instead of writing it down. (Give impression of plenty of time.) Now, before we get started, do you have any questions?

NOW THAT YOU ARE A JUNIOR, I IMAGINE IT SEEMS A LONG TIME AGO, BUT:

Girls 1. How did you come to decide to go to college? (Try to get influence of mother)

TEST RECORDER HERE

How did your parents feel about your going away to school? (You and parents both felt you were able to take care of yourself away at college?)  
(Homesick? Parents come up to visit?)

Boys 1. By this time, I imagine you have pretty much decided how you want to make a living when you get through?

What is your major here in college?

What is your occupational choice?

Your father's occupation is?

1A. How does he feel about your being a \_\_\_\_\_?

How does your mother feel about this choice?

How did you come to choose this occupation? (Mother's influence, if any.)

1B. (If occupation is same as the father's):

How long have you wanted to follow in your father's footsteps?

How would he have felt if you had selected some other occupation?

How well satisfied are you with your choice?

## I IMAGINE SOMETIMES YOUR PARENTS FEEL THEY NEVER SEE YOU:

2. How often do you get home? Why?

Is it the same place you grew up? Size?

What do you do when you get home? (Note whether mentions spending time with mother.)

Have you ever taken a (girl)  
(boy) friend home to visit your family?

Are you engaged? (If notice, leave out.)

How long have your parents known your fiance(e)?

How do your parents feel about your fiance(e)? (Especially mother's feelings.)

## THE REST OF THE TIME WE WILL BE TALKING ABOUT WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP:

3. What are some of the things you remember about this period? (Plenty of time to talk--plenty of tape.)  
Emphasize.
4. Tell me about some of the things you remember happening to you involving your mother. (watch this).
5. Did you have any brothers and sisters?  
How much older or younger were they than you?  
How did you differ from them in your likes and dislikes--personality?  
How did these differences affect the way your mother treated you?
6. When disputes arose between you and your (brothers)  
(sisters)  
(playmates) how were they usually settled?  
(rules)
7. When you were a child what (things) did your mother keep after you about (obeying) in early childhood? In adolescence? (doing) In
- Who saw to it that you did those things?
- Which parent had most to do with the "dos and don'ts" in your family? (Differences in mother and father?)
- When do you feel this was so?
- What were you supposed to do?
- What things did you do that your mother seemed to dislike the most?

What things did you do that disappointed your mother?

On what occasions?

Why do you think she was insistent on your observing these rules?

---is this what she said to you?

(high school years)

How closely were you supervised in (grade school years)

Who did most of the supervision?

How did you feel about this supervision? (Want more freedom?)

If you have children of your own, what behavior will you encourage?

What behavior will you forbid?

What do you believe your children could do that you would dislike the most?

How does this compare with the rules when you were growing up?

(BROTHER)

ON THOSE OCCASIONS WHEN YOU OR YOUR (SISTER) WOULD BREAK A RULE:

8. What kind of discipline did your mother use with you in grade school years?

In high school years? (Did understand "why" of rules?)

What were the occasions when you were disciplined?

Why do you think this was so?

How did your mother's methods differ from your father's?

What kind of discipline made you feel the worst in grade school years?

In high school years?

Why do you feel this was so? (Want to get more of "did they reason?") Might say did parents tell you so?

How did she act when disciplining you?

When you were naughty how did you think your mother felt toward you?

After you had been punished how did your mother treat you?

How long did this last?

How did you feel toward your mother after being punished?

(Want to run away?) How recently can you remember wanting to run away?

Why do you feel your mother disciplined you?

How did you feel about your mother's discipline?

What will you do with your children when they are (naughty) (disobedient)? (What do when not necessary to spank? Would do on all occasions?)

How does this compare with the ways you were corrected when you were growing up?

OF COURSE CHILDREN ARE NAUGHTY RELATIVELY SELDOM:

9. When children behave well should their parents show they are pleased? How?

What things did you do that expecially pleased your mother when you were growing up?

How did she show it?

What things made her proud of you?

