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MATERNAL ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SCHOOL AND THE ROLE OF PUPIL, SOME SOCIAL CLASS COMPARISONS.

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A 4-YEAR RESEARCH STUDY HAS INDICATED THAT A MOTHER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SCHOOL INFLUENCES THE YOUNG CHILD'S SCHOOL BEHAVIOR AND HIS ABILITY TO DEAL WITH ADULTS AND PERFORM COGNITIVE TASKS. THE SAMPLE POPULATION FOR THE STUDY WAS MADE UP OF 1,963 NEGRO MOTHERS OF 4-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN FROM ONE MIDDLE-CLASS AND FROM THREE LOWER-CLASS GROUPS--UPPER-LOWER, LOWER-LOWER, AND LOWER-LOWER RECEIVING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE. DATA ON THE MOTHERS AND THE HOME ENVIRONMENTS WERE GATHERED FROM INTERVIEWS, INTELLIGENCE TESTS, AND "INTERACTION SESSIONS" DURING WHICH THE MOTHER WAS REQUIRED TO TEACH THE CHILD THREE SIMPLE TASKS WHICH SHE HAD SPECIFICALLY BEEN TAUGHT. IT WAS CONCLUDED THAT MOTHERS IN THE THREE LOWER-CLASS GROUPS INFLUENCE THE CHILD'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS SCHOOL BY STRESSING THAT HE BEHAVE AND LISTEN TO THE TEACHER. THUS THE LOWER CLASS CHILD COMES TO REGARD SCHOOL AS AN AUTHORITARIAN INSTITUTION RATHER THAN AS A PLACE FOR LEARNING. MOTHERS IN THE TWO LOWEST-CLASS GROUPS EXPRESSED FEELINGS OF POWERLESSNESS IN RELATION TO THE SCHOOL SYSTEM AND THEIR CHILD'S BEHAVIOR, WHICH TENDED TO INHIBIT THE CHILD'S INITIATORY BEHAVIOR IN A TESTING SITUATION, HIS QUICKNESS OF RESPONSE, AND HIS SOCIAL CONFIDENCE WITH AN ADULT EXAMINER. IN GENERAL, MIDDLE CLASS MOTHERS HAD MORE POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THEIR CHILD AND THE SCHOOL AND WERE MORE SENSITIVE TO THE EMOTIONAL ASPECTS OF THEIR CHILD'S EARLY SCHOOL EXPERIENCES. THIS PAPER WAS PREPARED FOR THE FIFTH WORK CONFERENCE ON CURRICULUM AND TEACHING IN DEPRESSED URBAN AREAS HELD AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY TEACHERS COLLEGE, JUNE 20-JULY 1, 1966. (DK)

MATERNAL ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SCHOOL AND THE ROLE OF PUPIL: SOME SOCIAL CLASS COMPARISONS

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This paper is concerned with the origins and antecedents of educability in young children whose families live in economically and socially depressed urban areas. Educability, as we use the term, refers to a mingling of orientations, skills and motivations that prepare the child to learn in a formal school situation. Educability includes at least three components: first, a cluster of cognitive skills (language, visual and auditory discrimination, conceptual ability, adeptness with logical operations, etc.), a degree of motivation to learn and to achieve in a school and classroom setting (curiosity, interest in inquiry, need for achievement, etc.), and acceptance of the role of pupil (orientation toward authority of teacher and school, acceptance of rules of the classroom and school, an understanding of the central purpose of the school, etc.). Although we are interested in the various influences that create, or retard, the development of educability, this paper is focussed upon the role of the mother in the emergence of this complex set of orientations and response patterns.

The development of an ability to learn in school settings has traditionally been of widespread professional concern only in special cases of children with mental retardation or defects of some kind or in instances of children with emotionally linked blocks to learning or with school phobias. The contemporary focus upon the educational problems of the poor has raised a number of questions about the discrepancy between the behavior and values of children from low socio-economic groups and

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the expectations for social and academic performance under which the public schools operate. It is frequently observed that children from the lower working -class sectors of American society are not prepared to operate effectively in the schools. One of the assertions we will make in this paper is that this lack of preparation is not merely a matter of level of intelligence but represents orientations to authority, the school, and the learning process that have been learned in the child's preschool experience and are constantly reinforced by his home and community environment.

The concepts and results we are reporting in this paper are part of a larger study, begun over four years ago, which was designed to assess the cognitive environments of urban pre-school Negro children and the impact of these environments upon the cognitive behavior and motivation of young children. In attempting to identify and study those variables in the environment of the pre-school child which appear to facilitate or interfere with subsequent cognitive growth, we have focussed upon the role of the mother as a socializing agent in areas of behavior usually associated with success in school.

