

Summary of the Research Project
Srinakharinwirot University Research Grant
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Name of the Project : Correlates of Social Perspective Taking
Ability of Elementary School Children in
Bangkok

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This study is the fourth sub-project of the longitudinal project on the "Study of the relationships among child-rearing practices, physical and psychological development." which follows children from preschool-age up to puberty.

There were three major research objectives in this study :

- (1) to examine whether children in this sampling group would have social perspective taking abilities at the same level as appraised by Robert L. Selman and his associates in their theoretical model;
- (2) to investigate factors which were expected to promote the development of social perspective taking of children. The emphasis of this objective was on children's family background, patterns of child-rearing practices and opportunities for social experiences given to children by their parents; and
- (3) to examine the relationship between children's social perspective-taking abilities and popularity among peers.

The subjects consisted of 109 Prathom Suksa 4 pupils of Srinakharinwirot University Demonstration School (Prasarnmitr) and parents of the individual child. The pupils' ages were ranged from 9 to 10 years with means of 10.06 years.

To measure social perspective-taking ability, five sociomoral dilemmas with a set of open-ended questions in each dilemma were given to each child in group situation. Children were asked to listen to each dilemma carefully, and to answer all the following questions with close supervision. To measure popularity among peers, the same group of children were also asked to list names of friends in the same classroom whom they preferred to

associate with for the activities mentioned. On the part of parents, they were requested to respond to 20 items of five-point rating scales concerning opportunities for social experiences given to children, and to give some bio-social and family background information needed. Data on patterns of child-rearing practices with main emphasis on physical, social-emotional, intellectual and moral development of the child, were collected from parents at the time children of this sampling group entered the preschool class four years before.

The main statistical techniques for hypothesis testing consisted of t-test, analysis of variance and intercorrelations among various indices. The data were treated both on total sample and on different groups of respondents classified by the bio-social and family background variables.

Main findings were as follows :

1. It was found that the majority of subjects (82.6 percents) achieved Level 3 social perspective-taking ability while 5.5 percents reached only Level 2, and 11.9 percents reached up to Level 4. In comparison between levels of social perspective-taking abilities of Thai children and those of American children studied by Selman and his associates, it might be concluded that Thai children in this sampling group had developed higher social perspective-taking abilities than American children in similar aged group and family background. This result was discussed in terms of socio-cultural differences.

2. Concerning investigation of factors presumably promoted social perspective-taking development of children, it was found that two main variables namely the opportunities for social experiences given to children by parents, and patterns of child-rearing practices which put main emphasis on both total development and each specific development were significantly correlated with children's social perspective-taking abilities in particular groups of respondents classified by bio-social and family background variables. In addition, children of highly educated fathers and mothers were found to have significantly higher social perspective-taking abilities comparing to their counterparts.

3. Children's social perspective-taking abilities were found to have positive correlation with popularity among peers. This finding supported the suggestion proposed by Jean Piaget that a child's social status or popularity was related to his ability to take another's viewpoint.

It is recommended that future research on the development of social perspective-taking abilities among various groups of Thai children and youths should be undertaken cross-sectionally as well as longitudinally to confirm levels of social perspective - taking established by Selman and his associated in terms of reliability and validity aspects. It is interesting to observe that such suggested research on child development is also highly recommended by the Office of the National Education Commission in Thailand, since the results can be applied to the national plans and policies for child and adolescent development.