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ATTITUDES OF HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE FEMALES

TOWARD FAMILY LIFE AND CHILDREN

by

Pauline Nelson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family and Child Development

Approved:

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Major Professor

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

1974

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I express special thanks to the principal and students at Logan High School, the students at Utah State University, and the members of the Alpha Chi Omega Sorority who participated in my research. Their cooperation was most helpful and will be remembered.

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Pauline Nelson

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ABSTRACT

Attitudes of High School and College Females

Toward Family Life and Children

by

Pauline Nelson, Master of Science

Utah State University, 1974

Major Professor: Dr. Carroll C. Lambert  
Department: Family and Child Development

The purpose of this study was to investigate the degree of similarity or differences between the attitudes of high school and college females toward family life and children.

Data for this study were collected by administering a standardized questionnaire with 35 items to both groups of students. The students' responses were evaluated and each question analyzed separately.

The findings of this study indicate that the responses of the college sample were more realistic than for the high school sample. Also the high school sample appeared to have more glamorous expectations of marriage than did the college sample.

(50 pages)

## INTRODUCTION

There has been very limited research concerning the adolescent parents' expectations of and attitudes toward their children. The results of a longitudinal study (de Lissoy, 1973a) of adolescent marital adjustment over a 3-year period, focusing on the childrearing attitudes and practices of mothers and fathers who married while they were still enrolled in high school proved to be disturbing.

de Lissoy (1973b) discovered that teen-age mothers lacked homemaking skills and knowledge of principles of child development. He had assumed that since his sample came from a rural population that the young mothers would have developed some degree of competency in homemaking skills but data indicated this was not the case. Whether this is because the youth of the girls precluded interest in child care or whether this is part of the total picture of immaturity is difficult to say.

Research on teen-age marriages indicates that marital adjustment is lower in couples where the men were under 20 and the women were under 18 years of age. There is sufficient research to show that the divorce rate is higher for couples married younger than 20 years of age than for couples married older than 20 years of age. Locke (1951), from his study, reports that a much higher percentage of divorced than of happily married persons had married when the wife was under 18 and the husband under 21.



There are many theories as to why adolescent marriages prove to be less successful, but just how much of the difference in divorce or adjustment levels between early and late marriages is due to age at marriage, and how much is to be attributed to educational, personality, social class, and premarital pregnancy differentials is a question which no research has answered (Winch, 1964).

There is a great need to add to existing knowledge regarding teen-age marriages and child care. Research is needed to explore the competency of teen-age females as mothers.

#### Problem

Because of the lack of research in the area of comparative attitudes of high school and college females toward family life and children, it was decided that it would be profitable to study attitude differences in these two age groups.

Since research has dealt primarily with reasons for marriage failure in adolescents, it was decided to focus the study on an exploration of attitudes toward family life and parenthood. Specifically, this study will explore attitudes on family life and children of 50 high school junior and senior females and 50 college junior and senior females. Thirty-five questions have been selected from the Parent Attitude Research Instrument developed by Schaefer and Bell (1965).

### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to compare the attitudes on family life and children of high school, female, upperclasswomen with the attitudes on family life and children of college, female, upperclasswomen.

### Definition of Terms

#### Adolescent or teen-age marriage

The research referred to in this paper is not consistent in the use of the terms "adolescent and teen-age." Unless otherwise indicated, an adolescent or teen-age marriage will imply that one or both of the marriage partners are 19 years of age or younger.

### Hypothesis

The hypothesis to be tested in this study is that females in college will indicate more positive attitudes toward family life and children than will be true for females in high school.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Marriage and Divorce Rates among High School Youth

In studying early marriages, Winch (1964) concluded that during the colonial and early national periods of the U. S. A. people married very young. There are no reliable statistics to indicate the exact age of marriage during this period of time, but the writings of European travelers, genealogies, and the provision in the common law that minimum ages for marriage were 14 for males and 12 for females, tend to support this belief.

The United States began to keep official data on the median age at first marriage in 1890. According to the U. S. Bureau of the Census, the median age of first marriage was about 2 years less for females and 3 years less for males in 1960 than in 1890. There does not seem to be any empirical data to explain this phenomenon (Winch, 1964).

Table 1 shows the percentage of females and males married in the 15-18 year-old bracket. Even though nearly 25 percent of the 18 year-old females are married, it is interesting to note that the rate has increased less rapidly since 1950, except for non-white females, for whom the rate has declined since 1950.

