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**Caretaking Forms and Styles in Urban Hong Kong:
A Pilot Study on Three-year-old Children**

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CARETAKING FORMS AND STYLES

IN URBAN HONG KONG

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by

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INTRODUCTION

Studies on child development have pointed to the importance of early childhood experiences on later development. Similar emphasis may be reflected in the Chinese saying "a person's life up to age 80 is already determined at age three".

The influence of early experiences, however, is not simple and direct. The nature of the relationship between specific early child-rearing practices and the child's psychological development has been widely debated. Attempts to identify causal relationship between specific experiences and later characteristics were inconclusive and were found to be unfruitful. The focus on child-rearing has shifted away from the unidirectional interpretation of socialization in which the child is viewed as the passive recipient of the mother's child-rearing practices. Emphasis has now been placed on the general social climate in the home in which the child actively interacts with the physical and social environment. The transactions between the child and his/her caretakers are important units of analysis in the understanding of the process of child development (Clarke & Clarke, 1976).

Most Western studies on child-rearing have focused on the mother as the primary caretaker. However, industrialization and urbanization have created changes in the structure of households, shifts in the role of women, and modifications in child care practices. As a result of the changes in household structure and role of women

in recent years, different forms of child care emerged in Hong Kong. The different forms of child care include children being cared by paid persons in a family setting, being cared by relatives such as grandparents, aunts or other siblings, and being cared by creches or nurseries. Thus, the sole emphasis on the mother's role as the socializing agent may miss out important influences of other family members and caretakers.

The educational level of parents as well as their economic standing are important factors in influencing child care practices. Socio-economic status itself is often related to the ecological setting in which differential caretaking resources are available.

A few empirical studies on child-rearing practices among different social classes have been reported in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong YWCA in collaboration with the Shue Yan College (1981) conducted a study with an emphasis on comparing child-rearing activities of three groups of working mothers from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds. The results showed that mothers of the professional group tended to be more rational, facilitative and education-oriented in their child-rearing approach. They would use explicit and verbal praises, and express their affection towards the children through physical contact. Mothers who were clerical and manual workers tended to resort to scolding and punishment more readily. They were also more reserved in their expression of positive affect towards their children. In the sharing of child-care and household duties, the fathers from the professional families participated more often than those from the clerical and manual worker families.

In the study conducted by Chan (1981) evaluating the family life education programmes launched by voluntary agencies and the Social Welfare Department of Hong Kong, it was found that most parents in his sample paid greater attention to the physical needs of their children but tended to neglect their psycho-social needs. The mothers relied on scolding and spanking as a form of discipline, and did not see the importance of parental support and concern in fostering the child's self-respect and confidence.

Another study on the changing pattern of child-rearing conducted by Lam (1982) revealed that working-class parents began to use more reasoning than physical punishment when disciplining their children. Her conclusion was contradicted by a later study of the Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong on 'Parenthood in Contemporary Hong Kong - The Experience of Mothers' (1983). The latter's results indicated that although the mothers understood rationally that positive inducement such as reasoning, persuasion and rewards would be more desirable child-rearing techniques than scolding and spanking, they still tended to use the latter techniques for discipline in practice.

The above studies on child-rearing and development have tried to compare social class and educational differences in caretaking styles. The methods used in the studies were usually surveys which were exploratory and descriptive in nature. No differentiation has been made between social class and social change (such as urbanization), both of which may affect the ecological conditions of child-rearing.

The present study aims at investigating in greater detail early

childhood development in Hong Kong. The forms of child care (i.e. who gives the care) and the social background of the family (including the socio-economic status and the stage of urbanization) were taken into account. These variables would be examined in terms of the style of caretaking and the impact on the child's development. Multiple methods were used in data collection.

The study was part of a cross-cultural research project initiated by Professor Marion Potts of Cornell University, U.S.A. in 1978. The participating countries/regions are: Australia, Hong Kong, India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Thailand and the United States. Cultural similarities and differences in child care practices and child development will be studied. Before the intensive main study is launched, it is essential for each country/region to carry out a pilot study to ensure that the research design and method would be relevant to the local situation and cross-culturally comparable.