The general problem to which the project addressed itself was to understand how cultural experience is translated into cognitive behavior and academic achievement. This question, however, developed out of a concern for understanding what is meant by cultural deprivation or cultural disadvantage. There has been considerable documentation of the depressing effect of social and cultural disadvantage upon academic ability. The more basic problem, however, is to understand the mechanisms of exchange that mediate between the individual and his environment. In focussing on the input features of the socializing process, we hope to be able to conceptualize social class as a discrete array of experiences and patterns of experience that can be examined in relation to the effects they have upon the emerging cognitive equipment of the young child. The study was not intended to demonstrate or examine social class differences as such. Rather, the interest in social class divergencies is a starting point from which to understand the specifics of maternal and child interaction

which have cognitive consequences for the child.

This conceptual approach represents a view of the educationally disadvantaged child as presenting a problem in acculturation. He comes to the school not only deficient in language skills and in ability to discriminate auditory and visual input but with a pattern of behavior which is not readily adaptable to the school. Typically, he is from a part of the society which has not been permitted to learn and engage in the routine daily social and occupational behavior of the dominant sectors of the society. It is, of course, these sectors of society that have developed the schools, the curriculum, and the teachers with whom he must interact. The alienation he feels from the mainstream of society has begun before he reaches school and his modes of adapting to this fact have created behavior that must be changed if he is to succeed in school. In this regard, the school must serve as a <u>re-socializing</u> as well as a socializing unit. The importance of this fact is not generally recognized and its profound implications for early education and for teacher training not adequately explored. The social and cultural distance between the home and the school is sometimes taken to indicate a lack of effort on the part of teachers or a lack of motivation on the part of parents. It seems more likely that neither of these is true and that an attempt to fix the blame upon either the school or the home evades and confuses more fundamental problems in the structure of the society.

It is evident from the preceding comments that we regard the early years as especially significant in the development of educability. This is not so much because of any assumptions about critical periods in early experience, although these may indeed exist, but because of the implications these early patterns of learning have for later experience in the school. In short, they are important in part because they occur before formal schooling begins and necessarily impede or facilitate the transition to academic success. We view early experience as a time when the child begins to learn ways of sorting and ordering the mass of information that his input modalities bring to him, developing techniques for selecting or ignoring the stimuli

that reach him from internal and external sources. Part of the role of a socializing adult in this early experience is to give the child categories of thought and ways of dealing with information. These modes of dealing with stimuli may be regarded as information processing strategies which enable the child to make some sense out of the incredibly large number of pieces of information with which he must cope. These strategies are learned in interaction with the total environment, particularly with other persons, and in this early learning process the mother plays a central and perhaps dominant part.

In our view, many of the differences in mental ability and cognitive styles that appear among different cultural and socio-economic groups in the United States can best be understood in terms of the transmission of information processing strategies from parents to children. It is also our contention that there are relationships between the position of the family in the social structure of the community and the techniques children use to deal with information made available to them. Perhaps the most important is the range and number of alternatives for action and for thought that are available in the environment and which may engage the consideration and attention of the family and its members. The degree to which alternatives are available is related to the family's position in the community. A family in an urban ghetto has few choices to make with respect to such basic things as residence, occupation, and condition of housing and on the minor points of choice that come with adequate discretionary income. A family with few opportunities to make choices among events that affect it is not likely to encourage the children to think of life as consisting of a wide range of behavioral options among which they must learn to discriminate.

To recapitulate the conceptual context in which the study was conducted. it is our argument that social class and cultural effects upon cognitive development of children can best be understood in terms of the specifics of interactional transactions

between the mother and her young child, that the nature of these exchanges is influenced by the family's position in the social structure of the community and the availability of alternatives open for consideration, that material behavior induces complementary learning or information processing strategies in the child and that the child's early orientation to authority and cognitive activity facilitates or retards his ability to adopt the role of pupil when he encounters formal learning situations in the public schools.*

There are five aspects of maternal behavior under particular scrutiny in the project. The first of these is the mother's techniques for regulating and controlling the behavior of her child. These techniques may be imperative-normative, relying on appeals to formal rules or authority or social norms of conduct. These techniques are especially important because of the relatively low demand they make on the cognitive resources of the child. The second regulatory technique is an appeal to subjective-personal states. In this strategy, the mother or other adult appeals to inner states, to feelings, moods, personal preferences, and approval of others. This technique encourages the child to see himself from another's point of view, to be sensitive to the perspectives of surrounding peers and adults. The third technique is cognitive-rational. In this mode, the appeal is to long-term consequences inherent in the situation and related to the task to be accomplished rather than to feelings and established rules.

A second cluster of behaviors we call maternal teaching techniques. These refer to the ability of the mother to organize and give meaning to the information that reaches the child or to help him make sense of new information in terms of

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The concepts utilized to analyze mother-child interaction draw significantly from the brilliant formulations in Basil Bernstein's writings and unpublished discussions of social learning, linguistic codes, and family control strategies (Bernstein; 1961, 1962).

knowledge he already possesses. These techniques appear most clearly in the teaching sessions which we asked the mothers of the project to perform with their four-year-old children. These teaching techniques include the mother's tendency to be specific, to orient the child to the task, to present material and ideas in sequences which give the child some experience in following a chain of ideas in working toward clear goals set for him. They are described in greater detail in other papers (Brophy, Hess and Shipman, 1966: Hess and Shipman. 1966).

