

A N E V A L U A T I O N O F A T T I T U D E S
O F M O T H E R S T O W A R D S
S E X E D U C A T I O N

A THESIS

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We hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under
our supervision by Elizabeth A. Twaddell
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TOWARDS SEX EDUCATION

be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements for the Degree of
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CHAPTER I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

The subject of sex education has received considerable publicity within the last year. All of the leading women's magazines as well as current periodicals have printed feature articles presenting arguments for and against sex instruction in the schools. The question of whether or not to teach sex education has become controversial and is being used politically in school board elections and even in state legislatures. National organizations have been formed to fight the teaching of sex education in the public schools. A recent Reader's Digest article by Rowan and Mazie (22) stated that sex instruction has become perhaps the most explosive topic in elementary and secondary education since John Scopes went on trial in 1925 for teaching evolution.

That this new controversy has created great interest in education is shown in increased attendance at parent groups meetings and in voting in school board elections where ever the battles over sex education are being fought. The result of this renewed interest in education is the examination and revision of existing programs of sex instruction. In some instances sex education has been dropped from the curriculum

entirely. Legislation controlling and even prohibiting sex education in some states has been passed. Some school districts have cancelled or postponed indefinitely plans for implementing programs of sex instruction.

The problem appears to be that opposing groups accuse schools of trying to take a fundamental responsibility away from the home. Most educators agree that sex education always has its beginnings in the home and that the home is the proper place for this important instruction. However, the question arises as to whether parents are fulfilling this responsibility. The point of view taken by schools in offering courses of sex instruction is not to usurp parental authority but to cooperate with parents in supplementing the training they have provided at home.

Breckenridge and Vincent (6) stated that most educators now recognize that the least important part of sex education is the imparting of the facts of anatomy and physiology. The really important part of sex education, they concede, is the fixing of attitudes, habits and emotional patterns; and they realize that this must of necessity occur in the homes and neighborhoods in which young people have spent their early childhood. Educators believe that schools have a responsibility to do what they can to promote and/or reinforce healthy fundamental attitudes and emotional reactions.

How did sex education get to be a part of the school curriculum in the first place? Bettelheim (3) contended that sex education, formerly taught in the home, is no longer a part of the child's home experiences. Schools began to teach about sex only because parents requested it. In the days when most children grew up on a farm, a child learned extensively by simple observation that he now has to be taught out of books.

According to Cook(9), the need for sex education in today's public schools has grown out of the refusal of many American parents to deal realistically with this subject in the home--and of the clergy to respond to the rising need for these programs. The results of this failure can be seen in almost every community in teenage pregnancies, a growing incidence of homosexuality and emotionally disturbed young people, and a breakdown in moral and ethical codes. Most youngsters have learned no other terminology for sexual matters than the dirty words acquired in the streets. They are unable to accept the idea that their parents enjoy sexual relations, because sex has been put up to them as "dirty"--and they do not want to regard their parents as dirty.

The way in which parents answer their children's first questions about sex has something to do with the early attitude which the child will have toward sex, and those first

patterns may possibly affect his lifelong outlook on sex and all its ramifications contends Breckenridge (5). The matter of answering a child's questions about birth correctly is important not only from the sex point of view but also from the need to consistently tell children the truth. Whatever may be the cause for the questions about sex, the fact remains that this may be the first time when parents fail to be honest with their children. In this way, the first lessons in untruthfulness may come from the parents themselves, who complain a few years later of their children's tendency to falsehood. Another undesirable effect of a parent's attempt to hush a child's questions is that a child thwarted in his normal desire for information may turn to undesirable sources and may be less likely in the future to go freely to the parent with his queries.

In an interview with Kirkendall, Collier (9) reported that Kirkendall emphasized that as children begin to reach outside the home for relationships they stop talking with their parents about sex, and by the teen years most young people are too embarrassed to ask questions. The schools with their function to educate is the logical choice to do the job. Sex education in the schools should begin in kindergarten and grow with the student. What little sex education given in schools to date has come far too late. Children easily disregard information for which they are not ready. The main problem is that

children are provided with a culture that is sex saturated. It is necessary to teach students something about how they relate to others--friends, teachers, parents, eventually the people they marry.