The Hong Kong pilot study was conducted between 1980 and 1982. The objectives of the pilot studies were:-

1. to try out the research instruments and procedure,
2. to preview the frequency distribution of the variables being studied,
3. to determine the coding scheme to be used in the main study,
4. to identify potential problems in the research design.

METHOD

Subjects

Age of the subjects was set at over three and under four by the time of the testing. First-borns and single children were excluded. Quota sampling was used based on the geographical location of the family and the type of caretaking form utilized by the family.

The four types of caretaking form included in the study were: mother care, paid helper, nursery, and care by the extended family.

Three geographical locations were used to select families which represented different stages of urbanization, as well as the educational level and the socio-economic status of the parents:

Aberdeen -- The first group were children of boat people who have been living on fishing boats and earning their livelihood by fishing. Boat people have traditionally been segregated from the mainstream of life on land. They have formed their unique sub-culture and way of life. With the introduction of reclamation and redevelopment policies of the Hong Kong Government about a decade ago, boat people were encouraged to be resettled on land. They represent traditional families of low socio-economic status which have undergone recent social changes. In this group, only families which have been relocated at the relatively new Aplichau Estate in Aberdeen for less than two years were included. The families were contacted through a nursery in the estate and through the personal introduction of the General Secretary of the Aberdeen Fishermen Welfare Society. The General Secretary visited some of the families with the research assistant when making the initial contact.

Tze Wan Shan -- The Tze Wan Shan (TWS) Estate was completed in 1965. Most of the residents have lived in the estate for over five years. The families were identified with the assistance of the nurseries and kindergartens in the estate, and the Maternal-Child Health Clinics in the district. The TWS group represents urbanized lower class families.

For both the Aberdeen and the TWS groups, most of the families lived in public housing estates which consisted of high-rise blocks with living units ranging from 16 m² to 33 m² per family. To qualify for public housing at the time, the family income should be \$4,100 and the family size should be at least 4. Rent for these units ranged from HK\$100 to \$400. (Hong Kong Housing Authority, 1984).

Mei Foo -- In order to approximate the type of setting found in the other two geographical locations, Mei Foo Sun Chuen was originally chosen to represent the middle/upper middle class professional families. Mei Foo consists of high-rise blocks of apartments ranging from 450 - 1,375 sq.ft., with 600-700 sq.ft. as the mode. At the time of the study, the flats may be rented for about HK\$3,000-4,000 per month, or privately owned at an average sales price of around HK\$300,000. The families were contacted through nurseries and social service agencies in the estate. An announcement was made in the local newspaper. Due to the lack of subjects which could fit our research criteria, particularly the requirement for being later-borns, the geographical location was extended to include Taikoo Shing, a newer development of similar nature, and Kowloon Tong, where residents approximated the socio-economic and educational level of

the Mei Foo group. Originally, the criterion for the educational level of both parents was set at the university level. Due to the lack of cases which could fit the combination of stringent requirements, the parental educational level was lowered to include post-secondary training.

Although great effort has been spent in trying to fill the quota set for each caretaking form at each geographical location, none could be obtained for the paid helper category among the two low social class groups, i.e. Aberdeen and TWS. Such a form of child care is rare because it would have been more economical for the mother to stay home if no other relative could take care of the child for her. The number of cases obtained for each type of caretaking form at each geographical location is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Number of Subjects in the Pilot Study

Location	Caretaking Forms				Total
	Mother	Paid helper	Nursery	Extended family	
Aberdeen	5	0	5	3	13
TWS	5	0	4	4	13
Mei Foo	5	5	5	5	20
Total	15	5	14	12	46

Procedure and Instruments

The families were visited at their homes for four sessions within a period of four weeks. Different times of the week and the day were selected to introduce some variations in the activities. The format of

each session was fixed:

Session 1: Questionnaire Part 1 with mother

Natural observation on target child with mother

Gift given (music box)

Session 2: Natural observation on target child with primary caretaker

Observation on the child and the primary caretaker on play dough activity

Session 3: Questionnaire Part 2 with mother

Natural observation on target child with the whole family

Session 4: Observation on target child in problem-solving task

Gift given (colour books and pencils)

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed through a joint effort by the Cornell team and the Hong Kong team. References were made to an earlier study on child-rearing patterns among low-income families in Hong Kong by M.C. Lam (1982).

