THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL ASSERTIVENESS AND PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S ASSERTIVE BEHAVIORS

By

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This study is dedicated to the preschool children in Stillwater who have helped me to realize that teaching preschool age children is a joy and a very fulfilling experience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The concept of assertiveness is important in the context of mental health and adequate social adaptation. One of the most common problem areas faced by counselors and psychotherapists is working with clients who are unable to assert themselves (Gay, Hollandsworth, & Galassi, 1975). Inability to assert oneself may be a problem not only for clients but also for parents, teachers, and children of all ages and in all facets of their every day lives. For instance, adults may have problems asserting themselves in the following ways: saying "no" to a salesman, insisting that others do their fair share of the work, or requesting a much overdue increase in salary. Children also have problems asserting themselves, such as expressing their ideas in the presence of authority figures or not allowing another child to take a toy away from them.

Alberti and Emmons (1974) stated the following:

> Teachers especially are guilty of anti-assertive behavior . . . . Quiet, well-behaved children who do not question the system are rewarded, whereas those who buck the system in some way are dealt with sternly. It is an acknowledged conclusion among educators that the child's natural spontaneity in learning is conditioned out of him no later than the fourth or fifth grade. (p. 5)

An assumption implicit in the above text is that assertive behavior may be adaptive in many situations. This author would agree with this basic premise.

Research in the area of assertiveness has been primarily confined to the area of assertiveness training. Little research has been done on the development of assertiveness in children and more specifically on the development of assertiveness in preschool children.

One such study was Dorman's (1969) which explored the relationship between assertive behaviors and cognitive performance in preschool children. Her subjects included 25 boys and 25 girls in a Head Start Program in Massachusetts. She hypothesized that the more assertive children, as measured by her tests, would have higher intelligence scores than the less assertive children, and that certain items of the Stanford-Binet would be related to assertion. She found that her data supported these hypotheses. Dorman found that high levels of assertiveness were associated with high IQ scores in her sample of preschool children. She indicated that more research needs to be done concerning the determinants of assertion and the variables which foster or hinder its development.

Biller (1969) found a relationship between the maternal figure and level of assertiveness in sons. He studied kindergarten age boys from father-absent homes and found that strong mother figures tended to produce higher verbal skills, but lower levels of independence and assertiveness in sons. Thus, the home environment may have a great effect on the development of assertive behaviors in children.

In another study by Baumrind and Black (1967), parent attitudes and behaviors associated with dimensions of competent behavior in normal preschool children were identified. It was found that stable assertive behavior in children was associated with independence granting and verbal give-and-take and with enforced demands and

consistent discipline by the parents. The development of assertive behaviors in children may be greatly affected by parent attitudes and behaviors in the home.

After reviewing the available literature on the development of assertive behaviors of preschool children, this author believed that there was a recognized need for a study to identify possible variables which foster assertive behavior. One of these variables may be the level of parental assertiveness. The purpose of the present study was to identify some of the relationships between parental assertiveness and the assertiveness of their preschool children. Preschool children were selected in order to minimize the effects of schooling.

The Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between parental assertiveness and preschool children's assertive behaviors. The more specific purposes of this study were to:

1. determine the difference between assertiveness scores of boys and girls;
2. determine the extent to which the assertiveness of the male and female parent was associated with the assertiveness of the children; and
3. determine whether there were differences between assertiveness scores of children from high-moderate assertive families and low-moderate assertive families.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were examined:

1. There is no significant difference between the assertiveness scores of boys and girls.
2. There is no significant difference between the association of the male parent as opposed to the female parent to the assertiveness scores of children.
3. There is no significant difference between the assertiveness scores of children from high-moderate assertive families and the assertiveness scores of children from low-moderate assertive families.
4. There is no significant interaction between sex of child and sex of parent with respect to the children's assertiveness scores.
5. There is no significant interaction between sex of child and the level of parental assertiveness with respect to the children's assertiveness scores.
6. There is no significant interaction effect between sex of parent and the level of parental assertiveness with respect to children's assertiveness scores.
7. There is no significant interaction effect between sex of child, sex of parent, and the level of parental assertiveness on children's assertiveness scores.

Definition of Terms

1. Assertive behaviors - behaviors having the characteristic of action on the environment, such as asking questions,

exploring the environment, and manipulating the environment (Dorman, 1969, p. 1).

2. High-moderate assertive family - a family in which one parent had a high level of assertiveness and one parent had a moderate level of assertiveness.
3. Low-moderate assertive family - a family in which one parent had a low level of assertiveness and one parent had a moderate level of assertiveness.
4. Preschool children - children who were between the age of three years and five years and attended a preschool program.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In the past few years, there has been an ever growing interest in the study of assertive behaviors. Researchers have defined assertive behavior in various ways.

Alberti and Emmons (1974) defined assertive behavior in the following way:

> Behavior which enables a person to act in his own best interests, to stand up for himself without undue anxiety, to express his honest feelings comfortably, or to exercise his own rights without denying the rights of others. (p. 2)

They stated that assertion and aggression were not the same thing. An aggressive person might malign others or deny their rights, whereas an assertive person is genuinely concerned with the rights of others yet at the same time able to establish his own rights.

Dorman (1969) defined assertive behavior as:

> Behaviors which have action on the environment, such as exploring the environment, manipulating the environment, asking questions, and destroying the environment. (p. 1)

As she defined it, assertive behavior included the concept of aggression.