In contemporary society transmission of the sex culture tends to rely on the youth peer group rather than, as in other aspects of the culture, descending from adults to youths claimed Calderwood (7). The lack of communication between the generations concerning sex is both cause and effect of confusion concerning sex norms, with mutual recriminations increasingly common. The repeated pleas for information and help present a different picture of youth from the adult view that today's youth are over-sophisticated in sexual matters. If provided with opportunity, youths respond openly to adults and actively seek honest communication between the generations. The hesitancy would appear to be mainly on the part of adults.

Cox (10) reported that the highest percentage of source of first sex information is age mates. Obviously, the chances of other adolescents supplying valid information in a clear, understandable manner are small. It is somewhat analogous to the blind leading the blind. The parents and the schools represent two sources that should lead the young adult to realistic attitudes toward sexuality. To the extent that they fail, peers and mass media fill the vacuum.

Duvall (11) emphasized that it is a sad commentary that recent youth polls show few more adolescents getting their sex information from home, school or church than was true in 1938 at the time of the first extensive youth survey conducted by the American Council on Education. Why are adults reticent when it comes to discussing the subject of sex with their children? Anderson (1) suggested three reasons. First, many adults feel guilty when discussing sex because they were brought up in an era in which discussion of sexual experiences was considered improper. Second, some adults avoid discussion because they mistakenly suppose that if they do not talk to young people about sex, they will know nothing about it and will consequently avoid any sexual activities and live sexually unblemished lives. Third, a number of adults lack the vocabulary and the information necessary to hold an informative discussion with teen-agers.

Parents may try conscientiously to answer questions the child asks on all other subjects, however react differently when the child asks questions that deal with sex. The child sees at once that here is a subject that seems to have emotional implications; it appears to be somehow different from other subjects, about which his parents are more cooperative when he asks questions. At that point, observed Landis and Landis (16), is to be found the beginning of the unhealthy attitude some people have about sex. Parents need to answer

questions about reproduction just as casually and as accurately as they try to answer all other questions the child asks.

It is further suggested by Breckenridge and Vincent (6) that questions about sex deserve an honest answer in simple language. These, and any other questions should be answered without embarrassment, and with complete honesty. Otherwise they will assume an aura of "different-from-other-questions", with the result that children will wonder and think about them far more than they do questions not singled out by their parents as embarrassing and worth evasive answers. Answered quietly and adequately, they slip into the category of answered questions which can be forgotten about for the time being.

Psychologists maintain that children accurately informed about basic facts of sex and reproduction have no need to indulge in persistent phantasies centered around sex. Breckenridge and Vincent (6) reinforced this theory by stating that a child with a sound sex education is not likely to be swung aside into undesirable practices and attitudes, but may prove a wholesome influence to other children less fortunate than he is.

The idea of sex education at an early age troubles some parents because they believe that early sex education

leads to early experimentation. According to Valentine (28), ignorance is more likely to create curiosity which, in turn, tends to lead to experimentation.

A position taken by Blood (4) was that children who receive their sex education from their parents conform more closely to social norms than those whose parents fail them. One study showed that parent educated women were more restrained premaritally and had the happiest marriages. Parents who wonder whether sex information stimulated promiscuity can see in the data quite the opposite.

In a study in 1952-1955, Landis and Landis (15) found that the factor of chastity was related to sources of sex information. Those who reported having had premarital sex experience were more likely to have had no information from parents and to have learned about sex facts from brothers or sisters, or from other children. The research supports the belief that parents who can give their children fairly complete sex information also influence their children toward developing attitudes and standards with which they can live comfortably in society.

Landis and Landis (16) maintained that if questions about sex facts are answered wisely when children are small, parents will find it easier to help their sons and daughters to understand the emotional aspects of sex later. Persons

who have wholesome attitudes toward sex and who are well informed on the subject have an advantage in marriage according to Landis (17). Some may have vulgar attitudes because all they have learned has come from badly informed companions. Others have an abnormal curiosity about sex because of the mysterious silence with which it has been surrounded in their home. Still others, because of the way parents approached the topic in trying to give information have been shocked, embarrassed, or made to feel that sex is unclean.

Most parents are willing to answer children's questions more or less fully until it comes to questions about sex. At this point they too often evade the questions and begin to build up in the child the attitude that sex is something mysterious, naughty, or not to be talked about. A question should be answered by which ever parent is asked the question, and regardless of the age of the child. If he is old enough to ask the question, he is old enough to have a true answer. It is just as important also that the parent not elaborate the answer beyond the child's understanding.

