Mothers' Attitudes Toward the Behavior of the Young Child

Rosemary Maughan Lundquist

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MOTHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE BEHAVIOR
OF THE YOUNG CHILD

by

Rosemary Maughan Lundquist

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
in
Family and Child Development

Approved:

Major Professor

Committee Member

Committee Member

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah
1973
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to extend my appreciation to the many people who have encouraged and helped with the preparation and completion of this thesis. I would like to thank members of my graduate committee. I am grateful to Dr. Carroll Lambert, who as my major professor, spent time offering suggestions and guidance throughout this research project. Dr. Don C. Carter contributed many valuable suggestions and evaluations which I sincerely appreciate. I extend a special thank you to Jane Lott for serving on my committee and for her willingness to offer many helpful suggestions and words of encouragement.

To the mothers studied, I express my admiration and appreciation. The psychotherapists' and the pre-school administrator's cooperation was most helpful and will be remembered.

I would also like to thank members of my family whose kindness and support has made the completion of this study possible, especially to my two daughters, Stephanie and Jennifer, for their inspiration.

Rosemary Maughan Lundquist
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypotheses</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing Role of Women</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-esteem of Mothers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of Self-esteem on Attitudes of Mothers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Review</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODS AND PROCEDURES</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Data</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FINDINGS</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCUSSION</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for Further Study</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Total responses of mothers by those receiving psychotherapy and those not in treatment</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Frequency of strong or mild responses by mothers receiving psychotherapy and those who are not</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Responses of mothers to question 9</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Responses of mothers to question 26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

Mothers' Attitudes Toward the Behavior of the Young Child

by

Rosemary Maughan Lundquist, Master of Science

Utah State University, 1973

Major Professor: Dr. Caroll C. Lambert
Department: Family and Child Development

The purpose of this study was to determine if the mothers' feelings of self-esteem influence her attitudes toward child behavior.

Two groups were studied: One group of mothers who were receiving psychotherapy, and one group who were not.

Data for this study were collected by individually interviewing twenty-five mothers who were receiving psychotherapy and twenty-five mothers who were not. The mothers were presented a standardized questionnaire with thirty-five items. The mothers' responses were evaluated and the two groups were compared.

The findings of this study indicate that the mothers' feelings of self-esteem do influence her attitudes toward child behavior and that there is a difference in attitudes between mothers receiving psychotherapy and those who are not.

(48 pages)
INTRODUCTION

Many social scientists and educators consider the mother to be the single most important person in the young child's life. Henry (1957) sees the mother as the principal source of nurture to the child. The mother-child relationship is a primary factor in the child's relating and behavioral processes.

The mother's self concept and feelings of fulfillment are important characteristics associated with her attitudes toward child behavior. Harris (1959) points out that when there is too much discrepancy and conflict between what a mother aspires to in her mothering and what actually occurs, she is prone to feel resentful, disappointed and guilty. In her conflict, she may take these feelings out on the child, the father, or herself. When these feelings reach a certain intensity, they constitute a problem in mothering.

Rheingold (1965) states that one way to measure the mother-child relationship is to investigate the mother's attitudes and behavior and then to determine their effects on the child. Read (1945) found that what parents think about their own role of parenthood appears to be more closely related to how the child behaves than what they think of child behavior itself.

In undertaking this study the researcher sought to find if there is a difference in the attitudes toward the young child's behavior between two groups of mothers with different degrees of self-esteem.
Problem

The problem to be investigated in this study is whether there is a difference in attitudes toward the young child's behavior between two groups of mothers with different degrees of self-esteem.

This study is an extension of Harris' (1959) study regarding attitudes of mothering as related to feelings of self-esteem and will concern itself with studying the mother who has a pre-school child between the ages of two through five.

Purpose

A review of the literature indicates the importance of the mother-child relationship in the development of the child. Harris (1959) says when there is too much discrepancy between what a mother aspires to in her mothering and what actually occurs, she is apt to feel resentful, disappointed and guilty and to take these feelings out on the child. It is the purpose of this study to determine if the mother's feelings of self-esteem do in fact influence her attitudes toward child behavior strongly enough that the impact can be recognized by questions from the Parent Attitude Research Instrument developed by Schaefer and Bell (1965).

Definition of Terms

A mother receiving psychotherapy

A mother receiving psychological counseling. She may be receiving counseling from a psychologist, psychiatrist, or social worker, in a
clinic or private practice setting. It is assumed that she will have lower self-esteem than a mother not receiving counseling.

A mother not receiving psychotherapy

A mother not receiving psychotherapy. It is assumed that she will have higher self-esteem than a mother receiving psychotherapy.

Self-esteem

Respect for oneself.

