

MATERNAL PROTECTION AND SOCIALISATION OF THE CHILD

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Many studies suggest that maternal deprivation during infancy tends to produce a child with undersocialised and psychopathic tendencies (2). There is evidence also, although this is less well established, that mothers who are overprotecting tend to produce children who are nervous, anxious, and over-socialised (1). The present study is concerned with the question of whether it is possible to isolate any general dimension of maternal attitude which is related to the socialisation of the child. The maternal attitude as investigated here might be described as a mixture of affection and protection. 38 mothers were visited in their homes and were assessed for their position on this dimension on a 24-point scale. Their children, whose ages ranged from 7.6 to 11.0, were interviewed and tested in school. The tests used to assess socialisation were (a) Personal Anxieties, a test of anxieties about personal relationships (see 4), (b) Persistence, a test of persistence time on an impossible task of making a square out of some bricks, and (c) Himmelweit and Petrie's Verbal Provocation Test (3). Table 1 shows the relations between the attitude scores

TABLE 1
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MATERNAL ATTITUDE AND SOCIALISATION OF CHILDREN

						Correlation*
Maternal Protection Score	-9	10-12	13-15	16-18	19+	
Personal Anxieties	1.0	1.0	1.4	2.7	2.1	+ .44
Persistence	3.5	4.4	3.1	4.0	5.6	+ .24
Himmelweit and Petrie's Test	0.5	1.0	1.2	1.0	1.7	+ .15
N	2	12	9	8	7	

*Correlation between maternal protection and child socialisation

of the mothers and the socialisation scores of the children; the correlation is positive for all three tests, but only significantly so (at the 5% level) for the Personal Anxieties Test. The findings suggest that the degree of socialisation of the child is a function, in part, of the amount of protection and affection given by the mother.

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