In the past, the terms curiosity, exploration, attention, manipulation, and play have been used as labels of a form of behavior which indicated interest in, or action on the environment. Since the

1950's, many studies dealing with both human and lower animal subjects have indicated that these behaviors--curiosity, manipulation, and exploration tend to be inborn and develop throughout the life cycle of the organism unless something interferes with their presence. Relevant research to show that assertive behavior is present from birth and develops as the organism matures will be presented.

Development of Assertive Behaviors

Vision is one of the earliest forms through which the environment can be explored since it is operating immediately after birth. Newborn infants scan stimuli in their environment (Haith, 1968) and they can follow a moving target. Visual exploration does not disappear as the organism matures but becomes more selective and finely organized (Fantz, 1965; Brennan, 1966). Visual exploration can also be effectively used as a reinforcement for learning (Butler, 1954). The studies in which the infant acts to bring about change in visual stimulation also demonstrates that an infant is able and wants to exert some control over his environment.

As the child grows older, his exploration involves more and more motor activity. White, Castle, and Held (1964) found that by five months, most infants were capable of visually directed reaching. Gesell (1940) and Rubenstein (1967) found that by six months, grasping of objects, manipulating, and tasting occur. Before an infant is able to reach and grasp an object to explore and learn about it, he is capable of motor action to increase his visual exploration and to act on his environment. Many infants move and play so vigorously in their cribs that they are able to "walk" their cribs around the room--

conceivably exploring their environment.

Action on the environment to manipulate it or to learn about it is a part of the concept of competence proposed by White (1959). White reviewed the literature on drives and needs and concluded that visual exploration, grasping, attention, and motor exploration cannot be conceptualized in terms of primary drives. Visual exploration, grasping, attention, and motor exploration are processes through which the organism learns about its environment and learns to interact with it. White included them all as a part of competence, an organism's ability to interact effectively with its environment. Competence is a behavior which comes under the category of assertive behaviors.

Competence and exploration are important because they result in varied experiences which are necessary for the organism's normal development and maintenance (Fiske & Maddi, 1961; White, 1960). By exploring and acting on the environment, the organism takes in new information which changes the organism, perhaps raising it to a higher level of development.

Another way to express assertive behaviors is through leadership. Leadership is an assertive behavior which is directed toward the social rather than the physical environment. Leadership requires ordering the environment and people to get things done. Rosvold, Mirsky, and Prebram (1954) found that monkeys form a hierarchy of dominance and all monkeys learn this hierarchy. It is also known that many birds and animals form pecking orders. Young children, age three, tend to show leadership characteristics when in a group of two or more (Merei, 1949).

Home Influences on Assertive Behaviors

The atmosphere of the home in the early years, the attitudes held, and the type of discipline have a great effect on the development of assertive behaviors. Becker (1964) reported the effects of parental discipline on the family. He proposed that families can be measured along two independent dimensions, warmth-hostility and restrictive-permissive. Children who are creative and positively assertive come from warm-permissive homes and children who are conforming and non-assertive come from restrictive homes, whether warm or hostile. Thus, cold, punitive, restrictive homes tend to produce non-assertive children, while warm, permissive, non-punitive homes produce assertive children.

In a study by Baumrind and Black (1967), parent attitudes and behaviors associated with dimensions of competent behavior in normal preschool children were identified. They found that stable assertive behavior in children was associated with independence granting and verbal give-and-take and with enforced demands and consistent discipline by the parents.

Biller (1969) found a relationship between the maternal figure and the level of assertiveness in sons. He studied kindergarten age boys from father-absent homes and found that strong mother figures tended to produce higher verbal skills, but lower levels of independence and assertiveness in sons. Therefore, the home environment may have a great effect on the development of assertive behaviors.

Leadership, a form of assertive behavior, develops in the same home atmosphere as creativity, exploration, and competence. Research by Baldwin (1949) showed that leaders come from democratic homes which

are warm and permissive.

Studies on leadership were done with preschool children in the classroom. These young leaders in the classroom were more intelligent (Bonney & Powell, 1953), more verbally fluent (Dunnington, 1957; Hartup, 1959), and more independent (Dunnington, 1957).

The results of studies on leadership suggest that assertive children are probably more intelligent than non-assertive children. The more assertive the child, the more he is likely to learn, and the higher will be his intelligence score. Dorman (1969) explored the relationship between assertive behaviors and cognitive performance in preschool children. She found that high levels of assertiveness were associated with high IQ scores. Thus, the more assertive the child, the higher was his intelligence score.

Gay, Hollandsworth, and Galassi (1975) studied assertive behavior in the adult population. Subjects in this study included males and females who ranged in age from 18 years to 60 years of age. They found that males had higher assertiveness scores than females on the Adult Self Expression Scale.

After reviewing the literature on assertiveness, little research on the etiology of assertive behaviors was found. In trying to learn more about the etiology of assertive behavior, it seems a logical choice to focus on the home environment. Specifically, focusing on the relationship between parental assertiveness and the child's assertiveness is a good beginning point in a much needed area of research.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Design

The basic design of this experiment was a 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design. The independent variables under consideration were sex of child, sex of parent, and level of parental assertiveness. The factor, sex of child (A) had two levels, boys and girls. Likewise, the second factor, sex of parent (B) had two levels, males and females. The remaining factor, level of parental assertiveness (C) was composed of two levels, high paired with moderate, and low paired with moderate. All three of these factors were considered fixed factors. This study was designed to evaluate the relationship between the dependent variable, assertive behaviors of children, and these three independent variables.