Hypotheses

There will be a difference in the attitudes toward the young child's behavior on the part of mothers receiving psychotherapy as compared to mothers not receiving psychotherapy.
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Changing Role of Women

Studies reveal that many women are not finding total fulfillment within the home and the traditional homemaker mother role. The United States Bureau of Census (1970) reveals that 40 percent of all of the women in the United States are working and that even among young wives with husbands present and children under six years of age, one out of every four has a full or part-time job. Hunt (1963) discusses the trend for modern women to desire careers in very large numbers. Hunt states that the Woman’s Bureau data on changing patterns in female employment make it seem likely that more and more educated young women will hold jobs both before and after the infancy of their children, being absent from the labor market only a few years rather than fifteen or twenty as has been true in the past. Hunt further concludes that the percentage growth of women among accountants, auditors, chemists, draftsman and various kinds of laboratory assistants and heretofore male dominated fields is most striking. American women more and more find fulfillment and satisfactions in a multiplicity of alternatives in their lives.

Rose (1959) notes that while many women go to work out of economic necessity; others seek careers as a flight from domestic roles or as protest against their perception of the role of women in our society. Rose further states that while many women in the home are dissatisfied, they accept the assumption that employment outside the home is inherently in conflict with the needs of family unity and child-rearing activities.
Nye and Hoffman (1963) studied the employed mother in America and reached several conclusions: (1) Present data provide support for the position that women employed full-time outside the home find more satisfaction in their work than non-employed women find in housework. (2) Contrary to popular belief, the employed mothers of preschool children verbalize not less but more satisfaction with their daily lives than their non-employed counterparts. (3) Working and non-working mothers do not differ in their reports of problems in rearing their children, and the working mothers tend to have more positive orientation to changes that accompany parenthood. (4) The working mothers tend to be less likely to see parenthood as restricting, burdensome, or demanding. Nye and Hoffman state that the association between maternal employment and self-acceptance tends to support the view that many women choose outside work because of the lack of a sense of usefulness and of identity that confront mothers whose household chores are reduced. Because of the lack of significance attached to her work, the housewife feels she is incompetent and that her contribution is a small one. Nye and Hoffman (1963) continue that no one expresses this more clearly than housewives themselves when they answer the inquiry about their occupation with the phrase, "just a housewife." Bringing home a paycheck, whether it is added to the family budget or saved for a rainy day seems in contrast to be a sign of competence and a tangible contribution to the family.

In Aspects of Anxiety (Roche Laboratories, 1968), the author states that women's motherly role and her historic role in homemaking have been greatly reduced by our culture. Her child-bearing and
child-care contributions to society diminished as the birth rate fell and her usefulness as a teacher and supervisor of her older children suffered as the schools assumed more and more of the educational burden and as teaching the arts of homemaking and child care declined. The author explains that even today, if a woman seeks outside occupation, she goes into an environment where she frequently meets bias and that success in her work outside the home may bring about an even greater denial of her biologic female role.

Peterson (1963) concludes that while there are those who might argue that society is too rough on the women who want to stay home to be wives and mothers, the current push for equal rights has led to equal responsibilities and the able woman finds she cannot hide her abilities, her strengths, her training under the myth that someone else or something outside her control prevents her from realizing her potential. She may choose homemaking, mothering but not as an escape from her other talents.

Rossi (1964) indicated that opportunities for women to find acceptable compromise solutions for the problem of their commitments to family and work will be improved by institutional modifications designed to assist them with the complexities of their dual role. She has suggested an expansion of day-care centers and practical mothering services, inner-city housing to provide ease of contact with schools, child-care services, household help and places of work. She would eradicate our rigid sex-role stereotypes, beginning in early childhood, to enable boys and girls to discover their qualities as human beings, rather than to find ways to fit the pattern of the cultural mold.
A girl would then be encouraged to view marriage and parenthood as one strand among many in her life. She would view motherhood as one among many highlights of her life, experienced with joy but not as the exclusive basis for a sense of self-fulfillment and purpose in life.

Hunt (1963) stresses the need for the modern woman to be adaptive. He suggests she envision herself as a highly complex person whose potential role-set is unlike that of almost any woman in the past. He continues that if from childhood on she is encouraged to conceive of herself as capable of many things—and to recognize that in the modern context she will need many new forms of fulfillment—she will not vacillate in her self-concept throughout her school years, not play the game of pretended dumbness, nor abandon the many cherished aspects of herself.

Although the role of women is changing, we must recognize as Krech and Greenberg (1952) conclude that what for one woman is an eminently satisfying and rewarding program is to another a confused nightmare and, to still another, a down-right bore! The drives which make some women want to stay home and others to go out are deep, emotional, and hard to measure.