The major content areas covered in the questionnaire included:

- Background information on the family;
- Target child's physical environment;
- Target child's activities including daily routine, play, and use of the mass media;
- Child care forms and alternatives including mother, relatives, husband, nursery, and other helpers;

- Development of target child's behaviour in terms of social and emotional behaviour, independence, assertiveness, aggression, compliance, cooperation, competition, prosocial behaviour, problem-solving, academic performance, and mastery;
- Forms of guidance and discipline;
- Mother's values and concerns about child;
- Perception of social change in child care;

and a Scale of Individual Modernity based on Inkeles and Smith (1974).

The questionnaire was administered in the form of a structured interview with the mother. During the pretest, the entire questionnaire took 1-1½ hours to complete. The length of the questionnaire necessitated that the interview be split into two sessions, i.e. Session 1 and Session 3. Most of the items were close-ended or precoded. Open-ended answers were listed and categorized before coding.

Natural Observations

A total of three free sessions of 20 minutes each were observed with the target child involved in any activity with different members of the family. In session 1, the child was observed with his/her mother. In Session 2, the child was observed with his/her primary caretaker. In Session 3, the whole family including both parents and other siblings were involved. Little structure was imposed and the participants could choose whatever activity they "normally" would be engaged in.

During the observations, the interviewer would make a "running

record" of all the verbal and non-verbal activities which occurred during the 20 minutes. A tape-recorder was used as an aid. The interviewer would sit aside and attempt to "melt into the background". However, given the small size of the accommodations in Hong Kong, it was difficult for the interviewer to remain inconspicuous at all times. Occasionally, the family would turn to the interviewer who would revert the members' attention back to the ongoing activities.

It was noted in a few situations that the mother attended to her own household chores and left the target child in free play as she "normally" would at that time of the day when the natural observation took place.

Play Dough

The play dough task was used to observe the interaction between the primary caretaker and the child on an unstructured task. The play dough used in this study consisted of a new box of dough rolled up in the form of six coloured sticks. In order to make the dough pliable, each stick has to be kneaded first. The child was asked whether similar tasks have been attempted before. The caretaker was given the following instructions:

"We want to find out the ways children from different countries play with the dough, and how they and their caretakers explore them together. Could I ask you to help for a few minutes, in getting (name) to play with the clay with you, to explore it, and do different things with it?"

Interference from other members of the family was discouraged although it could not be completely controlled at times. All verbal and non-verbal activities during the interaction were recorded verbatim. The observation lasted for 15 minutes.

Structured Task

The structured task was designed to assess the child's problem-solving ability and approach. The methods and design of this task were developed by the Cornell and Sri Lanka teams. Different tools with various texture, shapes, and functions had to be put together to retrieve six toys. The apparatus consisted of six small objects (toys) to be procured in the game by the child. These are actually three sets of two objects each, where the critical property of each set is, for set 1: shape (looped); for set 2: texture (sticky); and for set 3: magnetism. Thus, the relevant property of set 1 can be identified by sight, for set 2 by feel, and for set 3, by experimentation with possible hypothesis setting. Two toys of each set are included to test for transfer: i.e., once the child has found the way to procure one looped object, we need to know whether he will then use that same technique to get the other.

The game is set up to preclude the child's reaching the toys with his hands. Thus, objects are put into a transparent box beyond his reach. A set of sticks and tools is provided for him to use any way he wants to get the toys. To succeed, the child must: 1. put the sticks together so as to extend to sufficient length for reaching, and 2. choose which tool to put on the end of the elongated pole he

has created. A different tool is appropriate for each set of objects to be procured. For set 1, the looped shape objects, a simple stick inserted into the loop, and then lifted, will be adequate. For set 2, the sticky textured objects, the tool with velcro on the end is necessary. For set 3, the tool with a magnet inserted is required. We are interested in the child's ability to shift strategies as demanded by the different sets.