Locke (1951) did extensive research in marital adjustment and found that the wife was most likely to have good marital adjustment if she married between the ages of 20 and 29. He compared his research with previous findings

Table 1. Percent of any age level among the 15-18 year-old population who were of the married status during the given year by sex and color

Females												
Age	White						Nonwhite					
	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960
15	1.1	1.3	1.1	1.0	1.0	2.3	2.1	2.7	2.9	2.6	2.8	2.9
16	3.4	3.8	3.9	3.4	5.6	5.6	6.6	7.8	8.8	7.6	8.1	6.8
17	8.1	9.1	9.1	8.0	12.7	12.0	13.0	17.9	18.7	16.4	17.3	13.6
18	15.9	17.9	17.7	16.2	23.2	24.5	24.4	32.2	32.7	28.9	29.3	23.6
Males												
15	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.6	0.6	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.7
16	0.1	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.6	0.9	0.2	0.6	0.4	0.6	0.4	1.1
17	0.3	0.8	0.6	0.6	1.2	1.9	0.9	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.8	2.1
18	1.2	2.4	1.9	1.9	3.4	5.4	3.0	5.3	4.2	4.2	4.8	5.3

Source: Burchinal, 1965, p. 244.

and found studies done by Bernard, Davis, Hamilton, Hart, Kelly, Kirkpatrick, Landis and Landis, Schroeder, and Winch all indicated that when the wife was 20 and over at time of marriage, favorable adjustment was more likely.

Terman's study of 792 couples and Terman and Oden's study of 567 couples also showed age 20 and over for the wife as being more favorable. A study by Burgess and Cottrell of 526 individuals showed the wife's age of 19 and over as being good for high marital adjustment.

Krishnan and Kayani (1974) found that data on divorce rates by age and sex for the U. S. as a whole were not available. They developed the methodology of model divorce tables for deriving estimates of age specific divorce rates and Table 2 shows their estimates for U. S. females, 1960-1969.

The divorce statistics bear out previous cited research in indicating that the divorce rate is higher for those married before age 20 than any other group. It is interesting to note that while divorce has continued to increase and remains the highest for persons married in the 15-19 age group, in terms of percentage the change has been greater for all other age groups.

#### Reasons for High School Marriages

Burchinal (1960) reviewed the findings of research prior to 1960 regarding teen-age marriages and found data to support the following reasons for why young people marry:

1. Low aspiration levels, unrealistic views of married life, and employment opportunities.

Table 2. Modified age specific divorce rate estimates for selected age groups: U. S. females, 1960-1969

Age group (years)	Year										Change 1960-1969
	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	%
15-19	33.016	33.948	33.480	33.948	34.880	36.276	36.976	37.675	40.471	42.802	29.7
20-24	22.905	23.839	23.372	23.839	24.771	26.172	26.872	27.572	30.372	32.707	42.8
25-29	12.965	13.393	13.179	13.393	13.822	14.464	14.786	15.107	16.393	17.465	34.6
30-34	10.975	11.435	11.205	11.435	11.893	12.582	12.927	13.271	14.649	15.797	43.6
35-39	8.735	9.122	8.929	9.122	9.509	10.089	10.379	10.669	11.830	12.797	47.1
40-44	7.158	7.448	7.303	7.448	7.738	8.173	8.390	8.608	9.477	10.202	41.7
45-49	5.091	5.303	5.197	5.303	5.515	5.834	5.993	6.153	6.790	7.321	43.1

Source: Krishnan and Kayani, 1974, p. 75.

2. Earlier serious dating, heterosexual involvement, premarital pregnancy.
3. Romantic and glamorous image of marriage and unrealistic over-evaluation of marriage.
4. Impact of war and the draft.
5. The band-wagon effect.
6. Emotional problems and the motivation to escape from unpleasant home or school situations.

Bartz and Nye (1970) reviewed the literature of the sixties regarding teen-age marriage and found 23 empirical propositions. They discovered several of the propositions to be similar in nature and so combined them under more general explanatory headings. The three major groupings are:

1. Within a social class, the greater the heterosexual involvement at an early age, the more likely early marriage will occur.
2. The greater the positive discrepancy between satisfactions anticipated from marriage and satisfactions received from currently occupied roles, the more likely early marriage will occur.
3. The lower the social class, the more likely early marriage will occur. (Bartz and Nye, 1970, pp. 262-264)

Kuvelsky and Obordo (1972) compared projections for marriage among teen-age blacks and whites in three rural East Central Texas counties. All subjects were low SES sophomore girls. It was found that significantly more whites wanted to marry 19 years and younger than did blacks. Twenty-nine percent of the whites projected they would marry by age 19 while only 17 percent of the blacks thought they would be married at that age.

de Lissovoy and Hitchcock (1965) found .66 percent of the student body in Pennsylvania high schools to be married. Eighty percent of these had dropped out of high school. They found more marriages in rural areas rather than urban and more marriages in low per capita income counties but they were unable to determine whether it was the low income or the rural area that made the difference. They found no significant differences between marrieds and singles regarding achievement levels, income level and parents' occupations. However, they did find that married students averaged three siblings and singles only averaged 1.81.