Maternal language has been one of the points of special focus in the study. Scales for analyzing maternal language were developed by Ellis Olim and the relation of maternal language to the cognitive behavior of the child was investigated. These were reported in detail elsewhere and will not be discussed in this paper (Olim, 1965; Olim, Hess and Shipman, 1965).

Obviously, maternal cognitive skills are viewed as part of the cognitive environment. The level and style of mothers' cognitive activity are assessed by several techniques including the WAIS and the Sigel Sorting Task. Along with the mother's behavior in socializing the child into the role of pupil, this feature of maternal behavior will be described in more detail in this paper.

Although these maternal patterns of behavior have some interest in themselves, the purpose of this study is to examine the effect they have upon the cognitive behavior and educability of the child. Cognitive behavior is especially difficult to assess at age four and our tests of cognitive performance are very limited. We are following up the research groups at age four are: verbal ability, as reflected in the capacity to use labels and respond on measures of performance with verbal answers; the Stanford Binet: performance during the maternal teaching sessions; and conceptual style as indicated by the Sigel Sorting Task.

Research Plan

A research group of 1963 mothers and their four-year-old children was selected to provide variation along four dimensions: socio-economic background, type of housing, economic dependency status, and intactness of family. All subjects were Negroes, non-working mothers, free from any obvious mental or physical disabilities. The research group includes only Negro mothers and children because of the special, historically based, educational problems confronting the Negro sector of our population. It is a racially homogeneous group for methodological reasons. The criteria for selection of sub-groups and the composition of each group were these: Group A came from college-educated, professional, executive, and managerial occupational levels; Group B came from skilled blue-collar occupational levels with not more than high school education; Group C came from unskilled or semi-skilled occupational levels with predominantly elementary school education; Group D also came from unskilled or semi-skilled occupational levels with predominantly elementary school education, but with fathers absent and the families supported by public assistance. Groups were equally subdivided by sex of child and except for Group A, by private and public housing. Typical social class differences in intelligence test scores appeared among the group (Table 1).

Table 1

IQ Scores of Mothers and Children

(Means)

Test	Social Status Groups A (N-40)	B (N-42)	C (N-40)	D (N-41)
WAIS Verbal IQ	109.4	91.8	82.5	82.4
Stanford-Binet IQ (Form LM)	109.4	98.6	96.3	94.5
Difference	0.0	6.8	13.8	12.1

The mothers were interviewed in their homes about their activities with the child, their daily schedules, the availability of cognitive and intellectual stimulation and other features of the home environment thought to be related to cognitive development. The mother-child pairs were then brought to the university for testing and for an interaction session which required the mother to teach the child three simple tasks that she had been taught by a project staff member. One of these tasks was to sort or group a number of plastic toys (cars, spoons and chairs that were red, yellow and green) by color and by function: a second task was to sort eight blocks that differed in color, size, shape and mark by two characteristics simultaneously: the third task required the mother and child to work together to copy five designs on a toy called an Etch-A-Sketch.

In this paper we will present data relevant to several questions about the mother's role in socializing her child into the behavior expected of pupils in a major city educational system. These questions are:

1. What are the elements of the images the mothers of our research group hold toward the school as an institution and toward the teacher as a figure representing the school?

2. What kinds of behavior do mothers of our group believe to be appropriate for pupils in a classroom setting? How do they define the expectations of the school and the complementary role of pupil for their young children?
3. What are the mothers' aspirations for their children?
4. What relationships appear between the attitudes and practices of the mothers and the cognitive and school-relevant performance of their children?

By the role of pupil we mean a set of behaviors, non-academic in nature, which structure interaction between the child and the basic components of his school experience: the teacher, the tasks and materials of learning, institutional rules, and the peer group. The process of socialization into this role is not direct training: the child's definition of his role as a pupil, his expectations of the behaviors to be demanded of him by the school system, are attained through indirect learning.

Attitudes toward learning, toward institutions such as the school, toward persons of authority such as the teacher, and toward his own abilities and limitations as a member of the public school complex, are conveyed to the child during the pre-school years by older persons in the home environment. More specifically, in her everyday behavior and through the close mother-child interaction obtaining during those early years, the mother acts as the primary socializing agent of the child into the role of pupil.

The poorly-prepared child is not uneducable because he has learned nothing during the pre-school years, but because he has learned the wrong things. Successful socialization should result in a set of behaviors conducive to learning, the child is capable of establishing a good working relationship with his teacher, he is prepared to deal with her both as an authority and as a source of information, and he has confidence in his abilities to manipulate materials and to attempt challenging tasks. Unsuccessful socialization is expected to lead to a poor

teacher-child relationship, resulting in the blocking of information transmittance, and to a set of behaviors disruptive to the learning situation. The child who has learned to be compliant and submissive, to regard himself as ineffective in dealing with authority and inadequate in problem-solving, comes to school unready to meet the demands which are made upon him. This set of hypothetical events is seen as a potential explanatory model for the lower-class child's inability to meet successfully the role-demands of the public school system.