**Self-esteem of Mothers**

Giovacchini (1965) sees self-image as an important aspect of the ego's structure and feels that disturbances in this aspect of personality, have become more frequently observed in recent years. Giovacchini says that when one feels dissatisfied with one's self-image, there are feelings of inadequacy, helplessness, and vulnerability.
Komaravsky (1953) describes two types of housewives: those who have accepted full-time homemaking and chafe only against some particular features of it and others who have reluctantly given up jobs and who still yearn for a new way of life. One generalization applied in lesser or greater degree to both types: Sharp discontinuities characterized the whole pattern of their lives. The incentives and the psychological adaptation at one stage of her life cycle did not make for a smooth transition to the next one. Komaravsky suggests further that a psychological unpreparedness for homemaking was found even among women who had always looked forward to it as a natural and much desired goal.

It is concluded by Greenberg and Krech (1952) that the women who have a choice are the ones who really face the dilemma. They state that you can resolve inner conflicts when necessity leaves but a single course to follow in the same way you can meet outside criticism when you see your duty clearly. For widows who work, there is nothing but praise. For a woman who, by choice, works four hours a day or two days a week there is often guilt within herself and condemnation from outside. They state further that women who have professional interests are well-trained often operate under such a sense of guilt (when there is no economic urgency for them to work) that the moment there are any problems with their children they jump to the conclusion that their outside work must be the cause. They often do not question whether mothers who stay at home have these same problems. Modern mothers need to be encouraged perhaps also helped—to free themselves
from the obsession that obligations as a mother must confine them so closely to their children that they cannot share in the concerns of their neighbors and fellow citizens. A mother today should be encouraged to use her newly gained time, training and abilities in genuine work—in play—that is interesting to her as a person and a citizen. By using her energies in this way rather than applying them more intensively to her children she will be benefiting her children, herself, and the rest of us. Greenberg and Krech (1952) continue that they would like to see a climate of opinion developed in which a woman is considered a good mother not only if her outside activities are all in the service of the community, but where she is also an equally good mother if her chief interest outside of her family is working on modern dance, real estate, scientific research, journalism, architecture or politics.

Research on the mother-child relationship with regard to child behavior indicates that how the mother feels about her own behavior is reflected in how she feels about her child's behavior. Read (1945) advises that parent education should give more attention to the behavior of parents and their concept of their roles as a supporting or controlling force, because what parents think about their own role of parenthood appears to be more closely related to child behavior than what they think of child behavior itself.

Cyrus (1952) discusses the problem of overprotection and the responsibility the homemaker mother feels.
Modern psychology has succeeded in making everyone aware of the importance of the mother-child relationship, but it seems to have left almost everybody with the impression that all that is necessary is that mothers' stay home with their children. Actually the intense, mutually exhausting emotional and physical relationship which develops between mothers and preschool children in the typical urban family lead inevitably to that worst of all maternal sins, overmothering with undercurrents of hostility, and that most fatal of all child responses, overdependence with undercurrents of resentment. (pp. 393-394)

Cyrus, in discussing further the sense of self-fulfillment and self-esteem of women, says:

As long as we educate women, even partially to be interested in and responsible for the needs and problems of their world, and then isolate them in houses as soon as they become mothers and load them with work which they spent their youth learning to regard as menial and unintelligent, we should stop being surprised if they emerge finally with no faith in themselves and no real interest in anybody or anything but their own narrowed and distorted desires.

**Effects of Self-esteem on Attitudes of Mothers**

Negative attitudes on the part of the mother can be characteristic of various kinds of behavior, such as over-protectiveness and overindulgence. Symonds (1949) observes that overindulgence and overprotection frequently mask underlying feelings of rejection and that although to a casual observer it might appear the overindulged child was the recipient of an overdose of love and fondness and the overprotected child the recipient of an overdose of love, these attitudes may conceal and express hate toward the child. Symonds further notes that the outstanding characteristic of this parent attitude is the inconsistency of the behavior. The parent will feel one way today and
another way toward the child tomorrow. Symonds (1949) observes further that ambivalence is another attitude which may arouse feelings of inferiority in the child. Since the child does not know where he stands with his parents, he must be continually on his guard lest punishment fall on him for behavior which only a moment ago was condoned or even encouraged, thus his ego may be severely threatened.

Further research on overprotection by Levy (1943) found that women who were "constitutionally maternal" (that is to say women who had their needs met solely in being a mother) were influenced both by current circumstances and childhood experiences. They were influenced in a way that made their behavior with their children less appropriate than it might have been had their own needs been more fully gratified.

Komarovsky (1953) stresses that child raising may bring deep satisfaction to women but it is also a source of worry. When 306 mothers were asked to indicate the chief sources of (a) fatigue, (b) worry, and (c) friction in their lives, the majority put at the top of the list in each of the three categories not housework, or marriage problems, or financial worries but child rearing. The lack of skill at handling children on the part of some mothers precipitates problems. Far from getting the sense of growing mastery over her problems, she all too often has the feeling of barely keeping her head above water.