There is no more curiosity about or interest in sex than in any other subject if information and knowledge about it is acquired normally and naturally as in other fields. If adults manifest shock, hesitate in answering questions or are alarmed by the fact that boys and girls are at first

curious about the fact that they are different, the stage is set for children to begin thinking that sex organs are different from other parts of their bodies.

Landis and Landis (15) further stated that one reason why many parents have difficulty keeping lines of communication open as children approach adolescence is that the parents have no language they can use in discussing sex with their children. They have used a baby language for bodily functions and parts of the body. The child has learned to say "hand", "foot", "eyes", "ears", and "stomach", but he has not been given the right names for his sex organs or for processes of bodily elimination.

Knowing the right names for parts of the body is an important part of sex training. This is a real step forward. It allows sex education to take place in the open. For when there are words and names, there can be talking, confirmed Stewart (27).

Sears (23) summarized parental policies toward five-year-olds' sex questions under the heading of "information control." Closely related to parents' unwillingness to answer embarrassing questions was their tendency to avoid sexual terms. Sears called this "avoiding labels."

Children should acquire factual knowledge about sex as they have need for it. Proper names for eliminative products,

for genital organs, and for the sexual act, for menstruation, and other sexual realities should be given at an early age to protect children against using "gutter language" or other false substitutes. Breckenridge and Vincent (6) theorized that one of the chief reasons for this is that scientific names are free of the attitudes of nastiness or sneaking which inevitably accompany the other names.

Although Americans consider themselves enlightened in regard to sex education, a position taken by Spock (26) was that relatively few adolescents receive much knowledge at home even today. The Life Cycle Library (18) stated that this breakdown in the learning process which occurs in the majority of homes has led authorities in the field of sex education to suggest that the school assume responsibility for instruction in this subject. The school reaches the child over a span of years and can institute a program in sex education which parallels each stage of the child's intellectual and emotional development. The classroom teacher can play a vital role in helping a child to understand the true meaning of sexuality and to accept it as a positive and constructive element of life. By doing this, the teacher can help strengthen the character of the child and make an immeasurable contribution to his development as a responsible citizen. However, this can only be accomplished if sex

education is taught in an atmosphere free from repression and secrecy. This subject must be approached realistically, directly and honestly.

It is possible that the incest taboo which is a product of human culture and not found in animals, may underlie some of the resistance and inner conflict many parents have about communicating with their children about the emotional aspects of sex, speculated Mace (19). He suggested that if this is true, perhaps parents cannot be expected to help their children in this area and that it is rather the responsibility of other institutions in today's society.

Schulz and Williams (24) pointed out that if the school is to prepare students for a productive and satisfying life in today's stressful and challenging world, a curriculum must be established that will contribute to family stability. The family, of course, no longer attempts to train a child to be self-sufficient, to do all things well; the help of other institutions such as the school and church is taken for granted.

In the study by Schofield (23) 67 per cent of the boys and 29 per cent of the girls felt that they had never received any help from their parents in dealing with problems related to sex. Parents seem to decrease in their role of sex educator as the child increases in age. More influence comes

from teachers as parents decrease in their roles. However, parents have set controls on the school systems that have hindered progress in setting up adequate curriculums of sex education.

The charge has been made that the family has been weakened by the loss of certain functions that have been taken over by other social agencies and institutions. However, Harter (12) posed the question as to whether these functions were really "stolen" from the family, or whether the family was anxiously awaiting the emergence of social agents which could be trusted with functions that the family either did not want or could not really handle. This charge might be better described as a redefinition of the family's role in sex education rather than a complete theft of the role by other socialization agents.

A position taken by Harter (12) is that there are two groups of parents. One group is made up of parents who are satisfied with their own sexual knowledge and fertility experiences and may want to give their children the general "facts of life," but at the same time they want to be able to rely on the schools as technical consultants who can provide details and clarifications. The second group is composed of parents who do not have adequate sexual knowledge and/or who are not satisfied with their fertility experiences

and feel that they must depend upon the school to conduct most of the information process in sex education and may earnestly hope that the schools will do this; even though if they had their choice they might like to be able to provide this information themselves.