Mothers' Attitudes toward the School

The primary instrument for assessing the images the mothers of the research group held of the school was composed of rating scales developed through interviews, pilot administrations and item analyses. The final instrument used in the project included 27 items each of which was to be rated on a five-point scale from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree." A factor analysis of the responses yielded six factors accounting for all items: each item was heavily loaded with only one factor.

Scores reflecting each factor were obtained for subjects by summing responses (on a five-point scale) to the individual items comprising each factor: a high score, then, represents disagreement with the individual item contained in the factor. Mean scores for each of the four socioeconomic status groups, on each of the six factors, are reported in Table 2.

T tests were computed for differences between mean scores of each group contrasted with each other group: those reported here as significant reached a probability level of .05 or better.

Table 2

Mothers' Attitudes Toward Education

(Means)

Attitude	Social Status Group A (N-40)	B (N-42)	C (N-40)	D (N-41)	Range of Possible Scores
Low Score Indicates:					
Powerlessness	18.0	17.0	15.0	14.3	5-25
Conservatism	19.0	17.6	18.0	16.7	5-25
Resignation	14.7	12.7	11.3	11.7	6-30
Importance of Education	11.2	11.0	9.4	10.2	4-20
Importance of Non-Academic Goals	8.5	9.2	10.0	9.7	3-15
Defense of Schools	8.4	8.4	8.0	8.4	4-20

Factor one includes five items which suggest frustration, futility, and the uselessness of attempting to change either the system or the unruliness of children. Middle and upper-working class mothers tended to disagree with the statements loaded heavily with this factor, while mothers in the two lower-class groups tended to agree with them. All differences between classes were significant except that between groups C and D.

Items significant in factor two suggest conservatism, an attitude which discourages fun in life, and complaints about the "waste of time" in extracurricular activities provided by the school. Although social class differences are not so great as on the first factor, middle-class mothers tend to disagree with the central theme of this factor, and mothers in the public assistance group to agree. The middle-class group differed significantly from both groups B and D.

The central theme of factor three is optimism vs. pessimism and resignation to one's lot. The factor is composed of negatively loaded items, all of which express feelings of optimism and of reliance on education for bettering one's lot.

Lower-class mothers tended to agree with these negatively-stated items. All class cross comparisons were significant, except that between Groups C & D.

The items comprising factor four express positive attitudes toward the School system, and the importance of getting a formal education. Middle and upper-lower class mothers tended to disagree with the central theme; lower-class differences were significant except that between Groups A and B.

Factor five deals with the issue of whether success in formal education is the most important goal in life. Mothers from middle-class backgrounds feel that other things are also to be highly valued: mothers from Groups C and D emphasize the overriding value of an education.

In their attitudes toward education, then, mothers from middle-class backgrounds rejected themes of powerlessness vis-a-vis the authority of school, denied a conservatism which dictates more work and less play, denied an optimism which says that formal schooling is the only means to a better life, and agreed with the notion that there are other goals in life as important as education.

Group B mothers showed less intense feeling on these factors but they tended to agree with Group A mothers in denying that they are powerless and that education is the central hope for bettering one's lot in life.

Mothers in both Groups C and D agreed with statements of the futility of attempting to use one's power against the school system, but they also tended to agree with the notion that a good education is an important means to improving one's status. In addition, mothers in these groups tended to express or endorse a conservative attitude, a rigidity about working and not wasting time on play.

A second, less direct, opportunity to describe the school was provided by a task requiring mothers to describe what they believed was happening in a photograph of a mother and a teacher seated at a large desk in a school classroom. The mother was given the following instructions: "Here is a picture of a teacher and a mother

together in a school classroom. Can you tell a story about why the mother came to school and what they're talking about here in the classroom? We would like to know what is happening in the picture and what will happen as the result of their conversation."

The first distinction to be made was whether the meeting between mother and teacher was perceived as a problem-oriented session. Although in each group more mothers described the meeting as problem-oriented than did not, the difference was less for the middle-class group (67%) than for the other three groups (95% 76% 74% respectively). Among those mothers describing the meeting as problem-oriented, there were no clear trends as to differences in the type of problem described.

Mothers were also given an opportunity to reveal their views and feelings about the school in the interview in response to this question: "If you had the power to do as you wished about education in the school, what would you do?" Mothers' responses to this question were grouped into categories: 1) those suggesting no change: 2) those suggesting changes which are commonly held to be within the domain of an educational system [changes in curriculum or other academic aspects in the physical plant, or in the school's mechanical and administrative functions, (reflected in responses concerned with the need for more schools and teachers or for special facilities discipline of children, and improvements in the training of teachers or in their motivation and dedication)] and 3) those arguing for changes in the school as a social-political institution or as an instrument of social policy (responses dealing with integration, school-community and parent-teacher relationships).

Although more than one type of response was possible to this open-ended question, the majority of mothers gave short replies containing only one suggestion: 16 Group A, 7 Group B, 3 Group C and only 1 Group D mother made suggestions in more than one area.