Komarovsky (1953) continues that the loss of self-esteem which accompanies the relinquishment of a career was revealed in such phrases as "my ego was deflated," "I felt that I no longer amounted to much." "I lost my self-respect." (The shared feeling that people who don't
have an occupation don't amount to much). In conclusion, Komarovsky suggests that the value placed upon work and success in one's vocation is one of the central values of our culture derived from the puritan and the capitalist ethics. Women as well as men are beginning to be subject to the moral imperatives of work and success. "What do you do?" is a question asked with increasing frequency of women and doing refers to gainful employment.

Grey (1962) interviewed 203 mothers and found that most women had to spend more hours a day mothering their children than they wanted to. None of the women studied had jobs or careers. Grey feels that there is a strain in the fulfillment of the role of the mother demanded by other women versus the actual role and the need for a sense of self-development, and that the feelings of guilt, over imagined or actual neglect of children, or lack of self-assertion are common anxieties that lead women into psychotherapy. This strain of self-assertion may manifest itself in feelings of depression, feelings of hopelessness and the inability to "cope"!

In discussing the responsibility and feelings of the mother, Greenberg and Krech (1952) illustrate that each mother typically tries to do so much for and to be so much to her children, especially when she has only one child or two, that the parent-child relationship becomes too intense. This is particularly likely to be the case when the mother has given up her outside work or special interests. Even if it were possible to disregard what all this does to the mother as
a person, they conclude, we have to inquire whether after all it is best for the child. What does this do to the relationship between a mother and her growing-up child? What does it do to the growing-up child's view of his mother if he sees her mainly as a person in whose head only little thoughts about his teeth, his fingernails, his tidiness, his homework go round and round. What does it do to the child's view of himself? That she should love no one more than her husband and her children is one thing, but that on every level of a woman's concern and interest her children are to be the center, the beginning, and the ending of her world is something else. It isn't only the mothers who suffer when they are dissatisfied with the way their lives are arranged, as they work out their dissatisfactions, it is also their children and husbands who bear the brunt.

In discussing the effect of maternal attitudes on child behavior, Forbes (1914) suggests that the child must know his parents, but he must also know other men and women. He must know his home, but also the broader world of park, playground and school. He must be a little citizen of the world, not a prisoner of the nursery. He must be neither coddled nor neglected, and must be given the love that teaches him to love humanity, not the adoration that only shows him how to love himself.

A study by Oppenheim and Mitchell (1966) revealed that the only real difference between a group of clinic children receiving psychotherapy and matched children not receiving psychotherapy was their mothers. Mothers of clinic children tended to see themselves as "suffering from nerves," found it difficult to cope with house, husband,
and children. They worried more than non-clinic mothers about their children, and were more puzzled and helpless about dealing with them. Non-clinic mothers did not present such a distressed, harassed picture and were far more likely to see their children's difficulties as temporary and to see no reason for seeking medical advice about them.

The reasons for seeking psychotherapy vary as do the many diagnoses for forms of mental illness. However, many women seeking psychotherapy experience what is termed by psychotherapists as "middle-age housewife depression."

Beck (1967) illustrates that a depressed person is one who has a negative self-concept and is suffering a loss of emotional involvement in other people or activities. This is usually accompanied by a loss of satisfaction regarding daily life.

Rose (1959) sees the mothers' request for psychiatric or casework help for herself, her child, or other members of her family as an indication that she is searching for a more satisfying life for herself. Rose explains that when a mother's need for satisfaction transcends in nature or quantity the emotional return that can be expected from child rearing, distortion in the child's development provides a cue to the mother to seek appropriately what she needs. A mother who is physically close to her child, but lacking in warmth and enthusiasm about daily life, including child care, may fail to stimulate her child to learning and independence.
Summary of Review

The role of the modern woman is not clear cut and well defined. Many women still find the fulfillment and stimulation they need within the home and do contribute to a healthy child-rearing environment. However, the role of the traditional homemaker mother is changing and more women are seeking employment and additional ways of achieving self-gratification.

The research indicates that how the mother feels about her own role of motherhood is more closely related to child behavior than what she thinks of the behavior itself. A mother who has feelings of fulfillment and self-gratification is better able to provide a healthy child-rearing environment.

Some authors see a mother's request for psychotherapy as an indication that she is lacking in self-esteem and self-assertion. A mother receiving psychotherapy can be characterized as a mother searching for a more satisfying life for herself. Distortion in the child's development provides a cue to the mother to seek psychotherapy. A mother who is lacking in warmth and enthusiasm about her daily life may fail to stimulate her child to learning and independence.
METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Sample

The subjects that were used to test the hypotheses consisted of two groups of mothers from a suburban area north of Los Angeles, California. Twenty-five of the mothers interviewed were mothers who were receiving psychotherapy and had a child age two through five. The other twenty-five were mothers, who to the researchers knowledge, were not receiving psychotherapy and had a child age two through five.