The real question is not whether the schools should provide sex education for its students but how and what kind. Bell (2) quoted Dr. James A. Peterson, sociologist and past president of the American Association of Marriage Counselors,

Most criticism of family life education seems to neglect the fact that "sex education" goes on in every school bus, at every recess period and at every slumber party where they do not slumber at all but tell the weirdest, wildest stories about sex.

Powell (21) related the division of sex education into two phases: providing sex information and providing sex education. He stated that sex information, which involves teaching the biological facts, should be the province of the school. Sex education which involves the development of attitudes conducive to healthy living should be handled by the home. Yet, realistically it is difficult to separate the two aspects, even if one can make such a differentiation.

Amid the controversy over sex education one wonders what the majority of parents really wants. Valentine (28) revealed that a Good Housekeeping Magazine poll on Sex

Education in July, 1969 indicated a clear preference for offering sex education in grade schools.

Sex education has a strong backing at the grass-roots level reported Rowan and Mazie (22). A Gallup poll released in June, 1969, found that seven of 10 adults favor sex education in schools. They also reported that sex education has been endorsed by the American Medical Association, National Education Association, United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare; National Congress of Parents and Teachers; the National Council of Churches; the United States Catholic Conference; the Young Woman's Christian Association; and the Young Men's Christian Association among others.

The newly released television series, A Time of Your Life, has come under heavy fire. The last five programs of the 15 program series are on sexual development and reproduction. Opponents theorize that sex education will undermine American morality and pave the way for a Communist take-over. However, Jobin (14) found that teachers whose students viewed the programs say the programs have paved the way for rewarding, unembarrassed classroom discussion. Surveys of California parents whose children viewed the series turned up an extremely high percentage who reported, among other things enriched communication with their children.

Rowan and Mazie (22) emphasized that sex education backers agree that parents have primary responsibility, and that the school's role is a supplemental one. Proponents say that a good sex education program reinforces the moral training each youngster has received outside of school.

The present study was developed to determine whether mothers of girls currently enrolled in eighth grade Homemaking classes at Congress Junior High School located in Denton, Texas, desire help in teaching their children about sex. Another objective of the present study was to determine what kinds of sex information mothers are providing their children. A third purpose of the study was to discover what kinds of sex information mothers are neglecting to give their children.

CHAPTER II

P R O C E D U R E

The author of the present study investigated the attitudes of mothers towards sex education. Mothers of students enrolled in eighth grade Homemaking classes in Congress Junior High School, Denton, Texas, participated in the study in the spring semester of 1970.

Permission was granted by the principal of Congress Junior High School, to conduct this study. A questionnaire was mailed to each participant. With each questionnaire a cover letter explaining the nature of the study was included with a self-addressed, stamped envelope in which to return the completed form.

The "Survey Form for Mothers" was composed of 18 questions. The first 14 questions were adapted for use in this study from the "Family Survey of Lincoln Parish" by Parrish and others (20). The first seven of these questions was concerned with biographical information about each participant. Questions 8 through 10 were concerned with the participant's knowledge of sex information and the sources from which this knowledge was obtained. Questions 11 through 14 dealt with

the participant's opinions about and experiences in sex education with her own children.

The "Family Survey of Lincoln Parish" was originally designed for the Orleans Parish study which preceded the Lincoln Parish study. In designing the Orleans Parish questionnaire four revisions were made in which from 5 to 15 persons were interviewed in each pretest. There was considerable experimentation with what questions to ask and the wording of questions prior to printing the final questionnaire.

Data from the original Orleans Parish study were utilized by Harter (13) in his dissertation, "Rationality in Procreation and Differential Fertility." Harter developed procedures and measures to assure and assess reliability and validity of his study.

Questions 15 through 18 were developed by the author and were based upon statements concerning sex education by a physician and several educators in the fields of Child Development, Family Living, and Psychology. Question 15 was based on statements by Anderson (1).

Questions 16 and 17 were based upon similar questionnaires previously designed by Landis and Landis (15). Three thousand students from 11 colleges participated in their study during 1952-1955.

The last question was developed by the author and consisted of seven statements about sex education with which the participant could check "agree" or "disagree". The first five statements were taken directly from Landis and Landis (16). The last two statements were composed by the author from theories appearing time after time in the writings of many different educators favoring programs of sex education in the schools.

A copy of the cover letter and the "Survey Form for Mothers" is shown on the following pages.

April 12, 1970

Dear Parent:

As a graduate student in the College of Household Arts and Sciences at Texas Woman's University, I am investigating attitudes of mothers towards sex education. The results should be helpful to parents, teachers, and school administrators.