Because the number responding in any one of the nine specific categories was very small, the response-types were grouped into the three main types of categories described above. When X^2 values were computed for each of the three response-groups (use vs. non-use), social class differences were significant (p L .01) for each. Twice as many mothers in groups C and D as in Groups A and B had no suggestions: the majority made vague references to improving the schools, said they had never thought about it, or did not know what they could do. And twice as many Group A and B as Group C and D mothers made concrete suggestions for changes in curriculum, in physical and administrative aspects of running the schools, in discipline, or in training of teachers. Finally, more middle-class mothers discussed issues involving the school in a wider social and political system than mothers in all other groups combined (Table 3).

Table 3

Mothers' Suggestions for Improving the Schools

(Percentages)

Type of Change Recommended	Status Groups A	B	C	D
Essentially None	12.5	26.2	48.7	51.2
Educational	70.0	66.7	38.5	43.9
Political, Social	35.0	11.9	17.9	4.9

Mothers ' Interaction with the School

A mother's feelings about herself and her relationship to the school system may set the pattern for her child's belief about the typical relationships of the of the individual to the institution. How does a mother describe her role in

interaction with the school and with its main individual representative, the teacher?

Statements of mothers' feelings about their relationship to the school and its representatives come from their description of the relationship between the mother and teacher in the photograph. Responses for mother-teacher relationship were scored on the relative status positions ascribed to the two women and the affective tone or mood of the described interaction. A third consideration, especially if there was a problem being discussed, was whether the outcome was good, hopeful, or poor. The proportion of mothers utilizing each scoring category is reported in Table 4.

Table 4

Mothers' Perception of the Nature of the
Mother-Teacher Relationship, by Social Status
(Mother-Teacher Protocols)

(Percentages)

Relationship	A (N-39)	B (N-38)	C (N-37)	D (N-38)
Positive: cooperation of equals or working together	59.0	42.1	21.6	31.6
Conflict	23.1	28.9	24.3	31.6
Passivity	10.3	23.7	40.5	23.7
No information or vague	7.7	5.3	16.2	13.2

Although the differences among groups were not statistically significant, there were some apparent differences in patterns of response. The greatest proportion of respondents described the relationships as a working together of the two women to reach a solution or agreement, with neither dominating and with no friction between them. This response was more typical, however, of the Group A

and B mothers than of mothers in Groups C and D: the latter tended to describe the mother as a passive figure seeking information and advice from the authoritative teacher.

A response describing the relationship as one of equality in which the affect was explicitly positive and both parties were exchanging information and gaining insight was found far more often among middle-class mothers than among mothers in any of the other groups. Lack of information about the relationship or its affective tone was far more typical of groups C and D than of groups A and B.

Middle-class mothers, then, saw their role in interaction with the school and its representatives as one of equality: the mother's meeting with the teacher was typically seen as a friendly visit between equals who were interested in gaining insight into the child's behavior.

Mothers in Group C, while they did not emphasize positive affect and equality to the extent that middle-class mothers did, tended to describe the mother-teacher relationships as a working together of the two to reach some common goal.

Mothers in both C & D groups tended to describe the mother's role in the conference as a passive one; mother went to the school to ask the teacher what to do; or she went to "get satisfaction" from the teacher for something that had been done to her child, and the conference was characterized by friction between the two which might not be resolved. Group C & D mothers were also more likely than Group A or B mothers to ignore or to describe only vaguely the affective relationship between the mother sand the teacher.

Mothers' Definition of the Role of the Pupil

How a mother defines the school indicates which aspects of the new situation (i.e., new to the child) are most important to her. Until he has entered and actually experienced this new realm, the preschool child's notions about school are likely to be hazy and inaccurate. He can, however, anticipate it, especially

if his mother prepares him, drawing his attention to those aspects she deems most important. If she does not tell her child what she thinks of school nor describe the daily round of a classroom, she will often express her attitudes and expectations indirectly, guiding him in developing attitudes and behavior she believes will be necessary for his success in school.

To obtain the mothers' definitions and perceptions of school, they were asked to imagine that it was the first day of school: "Your child is going to school for the first time, what will you do, what will you tell him?"

Responses to this question were scored for six categories. The "obedience" category includes responses in which the mother defined the classroom as a place where the child would have to behave in a socially accepted and obedient manner toward the teacher and/or his peers: to conform to classroom routine: to follow a set of rules pertaining to health, safety and property rights: or simply to behave or be nice. For example, a mother in the public assistance group said that she would tell her little girl,

> "to obey the teacher. Do what the teacher asks her to do and that's all to do or say. Just tell her to sit quiet and listen at the teacher and do whatever the teacher tells her to do and get her lessons."

Another less concerned with school itself than with getting there and home safely, said,

> "I would tell him to be aware of cars, you know, don't step out in front of a car is something that is dangerous. And don't pick up different things that don't concern him. Go straight to school and come straight home from school."