Help from other members of the family was not allowed although it could not be completely controlled in some cases. Standard forms of feedback and facilitation were used by the interviewer to guide the child during the task. No time limit was set. The child's verbal and non-verbal behaviour was recorded and the number of attempted and completed tasks were noted.

Analysis

For the questionnaire, the precoded answers were tabulated directly. For the observations, the verbatim responses were coded according to a structured coding scheme. Each observation was separated into distinct activities. Within each activity, the behaviour units were judged according to the predetermined framework by two researchers who discussed and agreed upon the assigned codes. The summary coding system was adopted instead of the detailed unit-by-unit sequential analysis suggested by the Cornell team, in order to digest the vast amount of data into a meaningful but workable output. The coding of the observations focussed on:

1. Area of activity

2. Degree of involvement in activity by participants present at the observations
3. Overall atmosphere of the observations
4. Goal of instruction
5. Techniques of caretaking, including instructional techniques, facilitation techniques, and controlling techniques
6. Child's response during the caretaking situation
7. Child's problem-solving ability
8. Child's response to instruction
9. Child's effort in response to caretaker's instruction

The above 9 areas were coded for the three natural observations. For the play dough session, Areas 1 and 2 were not applicable. The other areas were coded with the following additions:-

10. Child's play dough products: The number of products was recorded. The quality of the products was rated to reflect the child's ability and imaginative level.
11. Caretaker's/others' expression of affect towards child's performance in play dough
12. The total number of tasks completed with and without violating rules/concrete help from others
13. Child's overall attitude and reactions towards the task, including time used to complete a particular task, and the number of trials made on each task.

In the present analysis, the frequency and the percentage of responses for the questionnaire and the observations were computed

for the entire group of subjects. Comparisons were made among the four caretaking forms and among the three geographical locations. Because of the small sample size used in the pilot study, only descriptive comparisons would be made and only on those variables which suggested group differences. These results would serve to generate hypotheses for the main study rather than to test hypotheses at this stage.

RESULTS

Physical and Social Milieu

In view of the limitations on living space in Hong Kong, most of the children in this study had to live in the same room with their parents, or share a room with their siblings. More than half of the children shared a bed with their mothers or siblings. However, they usually had separate storage space for their own things.

The children under study followed a regular daily routine, getting up between 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., going to bed at 9:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. and taking a nap in the afternoon. However, for some children, their bedtime was as late as other adults in the family. Most children had fixed time for their meals and play. They also spent time regularly on study and learning despite their young age. On the whole, the children followed a fixed and planned daily schedule initiated and encouraged by their parents or the adults caring for them.

Play

As regards to play and other leisure activities of the children, their siblings were their playmates in most cases (95.2%) while their mothers came second as their playmates (50.0%). Play sessions or activities were usually conducted at home (37.5%), in parks (30.3%), and in hallways of the housing estates where the children lived.

Parents bought toys for their children regularly and a significant majority of the parents chose the toys mostly according to the interest and the benefit of their children (66.7%). A small proportion of the children (27.1%) was allowed to make their own choice of toys bought.

T.V. and Mass Media

Almost all the families owned a television set. On the average, most of the children watched T.V. for one to two hours a day. They watched predominantly children's programme and to a lesser extent, drama series. Except for the professional families, the children usually chose their own T.V. programmes.

Caretaking Arrangement

On the average, mothers spent 14.5 hours during the weekend with the children. The amount of time spent during the week differed depending on the childcare arrangement. For mothers who were the primary caregivers, they spent an average of 10.4 hours per day while working mothers spent between 2.6 to 3.4 hours per day with their children.

The frequency of bringing children out, mostly to play in parks

or to visit relatives, were 7.6 times per month.