Chilman (1966) studied the dating, courtship and engagement behavior of married and single undergraduates with an analysis of early-marrying and late-marrying students. She found that men who married early had their first nocturnal emission significantly earlier than those who married later. There was no difference in the physical maturity of women.

According to Chilman's findings, early-marrying men went steady before the age of 18 more than late-marrying men. This finding was significant at the .05 level of confidence. Early-marrying girls went steady at the median age of 15.7 whereas late-marrying girls went steady at the median age of 17.5. This finding was significant at the .01 level of confidence. Early-marrying girls had their first date before late-marrying girls and this was significant at the .02 level of confidence. Early-marrying boys also tended to have their first date earlier but there was no significant difference.



Role Expectations of Adolescents and High School Marrieds

Geiken (1964) administered a Family Responsibility Inventory containing 45 questions to married couples and high school junior and senior boys and girls. She found that the students expected to share responsibility in the same areas that married couples indicated they were already sharing responsibility. However, there was considerable discrepancy between the boys and girls as to the degree of sharing. The girls expected far more help from their husbands than boys indicated they would give. Evidence from this study indicated that high school students need to become aware of the significance of role expectations in determining the quality of the marriage relationship.

Moser (1961) tested the marriage-role expectations of 354 white, senior high school students in Florida. He found that most agreed on general items but there was major disagreement on specifics.

In a study of the marriage role expectations of adolescents, Dunn (1960) found the trend still leaning toward traditional sex roles of housewife and breadwinner but with more emphasis on companionship/equalitarian type relationships. She found that students' responses regarding the working wife and future college plans were unrealistic when compared with present practices. Dunn stated that it is particularly important to recognize the potential for conflict or disillusionment inherent in the nature of role expectations of these adolescents. The inconsistencies in their responses, their unrealistic expectations, and differences in their opinions offer fertile ground for future conflict.

Studies by Empey (1958) and Bell (1962) indicate that high school senior girls and college coeds seem to be planning for careers but still maintain their main aspirations are for marriage and traditional female roles. Wise and Carter (1965) compared the definition of the role of homemaker of two generations of women. They tested 132 young married girls and 84 of their mothers in Weber County, Utah. They found the two generations to be in agreement and both took the traditional role. Many of the mothers in both groups were working but they did not define this role as "provider." Young marrieds with young families seemed to accept the traditional slightly more than their mothers.

Hobart (1960) studied attitude changes during courtship and marriage. His sample consisted of college students when first tested and then the same sample was tested 4 years later. He tested in such areas as relative dominance, savings and money, divorce, religion, rearing children, values on neatness, and personal freedom. He found that changes varied according to sex and according to degree of involvement when first tested. Hobart concluded that:

Detailed study of these patterns suggest that they reflect the change from a less mature attitude found prior to marriage, to a more mature perspective characteristic of married people. This attitude change appears to take place at different courtship stages for different areas of marital experience. (Hobart, 1960, p. 356)

Hawkins and Johnsen (1969) found that a person's dissatisfaction with a situation seems to arise from an "awareness" or a "perception" that things are not going the way the person thinks they should be. They reached the conclusion from their research that the empirical generalization that conformity to

role expectations produces positive emotional response seems to hold for the marriage relationship.

Most of the research available concerning female role expectations took place during the sixties. It is very difficult at this time to assess the impact of the Women's Liberation Movement of the seventies on role expectations of high school and college females in 1974.

#### Teen-age Parents

Moss (1965) reviewed some of the literature concerning teen-age marriages and noted that while it is not reported in the papers, there is evidence that in the United States there is some concern over the consequences of the early marriage trend for children raised by teen-age parents. There seems to be concern about the over helpfulness of grandparents in coddling new parents and their children, while on the other hand, there is concern regarding the potential neglect of children. Moss quotes Vincent as suggesting that, "since those who marry early tend to be those with greater ego deficiency and social inadequacy, these marriages may produce an increasing number of children with like characteristics." (Moss, 1965, p. 235)

Very limited research has been done on teen-agers as parents, but de Lissovoy (1973b) studied 48 couples from semi-rural areas or small towns in Central Pennsylvania. Although his findings are not entirely empirical, they appear to be good indicators of what is actually taking place.

The mean age of the husbands and wives studied was 17.1 and 16.5 respectively. Forty-one wives and 35 husbands had dropped out of high school before graduating. Forty-six wives were expecting a child prior to marriage and pregnancy appeared to be the chief motivation for marriage.