A somewhat less explicit statement of the importance of obedience was given a Group C mother:

> "Well, the first time I would tell him to be nice and learn to listen to the teachers and do what they tell him to do and mind."

while a Group B mother listed a group of behaviors she expects her child to remember when he goes to school for the first time:

"I'd tell him to go straight to school and stop at the patrol lady... don't cross, because she tells you to. Mind your teacher: be nice: raise your hand, and when you have to go to the bathroom ask her, you know, and don't talk in school, don't eat any candy or chew any gum. Be nice."

Mothers of middle-class background tended to elaborate' more and to suggest rather than to demand obedience"

"I will tell (her) that she is beginning her education. And here she will learn to play with other children. She will learn to listen to the teacher and how to act properly in a control situation such as not talking out any time she wants to...And I will tell her to be very cooperative and do whatever the teacher wants her to do. And try to be friendly and get along with the children."

The following middle-class mother drew an analogy between obedience at home and at school:

"The only thing I will definitely stress to her is authority, that the teacher becomes the authority head. Mother and Daddy are the authorities at home, and that she has to respect and obey the teacher and likewise the teacher will respect and obey her wishes and I think this is mainly what I will tell her about it: that there is authority outside of the home and this is it, you are just going into it, your teacher will be your main center of authority at school and you must obey her as I want you to obey me."

A second response category defines school as an opportunity to attain increasing levels of achievement in academic skills. A mother might say, as did one in the public assistance group: "She's going there for to learn things which will help her for whatever she might want to be when she grows up": a Group C mother said, "I'd tell him that I want him to go to school so that he can prepare himself how to work or help him get a good job."

In addition to defining school as an authority system or as an educational system, some mothers were concerned with the beginning school as an emotional or affective experience. These mothers anticipated their children's fears of the new and strange experience and stressed the adventurous aspects of meeting new people and the change in status from baby to "big boy." One middle-class mother, concerned with affect, spoke only in positive tones:

"First of all, I would take (him) to see his new school, we would talk about the building, and after seeing the school I would tell him that he would meet new children who would be his friends, he would work and play with them. I would explain to him that the teacher would be his friend, would help him and guide him in school, and that he should do as she tells him to. That will be his mother while he is away from home."

A public assistance mother was more explicit about the potential negative feelings:

"Well, by her being kind of bashful, the first thing I think I'll have to go with her. And tell her that she only have to stay here for a few hours and play with the kids. And everything's going to be fine. And she'll be able to come home. I'll come and pick her up when school is out."

An eloquent statement of mixed emotions was given by a Group C mother:

"I know he gonna be ner-frightened, you know, to stay there by himself, uh with the teacha. I just don't know what I would tell him. I try, I'd tell him that, uh, that he gonna have a lot of fun, you know, with the drawin' and everythin', and uh, playin' with the rest of the kids. Lots of kids there to play with--the rest of the children. And I'll tell him that I'll be back for him, and uh, it's fun, it's a lot of fun to go to school, cause he looks forward to goin' to school, but I know that first day, I know how it is that first day, when your mother leave you, you just don't know what to do."

Responses to this open-ended question often constituted or included statements which did not directly answer the question. Mothers mentioned actual experiences the child had had which they felt were helpful in preparing him for school, such as visiting the school or playing and talking about school with older siblings and friends, or actual skills that she had attempted to teach him herself, such as tying his shoes, or learning his ABC's. A Group B mother related that she would tell her daughter "how to undress and pull off her shoes and rubbers and how to go to the washroom, and hang her coat and hat and things like that." Concern for the academic aspect of school was expressed in preparation by a public assistance mother: "I would help her with her ABC's, things like that. I would help her learn to count, you know, and do as much as I could to help her."

The coding system devised for responses to this question defines a unit as a completed thought, usually a subject-and-predicate clause. For each respondent the number of units devoted to each scoring category of response can be expressed as the percentage of the total number of units contained in her response. It is for this reason that vague and irrelevant response-units were included in the total score. Table 5 reports the average percent usage of each category obtained within each of the four socio-economic status groups.

Table 5

Mother's Relative Use of Different Response Categories on the First Day Technique (Mean Percentages)

Type of Response	Social Status Groups A (N-39)	B (N-40)	C (N-38)	D (N-40)
School Relevant Instruction:				
Obedience	21.3	49.1	44.2	46.7
Achievement	2.2	1.4	2.9	3.2
Non-instruction Orientation:				
Affect	31.2	14.3	14.5	21.5
Preparation	8.6	3.9	1.1	1.3
Other:				
Vague	16.4	13.7	23.4	17.5
Irrelevant	19.6	15.2	13.2	12.8
Sum	99.3	97.6	99.3	103.0

Overall level of response (that is, the number of total message units), did not vary much among the four groups although a slight trend was seen for both total length and variety of response to be greater at the upper socio-economic levels

It is clear, though, that the total response is partitioned differently in the different groups of mothers, with an especially marked difference in the use of obedience and affect categories by the middle-class mothers as contrasted with

the other three groups. Middle-class mothers are apparently more concerned with the emotional aspects of the new situation, with its meaning to the child, than with his displaying good behavior; they are perhaps more aware of the emotional aspect than are the mothers in the other groups.