Whoever the primary caregiver, the mother still played the central role in taking care of the child's needs. Mothers were primarily responsible for decisions on the child's daily routine, health, discipline and learning. A substantial minority of the fathers did not help in any aspect of the household or childcare tasks at all. When the fathers did help, they were usually involved in discipline, taking the child out or in some learning tasks. The other siblings played a major role in playing with the focus child. Some older siblings also rendered assistance as baby-sitters while parents or the mother had to go out.

Mothers' Expectations

In terms of self-care, the majority of the mothers expected their 3-4-year-olds to be able to wash their face, get dressed, go to toilet, tidy up and run small errands for them. In the area of academic achievement, they tended to encourage talents in singing, drawing, memory and academic performance such as reading, writing and arithmetic. The mothers held these expectations because they thought that these tasks were appropriate for the age and would foster good habits. Moreover, the mothers were conscientious and concerned about their children's relationship with other children. They discouraged any quarrel or fighting between their children with others under any circumstances. They emphasized compliance, cooperativeness, sharing and pro-social behaviours in their children. The traits most of the mothers considered as important for the children

at this age as well as when they grew up were good disposition and obedience. However, few of the mothers expected unquestioning obedience from their children. In comparison, these mothers regarded responsibility and high level of education as the traits characterizing an important person.

Child-rearing Techniques

Most mothers claimed in the interview that they tended to use verbal modes of reward and punishment. They would use direct guidance and praise to encourage their children to do something, such as sharing and cooperating. As a method of reward, verbal recognition is the most popular means followed by material reward.

To sanction a child, the mothers usually used verbal reprimand, gave direct instructions, and to a lesser extent, used physical punishment. More than half of the mothers would not allow their children to fight with others under any circumstances. Most mothers would try their best to separate the fighting children. Most mothers, irrespective of their educational level and socio-economic status, would use reasoning and explanation as a means of discipline while only a minority of them, mostly from the lower educational and social backgrounds, would resort to physical punishment.

During the actual observations, it was confirmed that both the mothers and the other caretakers tended to use verbal techniques most often to control the children. They would point out the children's unacceptable behaviours and gave directions to behave otherwise. Rarely would any of the caregivers seriously scold or hit children

during the observations when the interviewer was present.

Caregiver-Child Interaction

The interactions between the caregivers and the children during the natural observations usually involved free play, conversation, and eating. In these sessions, the caregivers generally took the initiative to interact with the children and this was particularly so with mothers who were the primary caregivers and were of higher socio-economic background. With their stimulation, the children were observed to be more responsive and dynamic in these sessions. These sessions consequently turned out to be richer in content and interaction.

The general atmosphere during these free sessions was permissive, encouraging, but at times, controlling. A few caregivers adopted a laissez-faire approach during which the children and the caregivers were not interacting directly, but each was doing his/her own thing, particularly among the lower-class caregivers who went on with their daily house-keeping routines such as doing laundry, cooking, etc. during the sessions. Nonetheless, all the caregivers were involved adequately in observing and speaking with the children in their activities. Compared to the other caregivers, the mothers, whether they were the primary caretakers or not, stood out as being more responsive to their children. They actively solicited the children's responses, gave directive instructions and participated in the children's activities. The mothers were more conscious about orienting their responses towards specific training goals during the observations. This was especially true with mothers of higher

educational and social status.

During the play dough activity, most caregivers were actively involved in the child's activity. The nature of the caregiver's involvements was more unilateral: observing the child or soliciting the child's response. Fewer of the caregivers from the working-class families would be working together with the child. Their interaction with the child was unstructured and lax most of the time.

Caregivers from the professional families were more structured and active in providing the child with instructions relating to intellectual and language training. However, the amount and quality of play dough production did not differ much among children from the subgroups.

Throughout the sessions, physical intimacy was seldom displayed by the mothers or the other caretakers towards the children. Most of them resorted to verbal means when communicating with their children. Expression of approval tended to be reserved and subtle. Expression of affection or emotion was rarely displayed explicitly.