If you have children what do you think they could do that would please you?

Would you show that you were pleased? How?

SOME PEOPLE FEEL YOU SHOULD LET YOUR CHILDREN KNOW YOU ARE FOND OF THEM; OTHERS FEEL THAT THIS IS WRONG AND WILL HURT THE CHILD.

10. What do you think about this?

(If should let them know it) How should they show affection?  
(If wrong to show affection) Why do you think so?

In general how do you think your mother would feel about the question of showing affection to children?

How did she let you know (you were important to her) or (she was fond of you) while you were growing up?

On what occasions did you feel closest to your mother?

What does a good mother do? (Their idea of a good mother).

What does a good father do? (Similar)

What are the best ways to being about good behavior in children?

SUPPOSE YOUR PARENTS WANTED TO GET YOU TO DO SOMETHING THEY KNEW YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO DO:

11. What was the best method to get you to do it?

Why was this so?

Did they use this method often?

Which one of your parents would be more apt to get you to do it?

Why was this so?

TO TAKE THE OPPOSITE SITUATION:

12. What generally happened in situations when you wanted to do something your mother did not approve of?

If you disagreed with your mother's decision then what would she do?

What would you do?

How often did such occasions arise?

13. When you got into your teens how were decisions reached that affected you?

In your family, whose ideas were generally accepted?

I IMAGINE YOU REMEMBER OTHER THINGS ABOUT YOUR GROWING UP THAT I HAVEN'T MENTIONED:

For example, tell me some (more) things you remember happening to you involving your mother.

I have a sheet here for you to fill out---

THE THINGS YOU HAVE SAID HAVE BEEN VERY HELPFUL. I WANT TO THANK YOU AGAIN FOR TAKING TIME TO BE INTERVIEWED.

## STUDENT FACE SHEET

County \_\_\_\_\_ Town \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_  
Year Month Day

Ages of Brothers \_\_\_\_\_ Ages of Sisters \_\_\_\_\_

Your Father's Occupation \_\_\_\_\_

If farmer, is farm owned \_\_\_\_\_ or rented \_\_\_\_\_

Kind of farming \_\_\_\_\_ Number of acres \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's outside occupation, if any \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's occupation before marriage \_\_\_\_\_

Your father's church membership \_\_\_\_\_ or preference \_\_\_\_\_

Your mother's church membership \_\_\_\_\_ or preference \_\_\_\_\_

Your church membership \_\_\_\_\_ or preference \_\_\_\_\_

Your father's education: Your mother's education:  
(Circle last year completed)

Elementary	1-6, 7, 8
High School	1, 2, 3, 4
Vocational	1, 2
College	1, 2, 3, 4
Post-Grad.	1, 2, 3, 4

Elementary	1-6, 7, 8
High School	1, 2, 3, 4
Vocational	1, 2
College	1, 2, 3, 4
Post-Grad	1, 2, 3, 4

Check one of the following statements that best fits you:

\_\_\_\_\_ I am engaged

\_\_\_\_\_ I date around

\_\_\_\_\_ I am going steady

\_\_\_\_\_ I date very seldom

\_\_\_\_\_ Other (describe)



KANSAS STATE COLLEGE

Manhattan, Kansas

Department of Family and  
Child Development

Mrs.

Dear Mrs.

Here at K-State we are carrying on a research study concerning the ideas that mothers have about child-rearing and about various situations that happen in families.

The study is sponsored by the Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station and also by our own department of Family and Child Development.

I am especially anxious to talk with you as the mother of a K-State student. Any ideas you may have will be of great value to us and will add to the general knowledge about families.

I am planning a trip to your part of the state and I should like to call on you \_\_\_\_\_ if it is at all possible. The interview will take about an hour or a little more of your time.