The findings of this study in connection with teen-age marriage were very similar to previous research findings already mentioned in this paper. However, de Lissovoy also studied parents' views on child training and parental knowledge of developmental norms. After only 3 months of marriage when only seven couples had children, the participants were asked to rate themselves on several areas of adjustment. At this time the couples rated themselves very high in the area of child training except for those having children and they rated themselves very low. It appears that the husbands and wives without children were rating their "ideal notion" of parenthood.

When nearly all the couples had had their child, they were tested on developmental norms. They were asked separately when they expected a baby to achieve selected patterns of behavior such as a social smile, sitting alone, first step, toilet training, etc. It was found that only the prediction of the first appearance of the social smile did three mothers and four fathers mention a realistic norm. When questioned on a baby's need to cry, only two-thirds of the mothers and one-third of the fathers had somewhat realistic expectations.

In order to assess the acceptance of their children and the control they exercised in dealing with them, thirty-one mothers were interviewed. At this time all of the mothers had at least one child and 14 mothers had two

children. The statistical information on this part of the study showed the mothers' acceptance scores to be low and their control scores to be just over mid-point.

When parents were asked about what type of discipline they used, the most common means of control mentioned was physical punishment. Spanking and slapping a child's wrist, hand or face were common practices once the child had learned to crawl. It was discovered that these parents received very little help from their own parents, physicians or other responsible persons in regards to child rearing.

Vladimir de Lissovoy states that it is his conclusion "that the children of many adolescent marriages have a high risk of joining the number of battered and abused babies; any measures to help prevent this deserve serious consideration." (de Lissovey, 1973a, p. 25)

The literature generally points out the fact that young parents need to be better educated on development and rearing of children. McFerran (1959) discusses the many factors that must be considered when educating parents in regards to child rearing. Even though parents may have the necessary knowledge to properly rear their children, there are factors that prevent them from acting as they know they should.

One's past creates many unconscious reactions and these may have a stranger effect on how one performs than that which we try to teach him. A parent's behavior is often influenced by internalized cultural norms. Interpersonal and social controls in relationship to the spouse, mother, neighbor,

and other relatives often have much influence on how a child is reared. The size of the family and structure of the unit may determine to an extent the type of behavior.

McFerran goes on to say that the degree to which family members help each other may have something to do with the parent's capabilities. The size of some families may create almost impossible tasks. Ecological and physical factors such as when poverty creates poor physical surroundings, mother works, house too small, etc., make it very difficult to achieve that which one knows he should do.

#### Summary of Review

At the present time in the United States approximately 25 percent of the females 18 years of age are married. Statistics show that about 42 percent of them will become divorced. This high rate is significantly greater than for any other age group.

The reasons for teen-age marriages vary considerably. Early heterosexual involvement, positive discrepancy between satisfactions anticipated from marriage and satisfactions received from currently occupied roles, and low social class seem to be positively correlated with early marriage.

Role expectations of unmarried adolescents do not seem to be much different in kind from those presently married but there is major disagreement in degree. Teenagers in the sixties still opted for the traditional homemaking roles but there is a trend towards more equalitarianism in marriage.

Research on teen-age parents is very limited but studies by de Lissovoy seem to indicate that young couples need greater knowledge of developmental norms and proper child-rearing practices. There are several factors that must be considered when trying to help young parents raise their children.

de Lissovoy, in his research, dealt primarily with young parents' knowledge of good child-rearing practices and developmental norms. Also, he questioned adolescent parents on their child-rearing practices. It is the intention of the researcher to add to this store of knowledge by exploring the attitudes regarding family life and children of high school and college females.

## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

### Sample

The subjects used to test the hypothesis consisted of two groups of single, female students in Logan, Utah. Fifty of the students were junior and seniors at Logan High School. The other 50 were juniors and seniors at Utah State University in Logan. Questions were asked regarding the education of parents and family size. The two groups were found to be homogeneous in these respects.

The majority of the high school students grew up in Logan and were probably members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They were a product of a homogeneous population. The college students probably came from various types of rural, urban, and cultural backgrounds. The study focused on maturity and age, but other factors may have influenced the results.

Neither the high school group nor the college group was selected in a manner to indicate representation of their schools. They were merely representatives of themselves. None of the subjects were aware of any of the details regarding the study nor were any of the subjects personal friends of the researcher.

### High school group

The group of high school students were chosen at the discretion of the principal at Logan High. Thirty were chosen from two child care classes and



20 from a psychology class. All single, junior and senior females in the classes were required to fill out the questionnaire. Eighteen were juniors and 32 were seniors. Forty-eight of the subjects had two or more siblings, two of the subjects had only one sibling, 40 subjects had younger siblings and none were only children.