Subjects

In this experiment, there were a total of 48 subjects who attended preschools in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Of these 48 subjects, 24 were boys and 24 were girls ranging in age from 3 years 6 months to 5 years 3 months. These boy and girl groups were further subdivided according to the following criteria. One-fourth of the group came from families with (1) a father who had a high level of assertiveness, (2) a

father who had a low level of assertiveness, (3) a mother who had a high level of assertiveness, and (4) a mother who had a low level of assertiveness. In addition, for reasons of experimental control, the mate in each of these had a moderate level of assertiveness.

Instruments

The Adult Self Expression Scale (ASES) developed by Gay, Hollandsworth, and Galassi (1975) was used to measure parental assertiveness. This assertiveness inventory consisted of 48 items which specified assertive behaviors which could occur in interpersonal situations. The following specific behaviors were included in this scale: expressing personal opinions, refusing unreasonable requests, taking the initiative in conversations and in dealings with others, expressing positive feelings, standing up for legitimate rights, expressing negative feelings and asking favors of others (see sample questions in Appendix B).

Each item on the ASES had five choices which were scored on a zero to four basis ranging from a low level assertiveness response to a high level assertiveness response. The total score on this inventory was obtained by the summation of the total number on each item. Consequently, the minimum score on the inventory was zero, indicating a low level of assertiveness; the maximum score was 192, indicating a high level of assertiveness.

Parents who scored above 131 on the ASES were considered to have a high level of assertiveness; those who scored between 96 and 131 inclusive were considered to have a moderate level of assertiveness; and those who scored below 96 were considered to have a low level of

assertiveness. These categories were determined by taking approximately plus or minus one standard deviation from the mean ($\bar{X}$=116) that Gay, Hollandsworth, and Galassi found in their study. Reliability studies conducted by Gay, Hollandsworth, and Galassi (1975) on the ASES indicated test-retest reliabilities of .88 and .91 for two week and five week inter-test intervals respectively.

An observer rating of assertive behaviors was used to measure the children's assertive behaviors. Dorman's (1969) observation schedule was modified and used to rate the children's assertive behaviors (see Appendix C). Dorman's observation schedule was modified as follows: the experimenter observed the children for two-minute intervals recording only one assertive behavior per category in every 20 seconds of observation time. The experimenter rested for a two-minute interval between each two-minute observation interval.

The observation schedule included the following eight items: asking the teacher for information, asking the teacher for directions, asking other children for information, asking other children for directions, directing other children, suggesting ideas to other children, exploring the environment, and playing with manipulative toys. The experimenter's score of assertive behaviors for each child was the number of checked behaviors totaled over a 16-minute period in all categories except the last one, "plays with manipulative objects." In this category, a sustained behavior, i.e., building with blocks, counted for one behavior within each one-minute time interval. Therefore, sustained behavior over a two-minute time interval would count as only two behaviors instead of the total of checked behaviors during this time interval.

Data Collection

Observer Reliability

Inter-observer reliability was established by the following procedure. The experimenter and one other child development specialist participated in practice observations for one hour one day. On two days following the practice day, the observers independently observed the same six children for two two-minute intervals each day for a total of eight minutes of observation time for each child. From these six observations, an observer reliability of .95 was established.

Methods and Procedures of Data Collection

The data for this experiment were collected in nine preschools in Stillwater, Oklahoma. The parents of 204 children at these preschools were sent letters (see Appendix A) explaining the purpose of the research and requesting the parents' and child's assistance in the study.

The experimenter visited each school group and spoke individually to at least one parent of each child to answer questions asked by the parents in regard to the help requested. The experimenter requested that both parents of each child answer the 48-item Adult Self Expression Scale individually and return it to the child's school within one week from the date received. The 48 subjects for this study were selected on the basis of their parents' assertiveness scores on this inventory. In the case where there were more than six families for any one family construct, the experimenter chose the families to be included in this study by selecting the ones which had greater

differences between male and female parent's assertiveness scores.

Each subject was observed for 16 minutes by the experimenter. The observation schedule asked the observer to observe the children during indoor play and record for two-minute intervals only one assertive behavior per category during every 20 seconds of observation time. After every two minutes of observation time, the observer rested for two minutes. The experimenter observed each child for two non-sequential two-minute intervals for a total of four minutes of observation time per day on four different days.

The name of each child observed at the preschools was written on a slip of paper and folded in half and placed in one pocket. The experimenter randomly selected a name to observe for the upcoming two-minute interval. After this subject was observed that name was placed in a second pocket and the next subject was chosen from the first pocket. This procedure was repeated until every subject had been observed two times on each of four different days.

Analysis of variance was used to determine whether significant differences existed for the factors sex of child, sex of parent, and level of parental assertiveness.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analyzed in this study represented an 84% rate of return. Of the 204 inventories distributed to the parents of the preschool children, 163 were returned.