As a group, in responding to this question, mothers paid only slight attention to academic achievement and formal preparation for school, although middle-class mothers did show a greater tendency to relate relevant incidents, either coincidental or purposeful, to which their children had been exposed. Vague and irrelevant statements made up more than a third of the total response in all groups. It is interesting to note that in the A and B groups irrelevant statements were more common, whereas in groups C and D, vague responses predominated. Responses labeled "irrelevant" generally took the form of ramblings about unique, personal qualities of the child or his anxious anticipation of the beginning of school.

It seems, then, that middle-class mothers were aware of the emotional implications of the beginning of school experience for children and were sensitive to the need for reassurance which would make this exciting adventure less strange. They tended not to define a mother-teacher meeting as a discussion of specific problems with a child, but as a friendly exchange. They made specific suggestions for changes in the school system which indicated awareness of the various functions of the school, and of the role of the school system in relationship to the larger society.

The Group B mothers stressed both obedience to a new authority, the teacher, and general good deportment in the child's behavior on beginning school: they defined school as a place in which the child is expected to conform to a new routine. More than mothers in any other group, they described a mother-teacher meeting as a problem-oriented session, the topic being the child's grades or a combination of grades and conduct. They made concrete suggestions for changing the school, specifically in its physical-administrative functions and in the quality of its teachers.

The Group C mothers, too, defined the school as a situation calling for conformity and obedience to authority. They saw a mother-teacher meeting as a conference oriented toward some problem: although relatively unspecific as to its nature, it was likely to involve the child's school work and perhaps also his behavior. Given the opportunity to make suggestions for changes in the school, they agreed that there was need for improvement but did not know what they themselves should or could do.

The mothers on public assistance (Group D) were very similar to the Group C mothers in their definition of school: it is a system of authority to which children must conform. A mother-teacher meeting was viewed as a session oriented toward solving a specific problem with a child's grades, behavior, or some complaint about something the teacher had done to the child. These mothers, too, may have stated that the schools needed improving, but did not make specific suggestions and, more than mothers in any other group responded, "don't know," or some other indication that they had not really thought about it, or that they did not think they could accomplish anything.

The Mothers' Aspirations for the Child

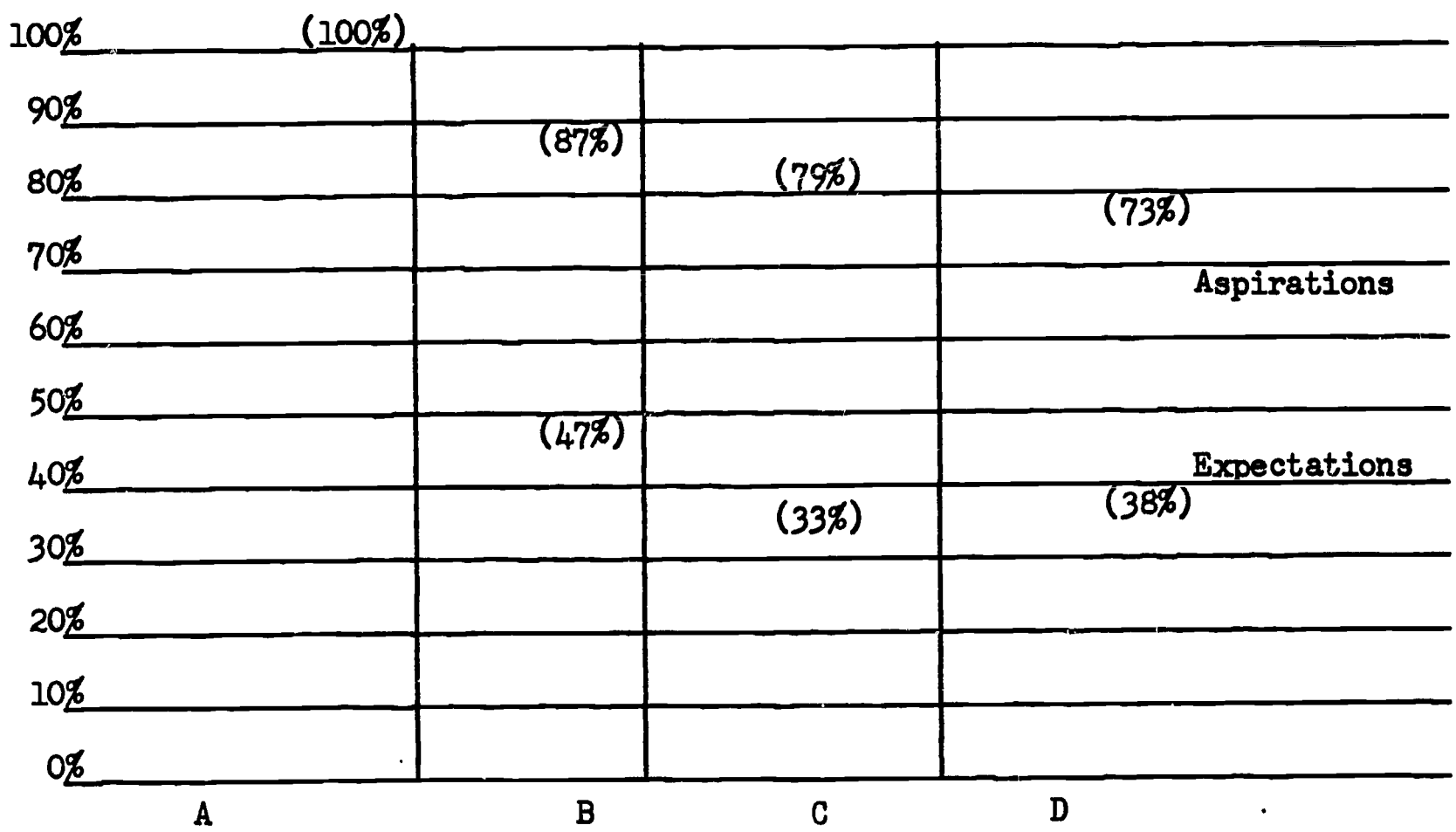
It has already been noted that working-class mothers feel a powerlessness and a lack of personal effectiveness against the authority of the school system, although they have great respect for education as an important tool for achieving a better status in life. They express a belief in the importance of good behavior on the part of their children. The frustration which appears to accompany these attitudes and beliefs was strikingly illustrated when mothers were asked about their aspirations and expectations for their children's educational achievement (Figure 1). The majority of mothers in all social class groups said that they would like their children to finish college. The majority of mothers in the working-class groups, however, when asked how far in school they thought their child would