#### College group

Subjects for the college group were selected from two homemaking classes in the College of Family Life at Utah State University and also from the Alpha Chi Omega Sorority at the same university. These students were selected because of their availability to the researcher. The students in this group were given a choice as to whether or not they participated in the study and not all eligible students chose to fill out the questionnaire. Twenty-nine of the subjects were juniors and 21 were seniors. Forty-three of the subjects had two or more siblings, six had one sibling, 33 had younger siblings and one was an only child.

#### Instrument

The data for this research was collected by the use of a questionnaire. Thirty-five items from "The Parent Attitude Research Instrument," a standardized test designed by Schaefer and Bell (1965), were selected by the researcher and approved by the thesis committee (see Appendix). The basis for selection was the arbitrary decision of the researcher. Questions which did not

pertain to the specific purpose of this study were eliminated and those which best described child-rearing were retained. The question investigated in this study was: Do the attitudes of high school girls differ from those of college girls regarding family life and children? Questions were selected with the intent of covering as wide a spectrum of attitudes as possible. There are no right or wrong answers; the subject indicated his opinion by drawing a circle around an (A) if he strongly agreed, around an (a) if he mildly agreed, around a (d) if he mildly disagreed, and around a (D) if he strongly disagreed.

#### Methods

It was necessary, because of class scheduling, to administer the questionnaire three times at the high school and also three times at the university to obtain a large enough sample. The researcher visited each class personally to administer the questionnaire. In every instance the teacher turned the time over to the researcher and then made no further comments. The questionnaire was administered to the Alpha Chi Omega Sorority at one of their weekly meetings. The procedure with the sorority members was the same as with other students.

The researcher first handed out questionnaires and pencils to the subjects with the instruction to wait until after directions to begin. The researcher used the first 5 minutes to give needed information for the completion of the questionnaire. It was stressed that all questions needed to be completed and the subject should look at the questions as a prospective wife and mother

and not from the role of a child. The students were then given 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

#### Analysis of Data

The researcher administered the test and also computed the data. Chi-square was the statistical test used in the study. It was used to determine whether any significant difference existed between the responses of the 50 high school students and the 50 college students. The minimum level of .05 was used to determine the significance of the relationship in this study. In order to compute the chi-square statistical test without a large degree of error, it became necessary to regroup the responses for some of the questions. Selected items have been categorized as Hi, Med and Lo, and others as Hi and Lo.

## FINDINGS

The findings, based on the chi-square statistical test indicate that a significant difference did occur in the responses to seven of the questions at the .05 level of confidence or beyond. The responses to two of the questions approached the .05 level of confidence and the responses to 26 of the questions showed no significant difference. Based on these results, the hypothesis that females in college would indicate more positive attitudes toward family life and children than would females in high school was partially accepted.

Table 3 shows the significant difference in the following questions having to do with developmental tasks: Question 26, "A mother should make an effort to get her child toilet trained at the earliest possible time." Question 35, "A child should be weaned away from the bottle or breast as soon as possible." Question 20, "The earlier a child is weaned from its emotional ties to its parents the better it will handle its own problems." Questions 26 and 35 are both significant at the .01 level. Question 20 was not significant at the .05 level but was included in the table because it approached this level of significance and is thought by the researcher to be relevant. In answer to all three questions, the high school sample more strongly agreed than did the college sample. The college students were more inclined to mildly disagree.

Table 4 shows the significant difference in questions 1 and 29 respectively. "Children should be allowed to disagree with their parents if they feel their own ideas are better." "Children are actually happier under strict

Table 3. Responses of students to questions 26, 35, and 20

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---

Question 26. A mother should make an effort to get her child toilet trained at the earliest possible time.

	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
High School	15	21	11	2	1
College	11	11	22	6	

---

	High	Medium	Low	No answer
High School	15	21	13	1
College	11	11	28	

---

$$X^2 = 9.42$$

$$df = 2$$

Level of Significance = .01

---

Question 35. A child should be weaned away from the bottle or breast as soon as possible.

	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
High School	15	20	9	6	
College	2	17	23	6	2

---

$$X^2 = 17.0$$

$$df = 3$$

Level of Significance = .01

---

Table 3. Continued

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Question 20. The earlier a child is weaned from its emotional ties to its parents the better it will handle its own problems.

	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree
High School	9	13	20	8
College	1	16	22	11

---

$$X^2 = 7.24$$

$$df = 3$$

Level of Significance = Approximately .07

---

Table 4. Responses of students to questions 1 and 29

---



---

Question 1. Children should be allowed to disagree with their parents if they feel their own ideas are better.