Major hypotheses were tested by analysis of variance. The results of the 2 x 2 x 2 analysis of variance are summarized in Tables I, II, and III. In interpreting this data, it will be helpful to remember that only high-moderate and low-moderate assertive families were studied. A high-moderate assertive family was a family in which one parent had a high level of assertiveness and one parent had a moderate level of assertiveness. A family in which one parent had a low level of assertiveness and one parent had a moderate level of assertiveness was a low-moderate assertive family.

Tests of Hypotheses

Sex of Child

Boys had higher assertiveness scores ($\overline{X}$=11.13) than girls ($\overline{X}$=8.42) (Table I). The difference between assertiveness scores of boys and girls was significant at the .06 level of probability (Table II).

Because of a significant interaction between sex of child and level of parental assertiveness (Table II), simple main effects tests were computed. Figure I shows the effects of sex of child at the

different levels of parental assertiveness on the child's assertiveness score.

TABLE I

OVERALL ASSERTIVENESS MEAN SCORES FOR CHILDREN BY SEX OF CHILD, SEX OF PARENT, AND LEVEL OF PARENTAL ASSERTIVENESS

Variable	$\overline{X}$
Sex of Child	
Boys	11.13
Girls	8.42
Sex of Key Parent[a]	
Males	9.79
Females	9.75
Level of Parental Assertiveness	
High-Moderate	10.96
Low-Moderate	8.58

[a]Key Parent - parent who had a high or low level of assertiveness and who was matched with a moderate assertive parent.

Boys from low-moderate assertive families had higher assertiveness scores ($\overline{X}$=11.33) than girls from low-moderate assertive families ($\overline{X}$=5.83) (Figure I). The difference between assertiveness scores of

TABLE II

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE SUMMARY TABLE

Source	df	MS	F	p
Sex of Child (A)	1	88.021	3.815	.06
Sex of Parent (B)	1	.021	.001	.97
Level of Parental Assertiveness (C)	1	67.688	2.934	.09
A x B	1	4.688	.203	.66
A x C	1	93.521	4.054	.05*
B x C	1	3.521	.153	.70
A x B x C	1	42.188	1.829	.18
Error	40	23.071		

*$p \leq .05$ significant.
$p > .05$ non-significant.

boys and girls from low-moderate assertive families was significant at the .01 level of probability.

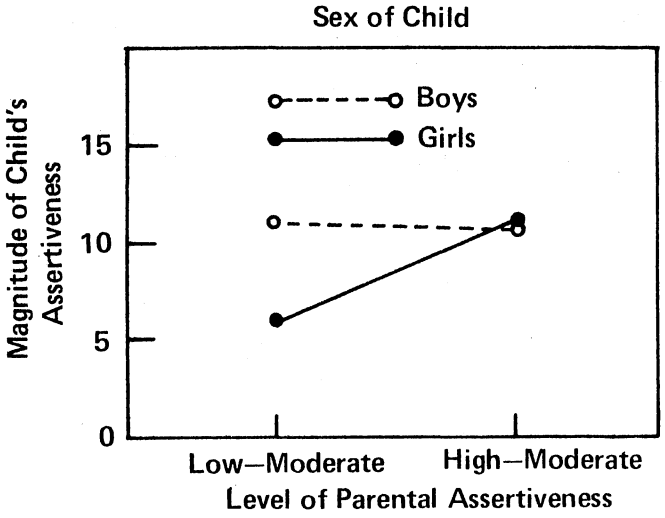

Figure 1. Effects of Sex of Child on Child's Assertiveness for Low-Moderate and High-Moderate Assertive Parents

Boys from high-moderate assertive families had a mean assertiveness score of 10.92 while girls from high-moderate assertive families had a mean score of 11.00 (Figure 1). Results of the analysis of variance indicated no significant difference ($p > .10$) in assertiveness scores between boys and girls from high-moderate assertive families.

Recent research by Gay, Hollandsworth, and Galassi (1975) indicated that in the adult population, males were more highly assertive than females. The present study seems to indicate that the

establishment of sex differences in assertiveness takes place at a fairly young age (3-5 years). The findings of this study were similar to Gay, Hollandsworth, and Galassi (1975) with respect to differences in assertiveness scores of males and females. However, the assertiveness level of male and female children needs to be qualified in terms of the parents' level of assertiveness. In this study, boys from low-moderate assertive families had significantly higher assertiveness scores than girls from low-moderate assertive families. However, boys and girls from high-moderate assertive families had approximately equal assertiveness scores.

Sex of Parent

Children with high or low assertive fathers and moderate assertive mothers had a mean score of 9.79 while children with high or low assertive mothers and moderate assertive fathers had a mean score of 9.75 (Table I). Results of F-tests for sex of parent revealed no significant difference ($p < .97$) in children's assertiveness scores based on sex of parent (Table II).

Since no significant difference existed for the main effect of sex of parent in this study, this may be an indication that there is no association between the male parent's assertiveness and the child's assertiveness compared to the association between the female parent's assertiveness and the child's assertiveness.

Level of Parental Assertiveness

Children from high-moderate assertive families had higher assertiveness scores ($\bar{X}$=10.96) than children from low-moderate

assertive families ($\bar{X}$=8.58) (Table I). Results of the analysis of variance (Table II) indicated a trend toward a significant difference ($p < .09$) in assertiveness scores of children from high-moderate and low-moderate assertive families.

Because of a significant interaction between sex of child and level of parental assertiveness (Table II), simple main effects tests were computed. Figure 2 shows the effects of different levels of parental assertiveness on the magnitude of the child's assertiveness score.