Mothers who were receiving psychotherapy

The twenty-five mothers who were receiving psychotherapy were selected from the private practices of four psychotherapists who were known to the researcher. The names were selected, using the names of mothers who had a pre-school child as the criteria. The mothers were approached by the psychotherapists and asked to participate. This sample is not a representative sample. These were mothers who were available to the researcher March 1973 in Los Angeles County, California and represent themselves.

Description. The ages of the mothers in psychotherapy ranged from 23 to 38 with an average age of 34 years. The average number of children was two, while 44 percent of the mothers are working, 60 percent have college degrees and 72 percent are married.
Mothers who were not receiving psychotherapy

The twenty-five mothers who, it was assumed by the researcher, were not receiving psychotherapy were mothers from a church-operated pre-school in Los Angeles County, California. The mothers were selected on a volunteer basis at a monthly parent meeting. After a brief explanation of the study, a paper numbered to twenty-five was passed around the room until the desired number of signatures were obtained.

Description. The ages of the mothers not receiving psychotherapy ranged from 26 to 40 with an average age of 31 years. The average number of children was two, while 8 percent of the mothers are working, 24 percent have college degrees and 100 percent are married.

Comparison of the two groups of mothers

A comparison of the two groups of mothers revealed that mothers receiving psychotherapy were more educated, a higher percent of them were working, and a higher percent of mothers receiving psychotherapy were unmarried. The average number of children was the same for both groups of mothers.

Setting

Setting of mothers not receiving psychotherapy

The non-clinical pre-school used in this study consists of six separate groups of pre-school children. Each group was in a room
situated side by side in the shape of an L. There were two outside play yards shared by all six groups. There was also a school office, storage room and equipment room.

The mothers were interviewed in the school office, a room containing a desk on one wall, a table and two chairs along the other wall, and a cupboard containing various pre-school manipulative toys on the other wall. It was assumed that these mothers were not receiving psychotherapy.

Setting of mothers receiving psychotherapy

The mothers receiving psychotherapy were interviewed at four separate psychotherapists' private practice offices. The offices were similar in that they each contained a desk and a sofa. The offices differed in the size of the room, the style and number of objects decorating the room.

Instrument

The data for this research was collected by the use of an interview questionnaire. Thirty-five items from "The Parent Attitude Research Instrument," a standardized test designed by Schaefer and Bell (1965) were selected by the researcher and approved by the thesis committee (see Appendix). The question investigated in this study was: Do the feelings and attitudes of mothers receiving psychotherapy vary from the feelings and attitudes of mothers who are not receiving
psychotherapy? The items selected from the instrument were those designed to reflect the problem being investigated. The questionnaire had four separate categories in which the mothers responses could be recorded: (A) strongly agree (a) mildly agree (d) mildly disagree (D) strongly disagree.

Methods

Twenty minutes was allotted each mother to complete the questionnaire. The researcher used the first five minutes to describe and discuss needed information for completion of the questionnaire, such as the importance of completing all of the questions, that the answers should reflect their own opinions, and that their identity would remain anonymous. After answering any questions, the researcher left the room for the remaining fifteen minutes while the mother completed the questionnaire.

The same procedure was used for both groups of mothers.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted involving twenty-five neighbors and friends of the researcher who had a pre-school child between the ages of two and five. All of the mothers interviewed were living in Los Angeles County, California. Five of the mothers interviewed were receiving psychotherapy. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine what adjustments needed to be made before administering the test to the sample such as: rewording of the information sheet, directions, the length of time to utilize the questionnaire, and the clarity of the questionnaire.
Description and administration

It had been decided in advance that it would be desirable if the length of each interview should not exceed twenty minutes. Some of the mothers were distracted with the researcher in the room. Therefore, it was decided that it would be most beneficial if the researcher left the room while the mothers responded to the questionnaire. It was also observed that it was necessary to stress the importance, to the mothers, of answering the questions honestly and to assure the mothers that their identity would remain anonymous. The first five minutes were used to give instructions and to answer questions. The remaining fifteen minutes were used by the mother to complete the questionnaire.

Results of the pilot study indicated the need to reword the information sheet as certain questions were found to be confusing. The word "own" was added to occupation, age, and education to read own occupation, own age, and own education. This clarification was necessary for the mothers to distinguish the reference to herself.

Statistical analysis was not done on the pilot study data.

Analysis of Data

The statistical test employed in the study was the chi-square. It was used to determine whether any significant difference existed between the scores of the twenty-five mothers receiving psychotherapy and the group of twenty-five mothers who were not receiving psychotherapy. The minimum level of .05 was used to assess the significance of the relationship in this study.
FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine if there was a difference in attitudes of two groups of mothers towards the behavior of their pre-school children. All mothers in the study sample had at least one pre-school child. The two groups of mothers differed in that one group of mothers was receiving psychotherapy; the other group was not. There were twenty-five mothers in each group.