Child's Achievement

At the age of three to four, most of the children were able to tell their address and count up to 30. They could read a few Chinese characters, some alphabets, and read up to 20 numbers. They could also write from one to five Chinese characters, up to 10 English alphabets and numbers one to ten. As many of the children attended at least a half-day nursery and some had to do homework, they demonstrated academic competence at a young age. Although the

three groups of children did not differ at the upper end of achievement, those from the professional families were more homogeneous with very few who could not read or write.

Child's Behaviour

According to the mothers' report, most of the children liked competition, but would be unlikely to break rules in order to win. When they avoided doing a task, they usually ignored the requests, diverted their attention elsewhere, or found some excuses. Even though some children would ask for reasons when instructed to do something, close to half would seldom or never ask for a reason. The most common responses when they were unhappy were keeping silent and becoming withdrawn, crying, or having a temper tantrum. When they were angry, they tended to cry, and to a lesser extent, hit others or become withdrawn. Nonetheless, the mothers did not find that the children cried all too often. When they cried, it was usually due to fights over toys, unfulfilled wishes or being bullied. Few of the children were considered aggressive. Quarrels and fights were infrequent. Only in the professional families were the children encouraged to be assertive.

During the observations, the children were mostly independent, cooperative, and assertive. They were generally compliant and obedient and would try according to the instructions. There was usually little resistance or bargaining.

On the whole, the children's problem - solving ability was not high as shown in the play dough activity and the structured task,

irrespective of their socio-economic class. Many of the children adopted a trial-and-error approach to problem-solving and did not seem to comprehend the principles of retrieval in the structured task. However, most children showed perseverance and some level of imagination.

Generally, there was little difference among the children from the different family backgrounds in terms of the behaviours of children during the observations. It was noticed that at this age, there were more differences in the behaviours of the caregivers, especially among the mothers from the three socio-economic groups.

DISCUSSION

In general, the children in this study enjoyed rather relaxed expectations on their roles and tasks. Few constraints were put on daily routines such as bedtime. The primary concern most mothers expressed was related to the lack of social and recreational facilities, and the limited educational opportunities in Hong Kong.

Given the small size of the sample in the pilot study, the pattern of responses differed more among the three geographical locations than among the four forms of caretaking. Variations in responses were found more often in terms of the socio-economic background of the family.

The background of the families from the three geographical locations differed in several aspects. In terms of the educational level, parents from the Mei Foo group vastly surpassed the other two groups. Most of the Aberdeen parents had no formal education and

those from Tze Wan Shan had only a few years of education. These latter two groups differed, however, in terms of the support they received from the extended family and social affiliations. The Aberdeen families were in closer proximity to their relatives. More of them had participated in social groups, particularly the Fishermen's Welfare Society. The support system might also be reflected from the mothers' sources of child-care knowledge. Tze Wan Shan mothers depended mostly on their own parents whereas the Aberdeen mothers were more diversified in terms of their sources of knowledge, including other relatives, neighbours and medical professionals. The Mei Foo mothers relied more on educational materials such as books, school, newspapers and magazines.

The socio-economic status as well as the type of housing prescribed the physical milieu for the children. The Tze Wan Shan children had the least amount of personal space whereas children from Mei Foo were more likely to have their own room or bed. Even though most children played at home, the Mei Foo children were more likely to be taken to parks while the other two groups might play in the hallways of the building or in the street.

The Mei Foo mothers were most cognizant of influences on child development and paid deliberate attention to the child's training such as through story-telling, the choice of toys and T.V. programmes, or in the choice of alternative caretaking. The child was taken out more often for his/her own sake. The special attention the child enjoyed might be related to the smaller family size among the Mei Foo families. With more children in the other two groups of families, special

attention to the target child might have been reduced.

One great difference among the families lies in the role of the father in relations to the child. In the professional families, the father is involved in more aspects of the child's life, including discipline, play, developing the child's interest, and helping with the child's learning. The fathers in the other two groups of families were less involved in the child's intellectual development. When they helped out, it was usually in terms of the child's daily routine or taking the child out. The responsibility for the child's learning often fell on the older siblings besides the mother. However, the fathers in this pilot study were not totally aloof as have been described in traditional Chinese families. At least when the child was very young, the fathers were more involved with some aspects of child-care.