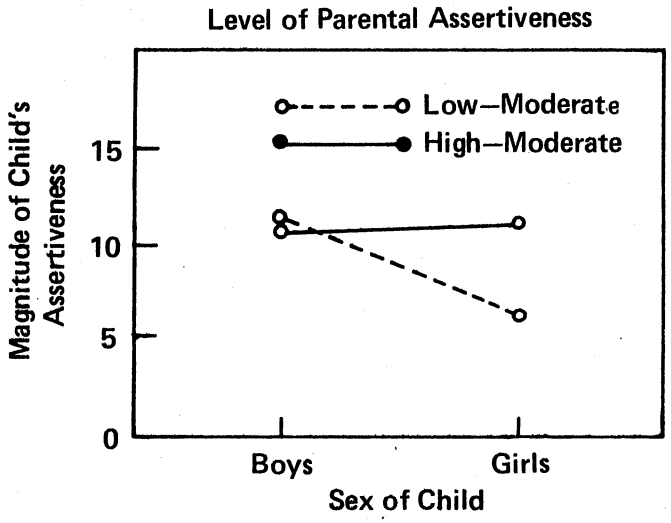

Figure 2. Effects of Level of Parental Assertiveness on Child's Assertiveness for Boys and Girls

Boys from low-moderate assertive families had a mean assertiveness score of 11.33 while boys from high-moderate assertive families had a

mean assertiveness score of 10.92 (Figure 2). The difference between assertiveness scores of boys from low-moderate assertive families as opposed to boys from high-moderate assertive families was not significant ($p < .66$).

The effect of level of parental assertiveness was quite different for girls. Girls from low-moderate assertive families had a mean score of 5.83 while girls from high-moderate assertive families had a mean score of 11.00 (Figure 2). The difference between the means was significant at the .05 level of probability.

Since assertiveness scores of boys from both low-moderate and high-moderate assertive families were approximately equal, this may be an indication that some unknown factor may be operating to influence boys so that boys from both high-moderate and low-moderate assertive families exhibited the same degree of assertive behavior. However, girls from low-moderate assertive families seem to lack the influence of this unknown factor.

Among the many possible explanations for this unknown factor, the following may be plausible. This unknown influence could possibly come from factors within the home or factors external to the home. It could be possible that the attitude of society, in general, in regard to stereotypical masculine behavior and stereotypical feminine behavior is influencing boys' and not girls' assertiveness scores from low-moderate assertive families. Behaviors which are stereotyped as feminine include passive, dependent, and non-assertive type behaviors whereas behaviors which are stereotyped as masculine include dominant, assertive, aggressive, and independent type behaviors. Therefore, if boys did not feel free to engage in passive, dependent, non-assertive

type behaviors their behavioral repertoire could be decreased, and their assertiveness score would increase.

A plausible explanation might be that parents of boys from low-moderate assertive families may worry more about boys being low assertive than girls being low assertive. In this event, the parents may reinforce assertive behavior in boys and not in girls.

In this study, all groups of children observed had female teachers. It could be possible that female teachers react negatively to assertive behavior in girls and reinforce assertive behavior in boys. If this were the case, boys from either type family construct would be equally assertive.

Interaction of Sex of Child by Sex of Parent

Boys whose fathers were either high or low in assertiveness had a mean score or 10.83 while boys whose mothers were either high or low in assertiveness had a mean score of 11.42 (Figure 3). Girls whose fathers were either high or low in assertiveness had a mean score of 8.75 while girls whose mothers were either high or low in assertiveness had a mean score of 8.08 (Figure 3). The analysis of variance indicated that the interaction between sex of child and sex of parent was not a significant ($p < .66$) source of variance on the children's assertiveness scores (Table II).

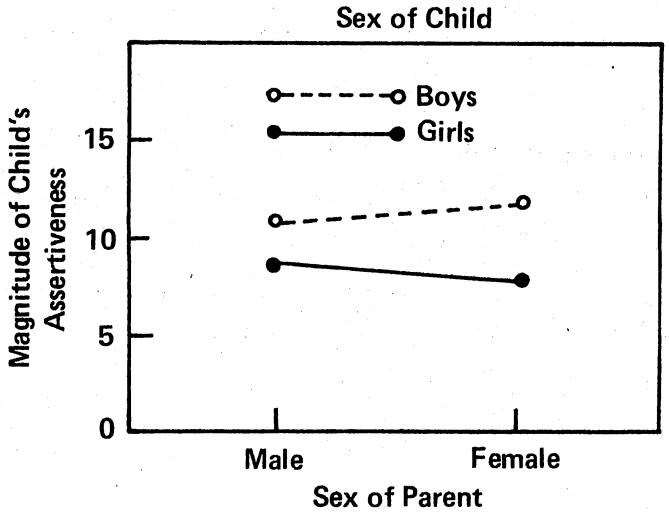

Figure 3. Interaction of Sex of Child by Sex of Parent

Interaction of Sex of Child by Level of Parental Assertiveness

Boys from low-moderate assertive families had a mean score of 11.33 while boys from high-moderate assertive families had a mean score of 10.92 (Figure 2). Girls from low-moderate assertive families had a mean score of 5.83 while girls from high-moderate assertive families had a mean score of 11.00 (Figure 2). The F-tests for the interaction of sex of child by level of parental assertiveness were significant ($p < .05$) with respect to the children's assertiveness scores (Table II).