Your opinions would be most helpful for completion of the study. Therefore, I hope you will contribute by reading carefully and answering the enclosed questionnaire. You do not need to sign the "Survey Form for Mothers," as we wish to keep all information confidential. It is important to the validity of the study that all questions be answered. Please check carefully for completeness and use the stamped, self-addressed envelope to return the completed form as soon as possible.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated as the information you give will be valuable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elizabeth Twaddell". The signature is fluid and elegant, with the first letter of each name being capitalized and prominent.

(Mrs.) Elizabeth Twaddell

S U R V E Y F O R M F O R M O T H E R S

1. What is your age?

20-30 _____
 30-40 _____
 40-50 _____
 Above 50 _____

2. What is your race?

White _____
 Negro _____
 Mexican _____
 Indian _____
 Other (specify) _____

3. What is your religious preference?

Catholic _____
 Jew _____
 Protestant (denomination) _____
 Other (specify) _____

4. How many years of education did you complete?

1-6 years _____
 7-9 years _____
 10-12 years _____

1-4 years college _____
 Master's degree _____
 Doctor's degree _____

5. What is your marital status?

Single, never married _____
 Married _____
 Widowed _____
 Divorced _____
 Separated _____
 Common-law union _____
 Other (specify) _____

6. How many husbands have you had? _____

7. Did you ever live on a farm before you were 18 years old?

Yes _____ No _____

8. When you were first married or pregnant did you know that babies came as a result from having sexual relations?

Yes _____ Do not remember _____
 No _____ Other (specify) _____

9. When you first found out about how babies are started or formed, how or from whom did you learn this?

Parents _____	Husband _____
Mother _____	Boy friend _____
Father _____	Girl friend _____
Brother _____	Teacher in school _____
Sister _____	Minister, priest, rabbi _____
Other relatives _____	Doctor or nurse _____
Other source (specify) _____	

10. When you were first married or pregnant would you have liked to have known more than you did about how and when babies are started or formed?

Yes _____	Do not remember _____
No _____	Other (specify) _____

11. Would you want your children to have information about how and when babies are started or formed by the time they get married?

Yes _____ No _____

- a. If YES: Whose responsibility do you think it is to inform your children about how and when babies are started or formed? Check more than one blank if appropriate.

Mother _____
Father _____
Both parents _____
Schools _____
Church or religious personnel _____
Physician or nurse or medical personnel _____

- b. If YES: At what age do you think children should have this information?

At puberty _____
(Ages 11-14 for boys, 9-13 for girls) _____
At age 21 or after (or after marriage) _____
When they get married or engaged _____
Continuous teaching from the time they _____
start asking questions _____
Dating age _____
Do not know _____

- c. If NO: Why do you not want your children to have information about how and when babies are started or formed?

They should not be informed until the
time of marriage or engagement _____
They should not be informed until they
are adults or after marriage _____
They find out about these things soon
enough by themselves without bring-
ing sex to their attention _____
If they were told they might try
experimenting to find out what it
is like _____
Other reason (specify) _____

12. In addition to learning from parents, do you think children should be taught in school about how babies are started, such as Biology courses in junior high school?

Yes _____ No _____ Do not know _____

- a. If NO: Why do you say that?

Might be all right if it were handled
right _____
Might be all right if it were taught to
boys and girls separately _____
Sex should not be taught in schools, but
in the home or doctor's office _____
Sex education should begin at an earlier
age _____
Sex education should be taught at an
older level _____
Other reason (specify) _____

13. Did you ever have any instruction in sex education when you were in school?

Yes _____ No _____ Do not remember _____

- If YES: In what grade?

1-6 grade _____ 10-12 grade _____
7-9 grade _____ College _____

14. Would you want your sons and daughters to be informed on methods of family planning or the use of precautions?

Yes _____ No _____

- a. If YES: At what age approximately should they receive this information?

At puberty
 (Ages 11-14 for boys, 9-13 for girls) _____
 At age 21 or after (or after marriage) _____
 When they get married or engaged _____
 Continuous teaching from the time they
 start asking questions _____
 Dating age _____
 Other (specify) _____

- b. If YES: Who should be responsible for teaching them about family planning or precautions?