The attitudes were determined by evaluating the responses of mothers to thirty-five items selected from the Parent Attitude Research Instrument, a standardized test designed by Schaefer and Bell (1965). The mothers responses to the questions were recorded in four separate categories (A) strongly agree (a) mildly agree (d) mildly disagree (D) strongly disagree.

The following hypothesis was used as a guide in this study:

Hypothesis

There will be a difference in the attitudes toward the young child's behavior on the part of mothers receiving psychotherapy, as compared to mothers not receiving psychotherapy.

The chi-square statistical test was employed to determine whether any significant difference existed between the scores of the twenty-five mothers receiving psychotherapy and the group of twenty-five mothers who were not receiving psychotherapy. The minimum level of .05 was used to assess the significance of the relationship in this study.
The findings, based on the chi-square statistical test indicate that a significant difference did occur, in comparing the total number of responses of the two groups of mothers, at the .01 level. Based on these results, the hypothesis was accepted (see Table 1).

Table 1 indicates the total responses of mothers by those receiving psychotherapy and those not in treatment. The mothers receiving psychotherapy reveal stronger responses in categories strongly agree and strongly disagree, supporting the hypotheses that a difference in the two groups of mothers would occur. The mothers receiving psychotherapy did not differ markedly in their responses in the stronger and mild categories. The difference is obvious, however, when they were compared to the mothers not receiving psychotherapy. The comparison revealed that mothers receiving psychotherapy responded more strongly than the mothers not receiving psychotherapy. The fact that the mothers involved in psychotherapy would respond more strongly can be viewed as a sign of strength or a sign of weakness, depending on whether this pattern is seen as an expression of hostility or freedom from excessive inhibitions.

Test results indicate that a greater proportion of mothers receiving psychotherapy have strong attitudes as compared to the mothers not receiving psychotherapy. The mothers receiving psychotherapy responded more often in the strongly agree and strongly disagree categories as compared to the mothers not receiving psychotherapy. The mothers receiving psychotherapy did not differ markedly themselves
Table 1. Total responses of mothers by those receiving psychotherapy and those not in treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree (fo-ft)²</th>
<th>Mildly agree (fo-ft)²</th>
<th>Mildly disagree (fo-ft)²</th>
<th>Strongly disagree (fo-ft)²</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mothers receiving psychotherapy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>184</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>196</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>246</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mothers not receiving psychotherapy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>226</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>281</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>441</td>
<td>1.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>215</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>329</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.188</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>.19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>X² = 12.00</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2 by 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df = 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of significance = .01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(their scores were 434 total strong responses and 426 total mild responses), it is when they are compared to the mothers not receiving psychotherapy that the difference occurred. The mothers not receiving psychotherapy scored much higher in their mild responses of 353 when compared to their strong responses of 507 and to the mothers receiving psychotherapy in both the strong and mild categories.

The categories in Table 2 indicate that the mothers responses have been combined so that strong indicates both strongly agree and strongly disagree while mild indicates both mildly agree and mildly disagree.

Table 2. Frequency of strong or mild responses by mothers receiving psychotherapy and those who are not

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strong</th>
<th>Mild</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers receiving psychotherapy</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>250</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>434</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers not receiving psychotherapy</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>208</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>353</td>
<td>507</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[X^2 = 11.47\]
\[df = 2\]
Level of significance = .01

When analyzed separately, two questions were found to be statistically significant. They were questions number 9 and 26.
Question number 9. "Mothers very often feel they can't stand their children a moment longer."

Question number 26. "A good mother will find enough social life within the family."

Table 3 indicates the responses of the mothers in both groups to question 9. "Mothers very often feel they can't stand their children a moment longer." The question was found to be statistically significant at the .01 level.

Table 3. Responses of mothers to question 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Mildly agree</th>
<th>Mildly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers receiving psychotherapy</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers not receiving psychotherapy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 8.0$

df = 3

Level of significance = .01

Table 4 indicates the responses of the mothers in both groups to question 26. "A good mother will find enough social life within the family." The question was found to be statistically significant at the .05 level.
Table 4. Responses of mothers to question 26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Mildly agree</th>
<th>Mildly disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mothers receiving psychotherapy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mothers not receiving psychotherapy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 7.9$

df = 3

Level of significance = .05

The mothers responses to the questions referred to in Tables 3 and 4 indicate a difference in the attitudes between the two groups of mothers. Mothers receiving psychotherapy more strongly agree to question 9. "Mothers very often feel they can't stand their children a moment longer," and more strongly disagree to question 26. "A good mother will find enough social life within the family," than mothers who are not receiving psychotherapy. These responses lend additional support to the hypotheses that a difference would occur.

According to the present study, it is reasonable to assume that attitudes of mothers toward the behavior of the young child, will be different between mothers receiving psychotherapy and mothers who are not.