actually go, were less hopeful. Group B mothers' aspirations and expectations were more diverse, but the majority of those who aspired to a college education for their children also expected that their children would finish college. Discrepancy between expressed aspirations and expectations among middle-class mothers barely exists: they wanted their children to finish college, and they believed that they would.

Figure 1

Mothers' Aspirations and Expectations
for Their Children's Educational Attainment

(Percentage responding at level of college attendance or above)



Discussion and Summary

In this paper we have described some of the significant aspects of the attitudes that mothers of young children hold toward the public school and toward education. We have also examined the degree to which the mothers' attitudes and behavior are reflected in the child's performance in various tasks and tests in our study. These are only rough estimates of what will happen when the child eventually arrives in school. We are now in the midst of a follow-up study that will determine in a more adequate manner how these early maternal attitudes will be translated into children's behavior in kindergarten and first grade. It seems important, however, that even at age four these attitudes toward the school are associated with certain cognitive and other behaviors of the child. Although these relationships have been reported in some detail in other papers (Bear, Hess and Shipman, 1966) it may be appropriate to summarize them here. The mother's attitude toward the school as reflected in the Educational Attitude Survey is significantly related to the child's IQ and to the child's behavior in the Stanford-Binet testing situation. The two factors that appear most frequently in these two sets of data are factors one and six. Factor one (feeling of power or powerlessness) is particularly important. It is negatively related to the child's tendency to engage in initiatory behavior in the Stanford-Binet testing situation, to his quickness of response, social confidence and comfortableness with an adult examiner. Thus the mother's attitude toward the school, which is apparently part of a larger cluster of attitudes toward herself and toward achievement in areas related to education, already has a discernable influence on her child's ability to deal with adults in formal testing situations and his ability to perform on cognitive tasks.

The images that these mothers hold of the school and that are probably transmitted to the young child in some form are particularly relevant for early education and the child's success in the school. The mothers' attitudes indicate that the problem

is not due to a lack of respect for the school or to the belief that it is ineffective: it is due to the fact that the mothers regard it as a distant and formidable institution with which they have very little interaction and over which they exercise very little control. This leads to the kind of injunctions and preparation indicated in respones to our "First Day" technique where the mothers from working-class areas typically talk in imperatives, presenting the school as a place in which one must obey the teacher and follow the rules rather than as an opportunity for interaction and learning. Thus the initial relationship between the child and the teacher is posed in terms of authority rather than interaction and in terms of rules of obedience rather than inquiry and exploration. This early attitude supports and reinforces the passivity of many working-class children who come into contact with middle-class institutions. It represents an orientation toward authority and toward learning which has indeed been taught by the mother and by the community environment and which needs to be modified through experience with teachers who interact on a basis other than authority and obedience. We have explored this issue in more detail in the paper discussing the relationship between maternal control and authority and the developing cognitive processes of the child (Hess and Shipman, 1966).

If the general picture that has been sketched here applies, it would seem to have implications for parent education, particularly as regards interaction between the school and the parent. It suggests, for example, that engaging parents in the activities of the school in some meaningful way may indeed assist the child in developing more adequate and useful images of the school, of the teacher and of the role of pupil. More interaction between the home and the school, particularly in cases where the children are coming into the first grade or kindergarten might make the initial orientation smoother and easier and provide an initial setting for the child in his first contact with the school that would make the task of re-socialization somewhat simpler.

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