Mother _____
 Father _____
 Both parents _____
 Schools _____
 Church or religious personnel _____
 Physician or nurse or medical personnel _____
 Other (specify) _____

- c. If NO: Why would you not want your sons and daughters to be informed on methods of family planning or the use of precautions?

They should not be informed until the
 time of marriage or engagement _____
 They should not be informed until they
 are adults or after marriage _____
 They find out about these things soon
 enough by themselves without bringing
 sex to their attention _____
 If they were told, they might try
 experimenting to find out what it
 is like _____
 I do not believe in prevention and do
 not want my children to use family
 planning _____
 Other reason (specify) _____

15. Are you able to discuss sex with your child frankly and honestly without embarrassment?

Yes _____ No _____

- a. If NO: Why not?

I do not have sufficient factual knowledge
about sex _____

I do not know the proper language _____

I was brought up to feel talking about
sex was improper _____

Other reason (specify) _____

16. Which of the following names for body parts and processes have you taught your children?

Bowel movement _____

Breast _____

Fecal material _____

Nipple _____

Penis _____

Scrotum _____

Testicles _____

Urinate _____

Vagina _____

Vulva _____

17. Which of the following subjects have you discussed with your children?

Where babies come from _____

Menstruation _____

Venereal disease _____

Sexual intercourse _____

Sexual emotions _____

Masturbation _____

Sex perversions _____

Pleasure of sexual relations _____

Nocturnal emissions _____

Birth control _____

Orgasm or climax _____

None of these _____

18. Check in the proper column whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	Agree	Disagree
Questions should be answered when they are asked regardless of whether or not the child seems too young to be asking.		
Exactly what is asked should be answered casually and as accurately as possible.		
Whichever parent is asked should answer.		
Most important of all is the attitude with which the questions are answered.		
If questions about sex facts are answered wisely when children are small, parents will find it easier to help them to understand the emotional aspects of sex later.		
Ignorance is more likely to create curiosity which may lead to experimentation.		
A good sex education program reinforces the moral training each youngster has received outside of school.		

CHAPTER III

P R E S E N T A T I O N A N D A N A L Y S I S O F D A T A

Questionnaires were mailed to mothers of all girls enrolled in eighth grade Homemaking at Congress Junior High School during the spring semester of 1970. Homemaking is a required course for all eighth grade girls. A total of 135 questionnaires were mailed with an explanatory letter and a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Seventy-seven questionnaires were received through the mail by the investigator. Seventy-five questionnaires were completed in full. This number represents a 55.6 per cent return of survey forms.

Most of the mothers were between 30 to 50 years of age, with 48 per cent falling in the 30 to 40 age group and 40 per cent falling in the 40 to 50 age group. Four mothers or 5.3 per cent were below 30 years of age, and five mothers or 6.7 per cent were over 50 years.

<u>Age of Respondents</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
20-30 years	4	5.3
30-40 years	36	48.0
40-50 years	30	40.0
Above 50 years	5	6.7

Questionnaires were mailed to 118 white mothers and 17 Negro mothers. Sixty-nine or 92 per cent of those responding were white and six or 8.0 per cent were Negro. Of the 118 white mothers asked to participate in the study 58.0 per cent complied whereas 35.3 per cent of the Negro mothers participated in the study.

<u>Race of Participants</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
White	69	92.0
Negro	6	8.0

A majority of the respondents, 94.7 per cent, reported protestant religious preference while 5.3 per cent were Catholic. Eleven protestant denominations were represented.

<u>Religious Preference</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Catholic	4	5.3
Assembly of God	1	1.3
Baptist	26	34.7
Church of Christ	5	6.7
Cumberland Presbyterian	2	2.7
Disciples of Christ	3	4.0
Episcopal	3	4.0
Lutheran	2	2.7
Methodist	11	14.7
Pentecostal	1	1.3
Presbyterian	5	6.7
Unitarian	1	1.3
Unspecified	11	14.7

Six mothers or 8.0 per cent of those responding had completed nine years or less of education. Twenty-seven mothers had completed from 10 to 12 years of education and 33 had attended one to four years of college. Nine respondents had earned graduate degrees.

<u>Years of Education</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
1 to 9 years	6	8.0
10 to 12 years	27	36.0
1 to 4 years in college	33	44.0
Graduate degree	9	12.0

A majority of the mothers, 88.0 per cent, were married, while 5.3 per cent were widowed and 6.7 per cent were divorced or separated.