I do hope we can get together. It will aid tremendously in the family research project. I also believe you will find the interview quite interesting.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Leone Kell

MOTHERS' FACE SHEET

Case no. \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

County \_\_\_\_\_ Nearest Town \_\_\_\_\_

Your year of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Your husband's year of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Ages of sons \_\_\_\_\_ Ages of daughters \_\_\_\_\_

Your husband's occupation (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

If farmer, do you own farm \_\_\_\_\_ Rent farm \_\_\_\_\_

Kind of farming \_\_\_\_\_ Number of acres \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's outside occupation, if any \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's occupation before marriage \_\_\_\_\_

Year of marriage \_\_\_\_\_

Your church membership \_\_\_\_\_ or preference \_\_\_\_\_

Your husband's church membership \_\_\_\_\_ or preference \_\_\_\_\_

Your education: (Circle last year completed) Your husband's education:

- Elementary 1-6, 7, 8
- High School 1, 2, 3, 4
- Vocational 1, 2
- College 1, 2, 3, 4
- Post-Grad. 1, 2, 3, 4

- Elementary 1-6, 7, 8
- High School 1, 2, 3, 4
- Vocational 1, 2
- College 1, 2, 3, 4
- Post-Grad. 1, 2, 3, 4

How long have you lived in this community?

(1) \_\_\_\_\_ less than 1 year

(4) \_\_\_\_\_ 11 to 20 years

(2) \_\_\_\_\_ 1 to 5 years

(5) \_\_\_\_\_ 21 years or over

(3) \_\_\_\_\_ 6 to 10 years

KELL-ALDOUS PARENT INTERVIEW  
SCHEDULE ON CONTROL AND AFFECTION

How many children do you have?

What are their ages?

What are they doing now?

How do you feel about your (son) (daughter) going to college?

What was that?

Have you noticed any changes in (him) (her) (he) (she) since (she) went to college that you have been especially pleased about?

What are they?

If child in college is a boy:

What is his occupational choice?

How did he come to make this choice?

What is your (husband's) occupation?

Would he have liked for his son to take up his occupation?

or

How does your husband feel about your son's selecting the same occupation?

How do you (both) feel about your son's occupational choice?

Was there any particular occupation or profession you or your husband would have liked for him to follow?

If child in college is a girl:

What is she planning to do when she graduates?

How do you feel about this?

(SON)

I IMAGINE NOW THAT YOUR (DAUGHTER) IS IN COLLEGE IT'S HARD FOR (HIM) (HER) TO GET HOME.

(he)

How often does (she) get home? (Try to get mother's explanation of number of visits)

(he)

(he)

What does (she) usually do when (she) does get home?

(he)

Has (she) ever brought any friends home?

SOME OF THESE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN IN COLLEGE ARE STARTING TO THINK OF SETTLING DOWN:

(Son)

(girl)

(him)

Has your (daughter) brought a (boy) friend home with (her) to visit?

(he)

Is (she) engaged or married?

How did you feel about (him) getting (engaged)  
 (her) (married)?  
 (did) (boy) (his)  
 How well (do) you know the (girl) and (her) family?

IN THE YEARS BEFORE CHILDREN START THINKING OF SETTLING DOWN  
 THEIR MAIN SOCIAL INTEREST SEEMS TO BE IN FRIENDS THEY CAN HAVE  
 A GOOD TIME WITH:

How much did you try to know about the persons your  
 children would play with?  
 (his)  
 How did you feel about (their) choice of friends? (forbid  
 playing with some children?)  
 (him)  
 What kind of children did you try to encourage (them) to  
 be with?  
 (son)  
 How did your (daughter) in college differ from his brothers  
 and sisters in personality or likes and dislikes?  
 How did these differences in temperament influence the way  
 you handled your children?  
 How much did your children play with each other?  
 How did you feel about it when your children were play-  
 ing and got into disputes with friends? Each other?  
 What did you do on such occasions?

THIS BRINGS UP THE QUESTION OF THE MANY THINGS PARENTS TRY TO  
 TEACH THEIR CHILDREN TO DO AND NOT TO DO:

(rules)  
 What (things) did you try especially hard to get your chil-  
 dren to (do) (observe) when they were in (grade school)  
 (high school)? (Manners, good grades, getting in at  
 a certain time)  
 What things did your husband try to get your children to  
 do when they were in (grade school) (high school)?  
 How did you get your children to understand that they must  
 (obey these rules) (do these things)?  
 How did they react to these rules? Why?  
 What rules did you have the most trouble getting your child  
 to obey?  
 Why do you suppose this was so?  
 (son)  
 What things did your (daughter) dislike doing the most?  
 What things did your children do that you disliked the  
 most?