Mothers receiving psychotherapy indicate they are not finding the fulfillment they need in the home and they are more bothered by child behavior than mothers not receiving psychotherapy.
DISCUSSION

The hypothesis employed to guide this study was: There will be a difference in the attitudes toward the young child's behavior on the part of mothers receiving psychotherapy as compared to mothers not receiving psychotherapy.

The findings indicate that there was a difference in the attitudes of the mothers. The chi-square statistical test with the .05 level of significance used as the criterion of significance. The overall responses of the mothers were found to be significant at the .01 level. The categories where the responses fell revealed a significant difference between mothers. When analyzing each question separately, however, only question 9 and question 26 showed statistical significance at the .05 level.

It is the strong responses of the mothers receiving psychotherapy in both the strongly agree and strongly disagree categories that provide the statistical significance at the .01 level.

The findings indicate that the difference between mothers who are receiving psychotherapy in terms of strong and mild responses is negligible. In other words, the responses were almost equally divided between strong and mild. In contrast, the mothers who are not receiving psychotherapy produced a substantially larger number of mild rather than strong responses. The difference between the two groups may be due to several possible factors. The review of the literature
supports the concept that a person seeking psychotherapy is more often a person suffering from a lack of self-esteem having a low self-image. Rose (1959) sees the mothers' request for psychiatric or casework help as an indication that she is searching for a more satisfying life for herself. Question 4 of this study further supports this view. In comparing the two groups of mothers when they responded to question 4 "Children will get on a woman's nerves if she has to be with them all day," a significantly stronger proportion of mothers receiving psychotherapy strongly agree.

Further observation as to why the mothers involved in psychotherapy would respond more strongly leads us to at least two conclusions:

(1) The fact that the mother is receiving psychotherapy and has stronger opinions can be observed as a sign of strength. She may be more aware of her feelings thus she may be more able to express a strong opinion. She can be observed as a woman who is moving in the positive direction of making her life more meaningful. With that direction may come feelings of strength, thus the strong opinions.

(2) The fact that the mother receiving psychotherapy has stronger opinions can be observed as a sign of disturbance. An example of this is question 9, "Mothers very often feel that they can't stand their children a moment longer." A mother who strongly agrees with this question may be a mother who is disturbed and is having a hard time "coping" with the demands of child raising, therefore, she has sought the psychotherapy she needs.
Read (1945) in stressing that what a mother thinks about her role of motherhood is more closely related to how the child behaves than what she thinks of child behavior itself, would lead us to conclude that a mother who very often feels she can't stand her children a moment longer, would have a greater chance of having a child with a behavior problem. Rose (1959) sees distortion in the child's development as a cue to the mother to seek psychotherapy.

Oppenheim and Mitchell (1966) reveals that the only real difference between a group of children receiving psychotherapy and matched children not receiving psychotherapy was their mothers. Mothers of the children receiving psychotherapy saw themselves as "suffering from nerves" and found it difficult to cope with house, husband, and children.

The findings indicate that the mothers who are receiving psychotherapy are having to cope with problems which are difficult for them to handle. It may be noted that there are no significant differences between mothers receiving psychotherapy and mothers who are not was in their responses to 33 of the 35 questions in the questionnaire. However, the two questions for which there were significant differences in responses appear to provide reinforcement for the thought that the tendency of the mothers receiving psychotherapy to respond with expressions of strong feeling seems to be related to the fact that they feel pushed to the limit in terms of child care. (Mothers in psychotherapy often responded by agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement that "Mothers very often feel that they can't stand their children a moment longer.") In addition, they tended to strongly disagree or
to disagree with the thought that they might "find enough social life within the family." The strength of their responses in these two areas suggests, to the researcher, that the mothers receiving psychotherapy were feeling pressures at home, and were having to cope with problems in the family situation which are difficult for them to handle. It is logical to assume this would lead to their tendency to respond to questions dealing with children and family situations with expressions of strong feelings.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The role of the modern woman is changing and more and more women are not finding total fulfillment within the home and the traditional homemaker mother type role. The United States Bureau of Census (1970) indicates that one out of every four mothers with husbands present and children under six years of age has a full or part time job.

The mother's feelings of self-esteem and fulfillment are important characteristics associated with her attitudes toward child behavior.

Rheingold (1965) states that one way to measure the mother-child relationship is to investigate the mother's attitudes and behavior and then to determine their effects on the child.

It has been the purpose of this study to investigate the attitudes of two groups of mothers with assumed degrees of self-esteem, toward the behavior of the young child. There were twenty-five mothers in each group. All of the mothers had a pre-school child between the ages of two through five. One group of mothers was receiving psychotherapy while the other group of mothers was not. All of the mothers were residing in Los Angeles County, California.

Data for the study was collected by an interview-questionnaire technique. Each of the fifty mothers was interviewed and asked to complete the questionnaire.
The questionnaire used for data collection was thirty-five items selected from The Parent Attitude Research Instrument, a standardized test designed by Schaefer and Bell (1965). The mothers' responses to the items were recorded in four categories: (A) strongly agree (a), mildly agree (d), mildly disagree (D), strongly disagree. Chi-square was used to determine the significance of the data.