<u>Marital Status</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Married	66	88.0
Widowed	4	5.3
Divorced or separated	5	6.7

Of the 75 participants, 97.3 per cent had had one husband, while 2.7 per cent reported having had two husbands. Findings indicated that 36 mothers or 48 per cent had lived on a farm before age 18 and 39 or 52 per cent had not.

All of the 75 respondents, or 100 per cent, reported that they knew that babies came as a result from sexual relations when they were first married. Participants listed their mothers as their greatest first source of information about how babies are started or formed, with girl friends listed as the next greatest source. Fathers, brothers and religious leaders were not named as a first source.

<u>First Source of Information</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Parents	7	8.9
Mother	31	39.7
Father	0	0.0
Brother	0	0.0
Sister	5	6.4
Other relatives	4	5.1
Husband	2	2.6
Boy friend	1	1.3
Girl friend	16	20.5
Other friends	2	2.6
Teacher in school	6	7.7
Minister or Priest	0	0.0
Doctor or nurse	1	1.3
Farm life	3	3.8

Participants were asked if they would have liked to have known more than they did when they were first married about how and when babies are started or formed. Thirty-six or 48.0 per cent of the mothers responded "Yes" and 37 or 49.3 per cent responded "No." Two mothers or 2.7 per cent did not remember. All 75 respondents replied that they wanted their children to have this information by the time they married.

The majority of mothers reported that they believed the responsibility of informing children about sex was that of both parents. Twenty per cent believed that schools shared this responsibility.

<u>Responsibility for Informing Children</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Mother	30	17.6
Father	14	8.2
Both parents	55	32.4
Schools	34	20.0
Church or religious person	14	8.2
Medical personnel	23	13.5

Of the total group, 63 mothers, or 84.0 per cent, were in favor of sex education being taught in school, while seven mothers, or 13.3 per cent, were against and 2.7 per cent were undecided.

Of those seven parents who were opposed to sex education being taught in school, 10 per cent replied it might be all right if it were handled right. Fifty per cent of those opposing replied that it might be all right if it were taught to boys and girls separately. Twenty per cent of those opposing sex education in schools replied that the home or the doctor's office was the proper place for sex instruction--not the school. One opposing parent reasoned that beginning

sex education at the junior high school level was too early and one mother replied that instruction at this level came too late.

Findings indicated that more than half of the respondents had never had sex education when they were in school. Forty-two mothers, or 56 per cent, had not had sex instruction in school while 30, or 40 per cent, reported that they had. Three mothers, or 4.0 per cent, could not remember whether or not they had had such a course.

Mothers reporting that they had had sex education when they were in school checked the grade level at which it had been taught. Some respondents had had sex instruction at more than one grade level.

<u>Sex Education by Grade</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Grades 1 through 6	1	2.8
Grades 7 through 9	12	33.3
Grades 10 through 12	14	38.9
College level	9	25.0

A majority of mothers, 90.1 per cent, wanted their children to be informed on methods of family planning or the use of precautions. They checked approximate ages when children should receive this information. Most mothers, 44.9 per cent, believed in the continuous teaching of children

from the time they start asking questions. The next largest group, 27.5 per cent, thought that puberty was the time to inform children about birth control.

<u>Age for Informing About Birth Control</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Puberty	19	27.5
Age 21	1	1.4
At marriage or engagement	7	10.1
Continuous teaching	31	44.9
Dating age	10	14.7
Twelfth grade	1	1.4

Participants were asked who should be responsible for teaching children about family planning or precautions. Both parents, medical personnel, and schools were listed most often as being responsible for teaching sex education, and in that order.

<u>Responsibility for Teaching</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Mother	17	12.6
Father	10	7.4
Both parents	48	35.6
Schools	21	15.6
Churches	10	7.4
Medical personnel	29	21.5

Seven participants, or 9.9 per cent, opposed informing children on methods of family planning. A majority, or 57.1

per cent, felt they should not be informed until the time of marriage or engagement. Two mothers, or 28.6 per cent, believed they might try experimenting with sex if they were told. One mother felt children should not be informed about birth control until adulthood or until after marriage. None of the respondents reported that they did not believe in prevention or family planning.