	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree
High School	28	18	3	1
College	18	30	2	0
	High	Low		
High School	28	22		
Colege	18	32		

---

$$X^2 = 4$$

$$df = 1$$

Level of Significance = .05

Table 4. Continued

Question 29. Children are actually happier under strict training.				
	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree
High School	2	7	35	6
College	4	20	20	6
-----				
	High	Medium	Low	
High School	9	35	6	
College	24	20	6	
-----				
$X^2 = 10.88$				
df = 2				
Level of Significance = .01				

training." Question 1 was significant at the .05 level of confidence and question 29 was significant at the .01 level of confidence. Essentially both high school and college students agreed with question 1; the difference was only in degree. The high school students more strongly agreed that children should be able to disagree with parents.

The responses to question 29 did not show strong feelings either way but the college group seemed to be more accepting of strictness. It is not certain how the students interpreted strictness, but it does seem clear that the two age groups are not in agreement as to how much is acceptable.

Table 5 shows the significant differences for questions 7 and 30.

Question 7, "Mothers would do their job better with the children if fathers were more kind," was significant at the .05 level of confidence. Question 30, "It's natural for a mother to 'blow her top' when children are selfish and demanding," was significant at the .02 level of confidence. On both questions the high school sample more strongly agreed than did the college sample.

Table 6 shows the significant difference for questions 12 and 22.

Question 13, "Mothers very often feel that they can't stand their children a moment longer," was not significant at the .05 level but approached this level of significance and was included because the researcher thought it to be relevant. Question 22, "Raising children is a nerve-wracking job," was significant at the .02 level of confidence when distributed Hi and Lo. This distribution was not done to prevent error but to show a difference that seemed quite obvious to the researcher from the data. When computed according to (A), (a), (d), (D), there was no significant difference between high school and college students.

In reviewing the data the researcher observed that on several questions, both the high school sample and the college sample responded almost identically. No statistical analysis was done on these questions but they are included in Table 7 because of their possible relevance. The questions where the responses were significantly different, dealt primarily with developmental norms and child care. The questions where the responses were very similar, dealt basically with the parent's relationship to the child.



Table 5. Responses of students to questions 7 and 30

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Question 7. Mothers would do their job better with the children if fathers were more kind.

	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree
High School	10	14	18	8
College	1	21	19	9

---

$$X^2 = 8.84$$

$$df = 3$$

Level of Significance = .05

---

Question 30. It's natural for a mother to "blow her top" when children are selfish and demanding.

	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree
High School	12	23	12	3
College	2	29	18	1

---

	High	Medium	Low
High School	12	23	15
College	2	29	19

---

$$X^2 = 8.28$$

$$df = 2$$

Level of Significance = .02

---

Table 6. Responses of students to questions 13 and 22

Question 13. Mothers very often feel that they can't stand their children a moment longer.

	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
High School	8	17	17	6	2
College	12	23	8	5	2

---

	High	Medium	Low	No answer
High School	8	17	23	2
College	12	23	13	2

$$X^2 = 5.63$$

$$df = 2$$

Level of Significance = .06

Question 22. Raising children is a nerve-wracking job.

	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree
High School	6	8	17	19
College	6	19	13	12

---

	High	Low
High School	14	36
College	25	25

$$X^2 = 5.08$$

$$df = 1$$

Level of Significance = .02

Table 7. Questions receiving similar responses

Question		Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Mildly disagree	Strongly disagree	No answer
2. Some children are just so bad they must be taught to fear adults for their own good.	High School	1	4	11	34	
	College	0	1	12	36	1
3. You must always keep tight hold of baby during his bath for in a careless moment he might slip.	High School	33	13	2	2	
	College	25	14	11	0	
6. Parents should adjust to the children some rather than always expecting the children to adjust to the parents.	High School	24	21	4	1	
	College	21	26	3	0	
8. Children would be happier and better behaved if parents would show an interest in their affairs.	High School	40	9	1	0	
	College	42	8	0	0	
23. Parents deserve the highest esteem and regard of their children.	High School	18	30	1	1	
	College	18	24	6	0	2
27. When a child is in trouble he ought to know he won't be punished for talking about it with his parents.	High School	35	11	3	0	1
	College	32	16	2	0	
28. It is natural to have quarrels when two people who both have minds of their own get married.	High School	25	21	4	0	
	College	26	21	3	0	
33. The trouble with giving attention to children's problems is they usually just make up a lot of stories to keep you interested.	High School	4	7	22	17	
	College	5	6	23	16	

## DISCUSSION

The hypothesis employed to guide this study was: Females in college will indicate more positive attitudes toward family life and children than will be true for females in high school. The findings indicate that the responses to seven of the 35 questions showed a significant difference. The chi-square statistical test with the .05 level of confidence was used as the criterion of significance.