What things did your children do that worried you the most?

How do you feel about parents supervising their children?  
(amount)

What about your supervision of your children? (supervise  
their activities, see that they observe mother's rules)  
(grade school) (high school)

How did your children feel about this supervision?

How does this compare with the amount of supervision your  
(mother) (father) gave you?

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

What things did your mother keep after you about doing when  
you were growing up?

How did you feel about these rules?

What do you believe are the most important rules of life a  
child should learn as he grows up?

Do you feel you were able to teach these to your child as  
he was growing up? Why? Why not?

IT SEEMS ALMOST INEVITABLE THAT THERE WILL BE SOME TIMES WHEN  
A CHILD FAILS TO DO THESE THINGS THE PARENT WANTS HIM TO AND  
THE PARENT DOES SOMETHING TO CORRECT THE CHILD:

What were some of the occasions when you found it necessary  
to discipline your children when they were in (grade school)  
(high school)?

On such occasions how did you decide what type of discipline  
to use with them?

When your children did something wrong, how did you feel  
about it? (Get at mother's feeling for children)

What was your method of discipline when your children were  
in (grade school) (high school)?

Did you use different methods with the younger children?

How did your husband's disciplinary methods differ from yours?

Why do you suppose that was so?

On what occasions did he do the disciplining?

Which of you did the most disciplining?

Did you find that differences in your children's personali-  
ties made it (necessary) (desirable) to use different types  
of discipline with them?

How did they feel about the discipline?

Why was this so, do you suppose?

What kind of discipline seemed to affect your children the most? (Purt him the most?)

Why do you think this was so?

In what ways would they show it had affected them?

What would your children do after they had been disciplined?

After you had disciplined your children for doing something wrong, how would you try to treat them?

Why do you suppose your children did the things you disciplined them for when they were in grade school?

When your children were older and in high school, what were their reasons, do you suppose, for doing the things you would discipline them for?

Looking back, what seems to have been the most effective discipline? Why was this so?

When you were growing up and did something wrong, what did your parents do?

Who did the most disciplining? (Find out how they define effective discipline).

How did you feel about your mother's discipline?

How did their methods differ from your disciplinary methods?

What do you think parents should do when their children get mad at them and show it?

What do you think parents should do when children disagree with them or contradict them?

How do you think parents should handle situations when their teen-age children disagree with them?

How often does it seem to you that your children had to be corrected for doing something wrong?

LONG AFTER THE OCCASIONS WHEN YOUR CHILDREN DID SOMETHING WRONG ARE FORGOTTEN YOU'LL REMEMBER THE TIMES THEY PLEASED YOU:

When your children were growing up what were the things they would do that would make you feel pleased with them?

What made your husband feel pleased with them?



How did you show you were pleased?

When you were growing up what would you do that seemed to please your mother?

How could you tell they were pleased?

OFTEN, ON THOSE OCCASIONS WHEN PARENTS ARE ESPECIALLY PLEASED WITH THEIR CHILDREN, THEY ARE EVEN MORE CONSCIOUS OF WHAT THEIR CHILDREN MEAN TO THEM:

Some parents feel they should show their children they are fond of them. Others feel this may harm the child.  
What do you think?

How much affection do you think parents should give their children?

How did you show your children you were fond of them?  
Occasion?

What were usually the occasions when you showed affection for your children?

When did you feel closest to your children?

In general how do you think your mother would have felt about showing affection to children?

How did your mother show her affection for you?

On what occasions would she show her affection for you?

When did you feel closest to your (mother) (father)?

How did you feel about the affection they showed?