Conclusions

The findings of this study provide support for the conclusion that the feelings and perceptions of the mothers who are receiving psychotherapy and the mothers who are not receiving psychotherapy differ from each other in ways which appear to be powerful potential influences on the relationships which will prevail within their families.

Suggestions for Further Study

As a result of this study, the following suggestions for further studies are made:

1. A comparison study of how the child is behaving as it corresponds to what the mother says her attitudes toward child behavior are.

2. Further investigation contrasting the strong responses of the mothers receiving psychotherapy and mothers not receiving psychotherapy.
3. Investigation of the attitudes of mothers toward child behavior both before and after receiving psychotherapy.

4. Investigation of influencing factors such as age, occupation, education, marital status of the mother, social class, and sex of the child.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Own occupation

Occupation of husband if married

Marital status (married, single, divorced, widowed, separated)

Sex and age of children in the family
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 

Own age

Age of husband

Own education (high school, BS, MS, Ph.D. other)

Education of husband (high school, BS, MS, Ph.D. other)
Read each of the statements below and then rate them as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>a</th>
<th>d</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>strongly agree</td>
<td>mildly agree</td>
<td>mildly disagree</td>
<td>strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicate your opinion by drawing a circle around the "A" if you strongly agree, around the "a" if you mildly agree, around the "d" if you mildly disagree, and around the "D" if you strongly disagree.

There are no right or wrong answers, so answer according to your own opinion. It is very important to the study that all questions be answered. Many of the statements will seem alike but all are necessary to show slight differences of opinion.

1. Children should be allowed to disagree with their parents if they feel their own ideas are better.

2. A good mother should shelter her child from life's little difficulties.

3. Children should realize how much parents have to give up for them.

4. Children will get on a woman's nerves if she has to be with them all day.

5. One of the worst things about taking care of a home is a woman feels that she can't get out.

6. Parents should adjust to the children some rather than expecting the children to adjust to the parents.

7. Children would be happier and better behaved if parents would show an interest in their affairs.

8. Strict discipline develops a fine strong character.

9. Mothers very often feel that they can't stand their children a moment longer.

10. Having to be with the children all the time gives a woman the feeling her wings have been clipped.
11. Children and husbands do better when the mother is strong enough to settle most of the problems.  
   Disagree Agree

12. A child has a right to his own point of view and ought to be allowed to express it.  
   Disagree Agree

13. A woman has to choose between having a well run home and hobnobbing around with neighbors and friends.  
   Disagree Agree

14. Few women get the gratitude they deserve for all they have done for their children.  
   Disagree Agree

15. Most young mothers are bothered more by the feeling of being shut up in the home than by anything else.  
   Disagree Agree

16. When a mother doesn't do a good job with children it's probably because the father doesn't do his part around the home.  
   Disagree Agree

17. A mother has to do the planning because she is the one who knows what's going on in the home.  
   Disagree Agree

18. A child's ideas should be seriously considered in making family decisions.  
   Disagree Agree

19. Too many women forget that a mother's place is in the home.  
   Disagree Agree

20. One of the bad things about raising children is that you aren't free enough of the time to do just as you like.  
   Disagree Agree

21. A child who is "on the go" all the time will most likely be happy.  
   Disagree Agree

22. The whole family does fine if the mother puts her shoulders to the wheel and takes charge of things.  
   Disagree Agree

23. If parents would have fun with their children, the children would be more apt to take their advice.  
   Disagree Agree

24. When a child is in trouble he ought to know he won't be punished for talking about it with his parents.  
   Disagree Agree
25. Children should be kept away from all hard jobs which might be discouraging.  
   Agree: A, a, d, D

26. A good mother will find enough social life within the family.  
   Agree: A, a, d, D

27. Mothers sacrifice almost all their own fun for their children.  
   Agree: A, a, d, D

28. Children are actually happier under strict training.  
   Agree: A, a, d, D

29. Most parents prefer a quiet child to a "scrappy" one.  
   Agree: A, a, d, D

30. The sooner a child learns that a wasted minute is lost forever the better off he will be.  
   Agree: A, a, d, D

31. The trouble with giving attention to children's problems is they usually just make up a lot of stories to keep you interested.  
   Agree: A, a, d, D

32. A married woman knows that she will have to take the lead in family matters.  
   Agree: A, a, d, D

33. It is a mother's duty to make sure she knows her child's innermost thoughts.  
   Agree: A, a, d, D

34. Taking care of a small baby is something that no woman should be expected to do all by herself.  
   Agree: A, a, d, D

35. If a child has upset feelings it is best to leave him alone and not make it look serious.  
   Agree: A, a, d, D
VITA

Rosemary Maughan Lundquist

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Master of Science

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Major Field: Family and Child Development

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