Each question was analyzed separately but no attempt was made to analyze the over all responses. Questions 1, 7 and 22 were found to be significant at the .05 level of confidence, question 30 was significant at the .02 level of confidence and questions 26, 29 and 35 were found to be significant at the .01 level of confidence.

Questions 26, 35 and 30 respectively, "A mother should make an effort to get her child toilet trained at the earliest possible time," "A child should be weaned away from the bottle or breast as soon as possible," "The earlier a child is weaned from its emotional ties to its parents the better it will handle its own problems," showed that the high school group responded more frequently to "strongly agree" and "mildly agree" than did the college sample. The review of the literature supports this finding in that the studies made by de Lissoyov (1973a, b) indicated that teen-age parents had little knowledge of developmental norms. These findings may also indicate that the high school

group would be more impatient with their children while going through toilet training, weaning, and emotional dependency.

Burchinal (1960) concluded that one reason for early marriage was a romantic and glamorous image of marriage and an unrealistic over-evaluation of marriage. The responses of the high school sample tend to indicate that these students did not have a realistic understanding of what child rearing entails and therefore are in agreement with Burchinal's findings.

It is also possible that the high school sample thought the "good" mother is one who is able to have her child accomplish developmental tasks early. If this is the case, it may imply a lack of appreciation for childhood in general.

In response to questions 1 and 29 respectively, "Children should be allowed to disagree with their parents if they feel their own ideas are better," and "Children are actually happier under strict training," it appears that the college sample is more accepting of strictness. It may simply mean that the older students feel children are happier when they grow in a situation that is well defined and comfortably enforced. It is not entirely clear how they have interpreted the meaning of strictness.

In response to question 1, the high school sample more frequently answered "strongly agree" and the college sample more frequently answered "mildly agree." The responses to question 29 showed the high school sample mildly disagreeing and the college sample split down the middle between mildly disagreeing and mildly agreeing. The differences may indicate that the high school sample is still somewhat opposed to authority.

de Lissovoy (1973a, b) found teen-age parents to be very authoritative and domineering over their children in terms of punishment, so it may be that the high school sample responded as they would like to be treated and would ideally like to treat their own children, and not as they are capable of treating children.

Questions 7 and 30 respectively, "Mothers would do their job better with the children if fathers were more kind," and "It's natural for a mother to 'blow her top' when children are selfish and demanding," were answered similarly by both groups except that the high school sample responded to "strongly agree" significantly more than did the college sample. It is not clear why they responded in this manner but it is possible that the high school sample was more inclined to blame others for the frustrations of child rearing and the college sample understood that others can strongly influence the situation but in the end one must be responsible for himself.

It is also possible that the high school sample is impatient with children because they expect them to do as they are told. They may not understand that selfishness and demanding qualities in children may simply reflect their ego-centrism and is therefore natural behavior.

Questions 13 and 22 respectively, "Mothers very often feel that they can't stand their children a moment longer," and "Raising children is a nerve-racking job," found the high school sample disagreeing and the college sample agreeing. The review of the literature tends to support this in that the high school sample chose the more glamorous responses and the college sample

chose the more realistic responses. The younger students may think that being a mother is simple, not demanding, and easy. They may not be prepared for the realities of what motherhood and parenting involve.

The over all responses of the high school sample suggests to the researcher that these students do have a more glamorous vision of what marriage is like than does the college sample. It seems evident that the college sample has responded with more maturity than the high school sample but it is difficult to say whether this was because of actual maturity or whether this group was just more educated in the field of family life and rearing of children.

The high school group's answers reflect a glamorous and romanticised point of view rather than a realistic one. But it also seems to be an uninformed one in terms of children's characteristics and needs, and in this way it may be dangerous. The results of this study show a real need for education regarding parenthood, as well as the need for maturity before people accept the responsibilities of parenthood.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

### Summary

The divorce rates for couples married under 20 years of age are significantly higher than for couples married 20 years of age and over. In 1960, 24.5 percent of the white females in the United States were married by age 18 (Burchinal, 1965). It has been theorized by several researchers in the field of family life that teen-agers would not make good parents because of their seemingly lack of maturity and the instability of their marriages (Moss, 1965).

de Lissovoy (1973a, b) states that there is a need to study teen-agers as parents and to find out what their expectations of and attitudes toward children are.

It has been the purpose of this study to investigate the attitudes towards family life and children of two groups of unmarried females. Each group consisted of 50 students. One group consisted of junior and senior females from Logan High School and the other group consisted of junior and senior females from Utah State University.