A second difference was found in child-rearing practices. The professional families adopted a more democratic approach to child-rearing. For example, when the mothers intervened in the children's quarrels and interpersonal problems, they would try to find out the cause and then would reason with the children. To sanction the children, they would use verbal directions more so than physical punishment. They did not expect unquestioning obedience from the children and would explain to them in response to the children's request for reasons. To these mothers, the most important quality for young children was good disposition.

The other two groups of families adopted a more authoritarian approach to child-rearing. To the mothers, the most important quality for the young children was obedience. Many mothers expected their

children to obey without questioning.

Despite a longer stay in an urbanized setting, the Tze Wan Shan mothers seemed to be retaining traditional habits and values. More of them practiced traditional ancestor worship as a form of religion. They appeared to be more restrictive and punitive. They would scold or beat the children if the children were involved in quarrels or fights with others. Many would not allow their children to quarrel under any circumstance. They were less responsive to the children's request for reasons and many would do nothing even if asked by the children. Most of these mothers would use reprimand as a means of sanction and tended to use material contingencies as reward. Since they had less access to social support, they would have preferred the child to create as little trouble for them as possible.

Aberdeen mothers were more responsive to their children, but they also expected unquestioning obedience from the children. They found more problems of fighting and over-dominance in the child's social relationship which might be a reflection of their own expectations as well as the actual social environment in which there were more children that the target child had to relate to.

In terms of the facilitation of positive behaviour, the professional mothers were more structured and purposive. They played a direct role in the children's learning. Most of their children had colouring and story books. The mothers usually read stories personally or played story tapes for their children. Both parents played with their children often. In deciding on toys for the children, consideration was often given to what would benefit the children. The adults chose

T.V. programmes for their children and saw the benefit of T.V. as a source of knowledge.

The mothers in the professional families tended to use verbal praise as a method of encouragement for the children to do better. When the children had difficulty in solving a problem, the mothers would usually wait for a short while before intervening so that the children could try out for themselves. In requiring the children to do a task, the objective was usually to develop their habit or personality. Although achievement was encouraged, they placed less emphasis on homework, or on traditional academic abilities of reading, writing and memorization. They were concerned about a broader range of abilities including art and music, as well as about development of personality characteristics. Many of the mothers considered independence as the most important characteristic for their children when they grew up. However, they also had greater expectations for the children to attain professional and university-level education. Their children were more homogeneous in the acquisition of the basic academic skills. In general, the style of caretaking among these mothers was more permissive and child-centred, reflecting a conscious effort to facilitate the child's development.

The Aberdeen mothers were the least involved in the children's learning process. Few of the parents played together with their children. They thought T.V. had little influence on their children and usually let the children choose programmes for themselves. Few mothers would teach their children to read, write or count, or would read stories to the children. To encourage the children to do better

or to behave in a certain way, they would just tell the children to do so. They had lower aspirations for the children, and thought the highest educational attainment was up to the children. Some were satisfied with white-collar jobs or just up to primary level education for their children. This low academic aspiration might reflect some of the traditional orientations of fisherman which had not put education as a central value. The most important quality for their children when they grew up was also a good disposition.

The Tze Wan Shan mothers had placed certain demands on their children. Placing an emphasis on diligence as the most important quality for their children when they grew up, they pushed their children into more homework. Although they would ask their children to read, write, or count, they were less involved in the facilitation of the children's learning. They were less responsive to children's questions, and would usually do nothing to encourage positive behaviour or when asked to explain reasons. Few of the children had story or colouring books. The children were left to choose their own T.V. programmes. When the children were required to do a task at home, it was more for the reason of giving the mother less trouble.

