CHAPTER XI
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary:

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of maternal attitudes toward child rearing and family, as measured by two attitude scales, to observable mother-child interaction in an experimentally controlled setting. The study was based on a concept of attitude which included a tendency to act or react in defined ways in response to specific objects or situations. The two attitude instruments used were the PARI, which employs a Likert technique, and the PAS, which is based on a forced choice format. The study utilized the grouping of the 23 PARI scale into three factors: Authoritarian, hostility-rejection, and democratic. The PAS is composed of four scales: Disciplinarian, indulgent, protective, and rejecting. The general hypothesis that a relationship existed between maternal attitudes and behavior was tested by means of five specific sub-hypothesis.
A group of 50 mothers and their preschool children, who attended a cooperative nursery school sponsored by the District of Columbia Recreation Department, were used as the subjects for this study. The attitude scales were administered to the mothers at group meetings without any explanation of the relationship of the questionnaires to the behavior sessions. Each mother and her child was observed for a 30 minute period in a standardized play situation. The interaction of the mother and child was categorized as it occurred in three consecutive ten minute periods, using a system based on methods developed by Bishop, Schalock, and others. The recorded interaction yielded 12 behavioral scores for each mother, as follows: Non-attention, Attentive Observation, Verbal Interaction, Teaches-Explains-Demonstrates, Questions, Responsiveness to Questions, Interactive Play, Helping, Structurizing, Directing, Restriction, Forbidding, Criticism, Praise-Approval-Affection, and Rate of Compliance. On the basis of the scores for each of the three factors of the PARI and for the Disciplinarian and Rejecting Scales of the PAS, the subjects were dichotomized at
the median into a high group and low group. The approximately 25 percent at each end of the distribution were designated as the extreme groups.

Nonparametric statistical methods were used to analyze the data. The results obtained for the specific sub-hypothesis were as follows:

1. Mothers who were extremely high on the Authoritarian factor of the PARI used significantly more restriction than those who were extremely low. The results did not confirm the hypothesized differences between high and low Authoritarian mothers for attentive observation and directing behavior.

2. Mothers who were extremely high on the Hostility-Rejection factor of the PARI were significantly higher on nonattention and significantly lower on verbal interaction and interactive play than those who scored extremely low on this factor. The results did not confirm the hypothesized differences between the high and low groups for responsiveness to questions, helping, forbidding, criticism, and praise-approval affection.
3. Mothers who scored high on the Democratic factor of the RAI were significantly higher in rate of compliance than mothers who scored low on this factor. The results were not significant for the hypothesized differences between High and Low Democratic mothers for teachers-explains-demonstrate questions, and structurizing.

4. Mothers who scored high on the Disciplinarian scale of the PAS used significantly more directing and restriction than mothers who scored low on this scale. The results were not significant for the hypothesized differences between High and Low Groups for attentive observation.

5. Mothers who scored high on the Rejecting scale of the PAS used significantly more forbidding than mothers who scored low on this scale. The results were not significant for the hypothesized differences between the High and Low Groups for nonattention, verbal interaction, responsiveness to questions, interactive play, helping, criticism, and praise-approval-affection.
While 48 out of the 52 results reported were in the direction predicted by the hypothesis, only a relatively small number of results were statistically significant.

Differences in behavior over time were analyzed for each behavior category for the entire sample and for the High and Low Groups. The differences over time between the High and Low Groups were also analyzed. None of the differences in behavior over time were statistically significant.

Conclusions:

The findings of this study have been interpreted as indicating that no strong relationship exists between maternal attitudes toward child rearing and family life and motherchild interaction as observed in an experimental situation. Although grouping the mothers according to their attitude scores made it possible to predict some aspects of their behavior, especially behaviors which were highly salient to the attitude structure, none of the specific sub-hypothesis was completely confirmed. The results of this study have also been interpreted as giving little support to a
concept of attitude which includes as one of its components a predisposition to act in predictable ways.

One important derivative conclusion of this study is that a knowledge of the interaction of situational and personality factors with attitude must be considered for adequate prediction of behavior. On the basis of knowledge of attitudes alone, few predictions of behavior could be made. These few significant attitude-behavior linkages suggested a hypothesis that behavior which is more salient to the attitude structure tends to be more predictable. However, without knowledge of situational and personality factors, knowledge of mother-child social interaction will be incomplete.

With respect to the attitude instruments, no conclusive findings can be offered as to the relative efficiency of the Likert technique or the forced choice technique for eliciting attitudes which show a relationship to behavior. Although the PAI and the PAS seemed to function somewhat differently, there could be only
speculation as to the reasons, since the data did not present sufficient clear-cut evidence. Both instruments contributed to the significant findings, and there appeared to be little overlap between the two.

Dependence:

The beginnings of sociability. The months of infancy are filled with literally thousands of pleasant contacts between the baby and his mother. Every mother occasionally is annoyed with her child and expresses this annoyance with sharp tones, a rough swabbing, or a delay in providing milk or any type of food. But the vast majority of mother-infant interactions are pleasurable. Furthermore, this is true of the majority of mothers and infants, although cases of deep maternal hostility and rejection sometimes exist.

It is out of this myriad of satisfying contacts that the mother acquires her supreme position at the center of the young child's universe. Her person, her smile, her voice - all acquire their capacity to rea-
assure and delight the child simply because they so often have been associated with relief from hunger pangs, uncomfortable frightening situations. Dependency, in short, is a form of behavior that mother in our culture deem changeworthy. Whenever a mother reaches the decision that her child's dependence is changeworthy the fashion described above, dependency becomes, for the first time, a problem. There is every reason to believe that the young human being needs to remain emotionally dependent on a mother figure for a considerable number of years. Without this attachment, we know that children have difficulties in forming early relationships with other children and other adults.

Research has a long way yet to go in sorting out all the factors that contribute to the growth of dependency in early childhood. Much remains to be learned concerning the implications for later development of the early dependency relationship that grows between the child and his mother. Of one thing we can be sure: the formation of such relationships is of paramount importance to the growth of the human personality.
Suggestions for Further Research:

Because of the lack of specific research of this type, the present study was in many respects exploratory. The experimental situation was unstructured and a considerable number of behavior variables were measured. The study was focused on only two sets of variables— the mothers' attitudes and the mothers' behavior. The findings of the present study suggest that further research might well be pursued along the lines of including situational and personality variables along with attitude variables, as well as variables associated with the child, in a factorial design logic, which would enable identification of the interactions between attitude, personality factors, and situational factors.

Whether the findings of this study would hold true with other samples would also be worthy of investigation. For example, would the trends found in this study with a normal sample appear more emphatically in a pathological sample of mothers and children?
in general, then, the present study suggests that usually attitude-behavior linkages do not occur in a simple one-to-one fashion. The aim of further research should be to identify in which areas there are direct, simple linkages and in which areas additional factors such as personality and situational determinants play important roles.

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