Data for the study was collected by a questionnaire technique. The researcher visited the schools and asked each of the students included in the sample to complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire used for data collection was 35 items selected from The Parent Attitude Research Instrument, a standardized test designed by



Schaefer and Bell (1965). The students' responses to the items were recorded in four categories (A) strongly agree, (a) mildly agree, (d) mildly disagree, (D) strongly disagree. Chi-square was used to determine the significance of the data.

### Conclusions

The findings of this study provide support for the conclusion that the attitudes and expectations of the students in high school differ from the attitudes and expectations of the students in college in ways which would appear to be potential influences on their roles as wives and mothers if they were to marry and become parents at an early age.

### Suggestions for Further Study

As a result of this study, the following suggestions for further studies are made:

1. A comparative study of the attitudes of teen-age marrieds and marrieds in the 20-24 year-old age bracket.
2. Further testing into the single student's knowledge of developmental norms in children.
3. A comparative investigation of the attitudes of single teen-agers and married teen-agers.
4. Further study into areas where the high school sample and college sample were in major agreement with each other.

5. The same study made on males.
6. A look into how students define strictness, authority and demanding.

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## APPENDIX

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Grade in school \_\_\_\_\_

Number and ages of brothers and sisters \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's education \_\_\_\_\_

Father's education \_\_\_\_\_

You may have a tendency to respond to some of the statements from a child's point of view rather than that of a parent's. Please answer all questions as though you were a wife or mother.

Read each of the statements below and then rate them as follows:

A	a	d	D
strongly agree	mildly agree	mildly disagree	strongly disagree

Indicate your opinion by drawing a circle around the "A" if you strongly agree, around the "a" if you mildly agree, around the "d" if you mildly disagree and around the "D" if you strongly disagree.

There are no right or wrong answers, so answer according to your own opinion. It is very important to the study that all questions be answered. Many of the statements will seem alike but all are necessary to show slight differences of opinion.

- |   |         |
|---|---------|
| 1. Children should be allowed to disagree with their parents if they feel their own ideas are better. | A a d D |
| 2. Some children are just so bad they must be taught to fear adults for their own good.               | A a d D |
| 3. You must always keep tight hold of baby during his bath for in a careless moment he might slip.    | A a d D |
| 4. More parents should teach their children to have unquestioning loyalty to them.                    | A a d D |
| 5. One of the worst things about taking care of a home is a woman feels that she can't get out.       | A a d D |



6. Parents should adjust to the children some rather than always expecting the children to adjust to the parents. A a d D
7. Mothers would do their job better with the children if fathers were more kind. A a d D
8. Children would be happier and better behaved if parents would show an interest in their affairs. A a d D
9. A mother should do her best to avoid any disappointment for her child. A a d D
10. All young mothers are afraid of their awkwardness in handling and holding the baby. A a d D
11. Sometimes it's necessary for a wife to tell off her husband in order to get her rights. A a d D
12. Strict discipline develops a fine strong character. A a d D
13. Mothers very often feel that they can't stand their children a moment longer. A a d D
14. It isn't fair that a woman has to bear just about all the burden of raising children by herself. A a d D
15. A wise parent will teach a child early just who is boss. A a d D
16. It's a rare mother who can be sweet and even tempered with her children all day. A a d D
17. Children are too often asked to do all the compromising and adjustment and that is not fair. A a d D
18. Children pester you with all their little upsets if you aren't careful from the first. A a d D
19. A mother has to do the planning because she is the one who knows what's going on in the home. A a d D
20. The earlier a child is weaned from its emotional ties to its parents the better it will handle its own problems. A a d D
21. Too many women forget that a mother's place is in the home. A a d D

22. Raising children is a nerve-wracking job. A a d D
23. Parents deserve the highest esteem and regard of their children. A a d D
24. If mothers could get their wishes they would most often ask that their husband be more understanding. A a d D
25. Sex is one of the greatest problems to be contended with in children. A a d D
26. A mother should make an effort to get her child toilet trained at the earliest possible time. A a d D
27. When a child is in trouble he ought to know he won't be punished for talking about it with his parents. A a d D
28. It's natural to have quarrels when two people who both have minds of their own get married. A a d D
29. Children are actually happier under strict training. A a d D
30. It's natural for a mother to "blow her top" when children are selfish and demanding. A a d D
31. A young mother feels "held down" because there are lots of things she wants to do while she is young. A a d D
32. The sooner a child learns that a wasted minute is lost forever the better off he will be. A a d D
33. The trouble with giving attention to children's problems is they usually just make up a lot of stories to keep you interested. A a d D
34. It is a mother's duty to make sure she knows her child's innermost thoughts. A a d D
35. A child should be weaned away from the bottle or breast as soon as possible. A a d D

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