The purpose of the present investigation was to examine the role of mothers' child rearing practices and other socialization emphases in the development of children's learned helplessness. A number of socialization indicators categorized into four major domains such as mothers' expectancy, rearing-attitudes, rearing practices and self-perceptions were investigated. The study adopted a 2 (learned helpless versus mastery oriented) x 2 (child's sex) x 2 (urban versus rural setting) factorial design with 30 participants in each cell. The first phase of the study involved 240 children (120 boys and 120 girls) selected randomly from schools. Half of the boys were from urban areas and the other half were from rural areas. All the children were individually given a standardized test of children's helplessness questionnaire and a standardized performance test. The performance test measured their "giving up" responses. On the basis of both the tests, children in each sub-group were classified into mastery-oriented and learned helpless participants. The mothers of these mastery-oriented and learned-helpless children in each sub-group participated in the next phase of the study. This phase employed a pretested questionnaire that sought information with respect to a mother's expectancy relating to children's initiation of activities such as sitting and crawling. The measure also asked mothers to indicate their attitude in terms of their emphasis on autonomy and acceptability. The rearing practices emphasizing achievement and leniency were investigated along with mother's self-perception. The comparison of mothers responses across the groups indicated several features. A consistent pattern of higher expectancy on the part of girls' mothers was shown. The results also indicated higher expectation of urban mothers compared to rural mothers. There was no significant difference on expectation with respect to mastery-oriented children vis-a-vis helpless children. The analysis did not show any
difference in attitude of mothers across groups. However, the examination of rearing practices documented greater use of responsibility training given by mothers of mastery-oriented children compared to the mothers of helpless children. In congruence with our expectations, the mothers of mastery-oriented children were found to indicate higher self-assurance and self-realization than did mothers of helpless children. These findings, along with other results, were explained in terms of the current status of the construct of helplessness and socio-cultural factors pertinent in Indian situations. Major implications of the study in domains of child-management and trainings were pointed out. The directions for future research were also discussed.