This finding indicates that some association exists between boys or girls and high-moderate or low-moderate levels of parental assertiveness with respect to the child's assertiveness score. This association was discussed previously under the main effects for sex of child and level of parental assertiveness.

Interaction of Sex of Parent by Level of Parental Assertiveness

Children from families with high assertive fathers and moderate assertive mothers had higher assertiveness scores ($\bar{X}$=11.25) than children from families with low assertive fathers and moderate assertive mothers ($\bar{X}$=8.33) (Figure 4). However, children from families with high assertive mothers and moderate assertive fathers had a mean score of 10.67 while children from families with low assertive mothers and moderate assertive fathers had a mean score of 8.83 (Figure 4). The analysis of variance indicated that the interaction between sex of parent and level of parental assertiveness was not a significant ($p < .71$) source of variance on the children's assertiveness scores (Table II).

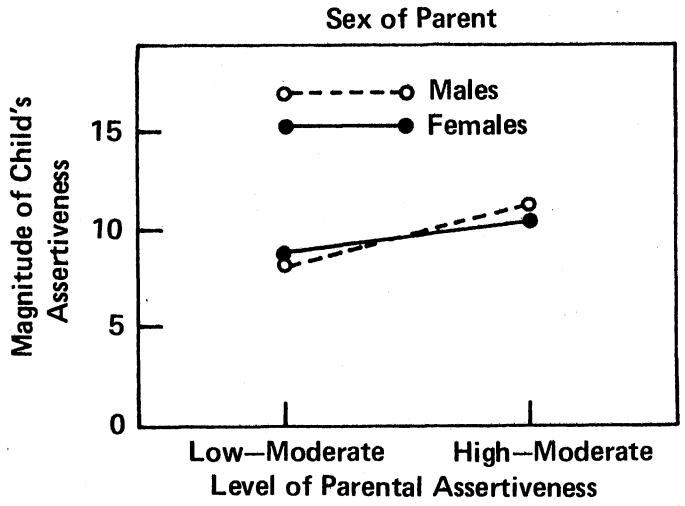

Figure 4. Interaction of Sex of Parent by Level of Parental Assertiveness

The results of the F-tests for sex of parent by level of parental assertiveness interaction indicate that no relationship exists between fathers or mothers and high-moderate or low-moderate levels of parental assertiveness with respect to the children's assertiveness scores.

Interaction of Sex of Child by Sex of Parent by Level of Parental Assertiveness

In Table III, cell means and cell variances for the A x B x C interaction are summarized. An F-max test was computed to check for homogeneity of variance. No significant differences existed between cell variances.

TABLE III

CELL MEANS AND CELL VARIANCES FOR A 2 x 2 x 2 COMPLETELY RANDOMIZED FACTORIAL DESIGN

Sex of Child	Sex of Parent	Level of Parental Assertiveness Low-Moderate	High-Moderate
Boy	Male	9.83 (14.17)	11.83 (18.57)
	Female	12.83 (57.77)	10.00 (34.40)
Girl	Male	6.83 (16.17)	10.67 (25.07)
	Female	4.83 (7.37)	11.33 (11.07)

Note. Numbers in parenthesis indicate cell variances.

Boys from families with low assertive fathers and moderate assertive mothers had a mean score of 9.83 while boys from families with high assertive fathers and moderate assertive mothers had a mean score of 11.83. However, boys from families with low assertive mothers and moderate assertive fathers had a mean score of 12.83 while boys from families with high assertive mothers and moderate assertive fathers had a mean score of 10.00.

Girls from families with low assertive fathers and moderate assertive mothers had a mean score of 6.83 while girls from families with high assertive fathers and moderate assertive mothers had a mean score of 10.67. Furthermore, girls from families with low assertive mothers and moderate assertive fathers had a mean score of 4.83. Girls from families with high assertive mothers and moderate assertive fathers had a mean score of 11.33. Results of the F-tests for the interaction of sex of child by sex of parent by level of parental assertiveness were not significant ($p > .10$) with respect to the children's assertiveness scores (Table II).

Results of the A x B x C interaction indicate that no association exists between boys or girls and fathers or mothers and high-moderate or low-moderate levels of parental assertiveness with respect to their children's assertiveness scores. However, it is interesting to note that the highest levels of assertive behavior were found in boys of low assertive mothers ($\bar{X}=12.83$) while the lowest levels of assertive behavior were found in girls of low assertive mothers ($\bar{X}=4.83$).

Summary

Results of this study indicate:

1. There was a significant difference ($p < .06$) between assertiveness scores of boys and girls, with boys scoring higher.

2. Since the interaction between sex of child and level of parental assertiveness was significant, simple main effects tests were computed. Results of these tests indicated that there was a significant difference ($p < .01$) between assertiveness scores of boys and girls from low-moderate assertive families.

3. There was a trend toward a significant difference ($p < .09$) in assertiveness scores of children from high-moderate and low-moderate assertive families.

4. Since the interaction between sex of child and level of parental assertiveness was significant, simple main effects tests were computed. Results of these tests indicated that there was a significant difference ($p < .05$) between assertiveness scores of girls from low-moderate assertive families and girls from high-moderate assertive families.