SPEAKING OF OCCASIONS WHEN PARENTS SHOW AFFECTION FOR THEIR CHILDREN:

What is your idea of a good child?

How do you think children usually behave?

What are the best ways to encourage good behavior in children?

How much time were you able to spend with your children when they were growing up?

CONTINUING ALONG THESE SAME LINES:

What is your idea of a good mother? Have your ideas changed during the time you were bringing up your children?

What is your idea of a good father?

REGARDLESS OF HOW MUCH OR HOW LITTLE TIME PARENTS HAVE IT SEEMS AS IF THERE ARE ALWAYS THINGS COMING UP THAT HAVE TO BE DECIDED:

How are decisions reached in your family?

How much should teen-age children know about such matters?

How did your children get their spending money? (allowance or earned it?)

What did your children do with the money they earned?

How were decisions reached that affected your children when they were teen-agers?

How would you handle situations when they would want to do something you did not think they should do in (grade school) (high school)?

What usually was the cause of such disagreements?

How often would they occur?

NOW WHEN YOU THINK BACK OVER ALL THE MANY THINGS THAT HAPPENED WHEN YOUR CHILDREN WERE GROWING UP:

If you had it all to do over, would you modify or change any of the things you did in raising them? How?

I HAVE SEVERAL FORMS ALONG THE SAME LINE OF THE THINGS WE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT THAT I WOULD LIKE FOR YOU TO FILL OUT.

COLLEGE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR MOTHERS' CONTROL  
AS RELATED TO THEIR MOTHERS' CHILD REARING VALUES

by

MARTHA ANN GARRETT

B. S., Florida State University, 1955

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Family and Child Development

KANSAS STATE COLLEGE  
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Within recent years social scientists have become increasingly aware of the need for using new frames of reference in the study of human behavior. One new reference point is the individual's perception of his own behavior.

Individual perceptions are largely the product of the cultural setting in which one lives. Receiving intense study in recent years, American middle class culture is described as having rigid behavioral expectations. These behavioral expectations are expressed in child-rearing values.

The demand for subjective information, such as the perceptions and values of individuals, brings to light the need for new methods in social research. Particularly adapted to securing subjective information is a non-directive, semi-structured interview.

The purposes of this study were to determine (1) the percentage of traditional middle class child-rearing values expressed by a group of mothers, (2) the degree to which the children of these mothers perceived their freedom of behavior to have been circumscribed by their mothers, and (3) the relationship, if any, between the mothers' percentages of traditional child-rearing values and their children's perceptions of them as circumscribing their freedom of behavior.

Interviews were conducted with 40 students and the mothers of these students. Included in the student group were 19 boys and 21 girls who were juniors in college, 20 years of age or under, single, and living away from home. All interviews were mechanically recorded and protocols typed directly from the tapes.

To ascertain each mother's percentage of traditional child

rearing values, those words, phrases or statements indicating desired child behavior were selected from each protocol. To determine the degree to which each student perceived his freedom of behavior to have been circumscribed by his mother, statements were selected from each student protocol and rated according to a system for analyzing qualitative material. Students were placed on a continuum ranging from those who perceived themselves as being most circumscribed to those who perceived themselves as being least circumscribed. In addition to using this more objective method of analyzing qualitative material, case studies were made of students representing both extremes of the perception continuum. Two judges were used in rating the students' perceptions and the mothers' values.

To determine if there was a relationship between the mothers' values and the students' perceptions, the data using these two variables as coordinates were plotted graphically.

Findings of the study were:

1. Of 40 mothers interviewed only three expressed primarily traditional middle class child-rearing values.

2. With the exception of six, all students expressed themselves as believing that their freedom of behavior had been circumscribed by their mothers.

3. On the basis of the methods employed in the study, no relationship was found between the mothers' percentages of traditional child-rearing values and the students' perceptions of having their freedom of behavior circumscribed.

4. On the basis of the case studies it is believed that other

factors such as the affectional relationship of mother and child and the ease with which they can communicate are important in determining whether a child will feel his freedom of behavior circumscribed. It would be desirable for these factors to be given further study.