In summary, the results on the lower-class families fitted some of the early observations on lower-class or traditional Chinese families. The attention directed to the young child was little. Parents seldom participated in the child's play. The authority of the parents was maintained and obedience was emphasized. In the professional families, a more democratic approach was adopted. Both parents were more involved in the child's activities. More attention was directed towards

the child's needs and development. The parents resorted to reasoning more often in discipline or teaching the child.

Nonetheless, the impact of the different styles of caretaking was not obvious from the information provided by the mothers on the questionnaire nor from the observations.

Results obtained on the four caretaking forms showed a less distinctive pattern of differences. This was partly due to the small number of cases in the paid helper group. Greater heterogeneity of responses was found among the mothers who were the primary caregivers. It was suspected that the variations within this group might be contributed by the socio-economic and educational differences among the mothers. Whether the primary caregiver was the mother, the paid helper, or the nursery, the mother still played the key role in the decisions about the child's development. The extended-family caretaker took a more active role in the day-to-day care as well as the discipline of the child. Despite the small amount of time that working mothers might contribute to the routine care of the child, there seemed to be little evidence that these mothers were less involved in the overall development of the child. They actually interacted intensively with their children during the short time they spent together.

METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

The pilot study provided the opportunity to identify some problems in the instruments, procedure, and research design which may be modified in the main study:

Observation Procedures and Coding System

The crowded home environment in Hong Kong made it difficult to confine the observations to just the individuals specified. It was difficult to keep out other family members from participating in the observed activity.

During the natural observations, some caregivers would continue with their normal activities in the house which did not involve interaction with the child, thereby reducing the amount of data on this aspect. The possibility of structuring the focus of the "natural" observation by more specific instructions may be considered for the main study.

Many problems were found with the structured task. The small size of the working-class home at times posed a physical problem to the display of the structured task. There may not be enough room to spread out the apparatus in a comfortable position. The presence of other family members and their active assistance despite reminders from the interviewer made it difficult to keep the situation "uncontaminated". Some allowance for these interactions should be considered in the coding scheme.

In coding the pilot study results, the original detailed coding scheme was abandoned due to the impracticality of assigning a code to each behaviour unit which would then be analyzed sequentially. Instead, a simplified coding sheet was designed to rate the presence or the degree of various target caretaking practices and responses. Such a form could be improved to

include more objective and behavioural criteria while retaining its simplicity. The form could also be used to train the interviewers in identifying the key behaviour units during the observations.

Questionnaire

The general feedback on the questionnaire was that it was too long. Some items were repetitious. Inclusion of certain items on the sections covering the mother's assessment of the child's development need further theoretical and empirical support. The mother's ratings on the child's behaviour were often subjective and may reflect more her own expectations than the child's actual behaviour. For mothers who were not the primary caregivers, they may not be able to provide the accurate information on some details of caretaking. Such information should be supplemented by the primary caretaker.

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香港不同社經階層教養兒童的形式

(中文摘要)

張妙清、鄒羅端華、林孟秋合著

此論文乃根據香港一個對兒童及其發展的先導研究的結果作一綜合報導。此研究將會與美國及一些亞洲國家所做同類性質的研究作一跨越文化的比較。

由於近十幾年來迅速的現代化及城市化，香港的家庭在其結構及功能上都有相當大的變遷，過往的大家庭多由核心家庭取代，家庭的好些功能亦由政府及自願機構擔當。家庭的變遷亦帶來了不同的教養兒童形式。本研究的重點是去了解在不同的社經階層及教養形式、父母對兒童的期望及管教之異同。

研究對象為來自三類社經階層的三歲兒童及其父母，這三個組別為專業人士、藍領階級及移居陸上的漁民。從這三個不同的組別，又細分為四種不同的教養形式：兒童由母親、傭人、幼兒園及親戚照顧的家庭。研究是通過結構問卷及實地觀察去了解目前家庭對子女的期望，他們日常生活的照顧，管教子女的形式等各方面與兒童成長有關的環節。

根據初步資料分析，覺得家庭的社經階層對兒童日常生活及發展有較顯著的關係，但不同的教養形式對兒童這些方面的影響卻不見顯著。