There were no significant differences in sex of parent main effect, interaction of sex of child by sex of parent, interaction of sex of parent by level of parental assertiveness, or the interaction of sex of child by sex of parent by level of parental assertiveness.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between parental assertiveness and preschool children's assertiveness scores. Specific purposes of this study were to (1) determine the difference between assertiveness scores of boys and girls; (2) determine the extent to which the assertiveness of the male and female parent was associated with the assertiveness of the children; and (3) determine whether there were differences between assertiveness scores of children from high-moderate assertive families and low-moderate assertive families.

Methods of the Study

The subjects were 48 children ranging in age from 3 years 6 months to 5 years 3 months who attended preschools in Stillwater, Oklahoma. There were 24 boys and 24 girls in this study. The boy and girl groups were further subdivided according to the following criteria. One-fourth of the group came from families with (1) a father who had a high level of assertiveness; (2) a father who had a low level of assertiveness; (3) a mother who had a high level of assertiveness; and

(4) a mother who had a low level of assertiveness. For reasons of experimental control, the mate in each of these groups had a moderate level of assertiveness.

The Adult Self Expression Scale (ASES) developed by Gay, Hollandsworth, and Galassi (1975) was used to measure parental assertiveness. Parental assertiveness scores were computed by summing the total number on each of the 48 items on the inventory. Parents who scored above 131 on the ASES were considered to have a high level of assertiveness; those who scored between 96 and 131 inclusive were considered to have a moderate level of assertiveness; and those who scored below 96 were considered to have a low level of assertiveness.

The subjects for this study were selected on the basis of their parents' assertiveness scores on the inventory. Dorman's (1969) observation schedule was modified and used to measure children's assertive behaviors.

Analysis of variance was used to determine whether significant differences existed for the factors sex of child, sex of parent, and level of parental assertiveness.

Results and Conclusions

Major results of the study were:

1. There was a significant difference ($p < .06$) between assertiveness scores of boys and girls, with boys having the higher score.

2. Since the interaction between sex of child and level of parental assertiveness was significant, simple main effects tests were computed. Results of these tests indicated that there was a

significant difference ($p < .01$) between assertiveness scores of boys and girls from low-moderate assertive families.

3. There was a trend toward a significant difference ($p < .09$) in assertiveness scores of children from high-moderate and low-moderate assertive families.

4. Since the interaction between sex of child and level of parental assertiveness was significant, simple main effects tests were computed. Results of these tests indicated that there was a significant difference ($p < .05$) between assertiveness scores of girls from low-moderate assertive families and girls from high-moderate assertive families.

In this study, results indicated that no significant differences existed for: sex of parent main effect, the interaction of sex of child by sex of parent, interaction of sex of parent by level of parental assertiveness, or interaction of sex of child by sex of parent by level of parental assertiveness.

These results indicated that boys from low-moderate assertive families had higher assertiveness scores than girls from low-moderate assertive families. However, boys and girls form high-moderate assertive families had approximately equal levels of assertive behavior. Furthermore, results indicated that girls from high-moderate assertive families had higher assertiveness scores than girls from low-moderate assertive families. However, boys from high-moderate assertive families and low-moderate assertive families exhibited approximately equal levels of assertive behavior.

On the basis of the results of this study, it was concluded that some unknown factor may be operating to influence boys so that boys

from both high-moderate and low-moderate assertive families exhibited the same degree of assertive behavior. However, girls from low-moderate assertive families seem to lack the influence of this unknown factor. Three plausible explanations for this unknown factor were given. These included: (1) the attitude of society in regard to stereotypical masculine and feminine behaviors may influence boys' and not girls' assertiveness scores from low-moderate assertive families; (2) parents may differentially reinforce assertive behavior in boys and not in girls; or (3) female teachers may react negatively to assertive behavior in girls but reinforce assertive behavior in boys.

Limitations of the Study

In reviewing the results of this study, the author feels it is advisable to make the reader aware of some of the problems and limitations related to this study. The problem of bias in the rating scale is one problem which needs to be discussed. Rating scales are prone to constant or biased error with the pervasive problem of the "halo effect." The question must be raised as to whether the experimenter observed girls to be less assertive than boys since the experimenter herself was a girl and less assertive than many people. However, this can be partially explained by inter-observer reliability. Two female observers established an inter-observer reliability of .95. By looking only at the main effect findings that boys are significantly ($p < .05$) more assertive than girls, one might readily conclude this. But the reader must look further to the findings of the simple main effects tests. The experimenter was able to rate girls from high-moderate assertive families at a level approximately equal to boys from

high-moderate and low-moderate assertive families. Thus, the question of experimenter bias does not seem to enter into the findings of this study.

The experimenter had a problem with one category on Dorman's (1969) observation schedule. The experimenter had problems identifying assertive behaviors in which the child played with manipulative objects such as puzzles, moving toys, toys that require taking apart and putting together. This category needed to be identified in more detail to possibly include all the types of manipulative play that were considered assertive behaviors.

A second point to be considered is the problem of an uncontrolled effect operating at one level of the experiment but not at another level. Some extraneous factors may exist at the parent's level of assertiveness since this level was controlled only for the levels of high-moderate and low-moderate levels of parental assertiveness. Therefore, these extraneous factors could cause a significant interaction in the sex of child by level of parental assertiveness interaction. Many possible external factors exist that were not controlled for in this interaction. These include: the different philosophies held by the nine teachers of the children whose assertive behaviors were observed, the type of preschool the children were attending, number of children in the families studied, or the birth order of the child being studied.

The instruments used in this study to evaluate parents' level of assertiveness and children's assertive behavior need further discussion. A standardized test, The Adult Self Expression Scale was used to evaluate the parents' assertiveness while a rating scale devised by Dorman (1969) was used to rate assertive behavior in

children. No standardized rating scale for children's assertive behavior was available at the time of this study.

The reader may question why only high-moderate assertive families and low-moderate assertive families were included in this study. The experimenter initially had planned to study four family constructs (high-high assertive families, high-low assertive families, low-high assertive families, and low-low assertive families), but sampling problems early in the study forced modifications in the initial design to the present design. Based on available data, a sample of approximately 1500 families would have been necessary in order to get 48 children from families with high-high assertive parents, high-low assertive parents, low-high assertive parents, and low-low assertive parents. In the sample of 204, only 30 families could have been used in a study of these types of family constructs. Frequencies and percentages for each of these four family constructs are summarized in Table IV.

This study was limited to intact two-parent families and did not include one-parent families. With an ever increasing rise in one-parent families, it would be interesting to compare assertive behavior of children from one-parent and two-parent families representing different levels of assertiveness.

TABLE IV

FOUR TYPES OF FAMILY CONSTRUCTS, THEIR FREQUENCIES AND PERCENTAGES

Family Type	Frequencies N=204	Percentages
High-High Assertive Family	12	6%
Low-Low Assertive Family	8	3%
High (female) - Low (male) Assertive Family	8	3%
Low (female) - High (male) Assertive Family	2	1%

Recommendations

Results of this study indicated the need for further research in the following areas:

1. A standardized instrument which measures children's assertive behaviors needs to be designed.

2. After this standardized instrument is designed, further investigation of assertive behaviors of children from high-high assertive families, high-low assertive families, low-high assertive families, and low-low assertive families could be studied.

3. The assertive behaviors of children from one-parent families could be investigated and compared to their counterparts from two-parent families with different levels of parental assertiveness.

4. Assertive behavior in children could be studied with controls on such factors as teacher's philosophy of assertive behavior, number of children in families being studied, birth order of the children in the study and other such factors.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER TO PARENTS

October 7, 1976

Dear Parents,

I am a graduate teaching assistant in the Home Economics East Child Development Laboratory at Oklahoma State University. I am working on a research project which involves measurement of the way in which one expresses himself (herself).

I would greatly appreciate your help in this research project. If you agree to participate, I will give you a 48-item inventory which I would like both parents to fill out individually. It is imperative for my research that both parents fill out this inventory and these responses are given independently. I will provide duplicate sets of the answer sheets so that parents may compare their answers after completing the inventory. It takes approximately 20 minutes to fill out. You will have approximately one week to fill out the inventory.

Because I am interested in relating the way parents express themselves to the way children express themselves, I will need to have identification of the questionnaire respondent. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you of the confidentiality of your response.

After I receive the completed inventories from both parents, I will come to your child's school to observe your child at play.

If you do not wish to participate, please return both copies of the inventory and answer sheets. A box labeled "Cathey Smith's Research" will be placed at your child's school where you may return completed and uncompleted answer sheets and inventories.

A more complete synopsis of the research will be available upon completion of the project in spring, 1977.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Cathey A. Smith
Home Phone: 372-8495

Judith A. Powell, EdD
Adviser

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM THE ADULT SELF EXPRESSION SCALE

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FROM THE ADULT SELF EXPRESSION SCALE

1. Do you ignore it when someone pushes in front of you in line?

2. Do you express your negative feelings to others when it is appropriate?

3. Do you play an important part in deciding how you and your close friends spend your leisure time together?

4. Do you insist that others do their fair share of the work?

5. Do you compliment and praise others?

6. If you lived in an apartment and the landlord failed to make certain repairs after it had been brought to his attention, would you insist on it?

The Adult Self Expression Scale was developed by Gay, Hollandsworth and Galassi in 1975. Copies can be purchased from them at the following address: ASES, P.O. Box 17174, Charlotte, North Carolina 28211.

APPENDIX C

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Name _____ Preschool _____

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
A Asks Teacher "how"																								
B Asks Teacher "why"																								
C Asks Child "how"																								
D Asks Child "why"																								
E Directs other children ("do" or "you do")																								
F Makes suggestions ("let's" or "why don't we")																								
G Explored the environment (walking around touching, interest in how things work)																								
H Plays with manipulative objects (puzzles, moving toys, things that require taking apart and putting together)																								

VITA

Catherine Anne Conroy Smith

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTAL ASSERTIVENESS AND PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S ASSERTIVE BEHAVIORS

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Education: Attended St. Dismas Catholic Grade School in Florissant, Missouri; graduated from Incarnate Word Academy in Normandy, Missouri, in May, 1970. Received a Bachelor of Science in Education degree from Central Missouri State University, Warrensburg, Missouri, with a major in Vocational Home Economics, November, 1974. Completed requirements for the Master of Science degree in July, 1977.

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Professional Organizations: Omicron Nu, Kappa Omicron Phi, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Oklahoma Association for the Education of Young Children, Southern Association on Children under Six, Oklahoma Association on Children under Six.