A majority of respondents, or 82.7 per cent, reported that they were able to discuss sex frankly and honestly without embarrassment with their children. Thirteen mothers, or 17.3 per cent, indicated they were unable to discuss matters pertaining to sex with their children. Several reasons were listed, but the reason checked most often had to do with the respondent's own background. Eight mothers, or 47.1 per cent, revealed that they had been brought up to feel that talking about sex was improper.

<u>Reasons for Inability to Discuss Sex</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Lack factual knowledge	4	23.5
Lack vocabulary	3	17.6
Feel it is improper	8	47.1
Too private to discuss	1	5.9
Communication barrier	1	5.9

The last two reasons listed were those written in by the respondents in the space for "Other reasons."

Respondents were asked to check names for body parts and processes which they had taught their children. A majority of participants used the proper vocabulary when referring to body processes. Fewer respondents checked using the correct names for female parts of the body. The fewest number of names checked by mothers were those for male parts of the body. (See Table I.)

A majority of mothers reported having discussed where babies come from and menstruation with their daughters. However, less than half of the mothers had discussed any of the other subjects listed. One mother had not discussed any of these subjects with her children (Table II).

Mothers were asked to agree or disagree with seven statements about sex education. A majority of respondents agreed with each statement (Table III).

The chi-square test was utilized to test for relationships between the variables. The data were organized into the four age categories. Complex chi-square was used to test the hypothesis of no relationship between the age and race of the respondents. A highly significant relationship ($\chi^2_3 = 49.06, p < .001$) was found to exist between age and race. However, the number of Negro respondents was small as compared to the white respondents. The number of Negro

TABLE I
 NAMES FOR BODY PARTS AND PROCESSES MOTHERS
 TAUGHT THEIR CHILDREN

Words	Number	Per cent
Female body parts:		
Breast	68	90.7
Nipple	53	70.7
Vagina	54	72.0
Vulva	16	21.3
Male body parts:		
Penis	43	57.3
Scrotum	15	20.0
Testicles	30	40.0
Body processes:		
Bowel movement	69	92.0
Fecal material	11	14.7
Urinate	58	77.3

TABLE II
KINDS OF INFORMATION RELATED TO SEX EDUCATION MOTHERS GIVE THEIR CHILDREN

Information	Number	Present Study	Landis Study
		Per cent	Per cent
Where babies come from	68	90.7	74.0
Menstruation	72	96.0	90.0
Venereal disease	34	45.3	33.3
Difficulty of controlling sexual emotions	30	40.0	38.0
Coitus (sexual intercourse)	37	49.3	37.0
Masturbation	14	18.7	17.0
Sex perversions	18	24.0	19.0
Pleasure of sexual relations	17	22.7	23.0
Nocturnal emissions	1	1.3	15.0
Contraceptives	27	36.0	21.0
Orgasm	3	4.0	10.0
No information given	1	1.3	6.0

TABLE III

OPINIONS OF MOTHERS CONCERNING THE PROGRAM OF SEX EDUCATION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Statement	Opinion			
	Agree		Disagree	
	Num- ber	Per cent	Num- ber	Per cent
Questions should be answered when they are asked regardless of whether or not the child seems too young to be asking.	65	91.5	6	8.5
Exactly what is asked should be answered casually and as accurately as possible.	71	100.0	0	0.0
Whichever parent is asked should answer.	68	97.1	2	2.9
Most important of all is the attitude with which the questions are answered.	69	98.6	1	1.4
If questions about sex facts are answered wisely when children are small, parents will find it easier to help them to understand the emotional aspects of sex later.	70	98.6	1	1.4
Ignorance is more likely to create curiosity which may lead to experimentation.	64	92.8	5	7.2
A good sex education program reinforces the moral training each youngster has received outside of school.	57	87.7	8	12.3

respondents decreased with age, whereas the smallest number of white respondents was found in the youngest and oldest age groups with about the same proportion of respondents in the middle age groups.

<u>Age in Years</u>	<u>Race</u>			
	<u>White</u>		<u>Negro</u>	
	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
20 to 30 years	1	1.4	3	50.0
30 to 40 years	34	49.3	2	33.3
40 to 50 years	29	42.0	1	16.7
Above 50 years	5	7.2	0	0.0

In testing for relationships between the age groups and the amount of education attained, no significant relationships were found ($\chi^2_g = 9.03, p > .05$). About the same proportion of respondents for each age group with the exception of the young group were found to have attended high school and college.

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Educational Level</u>							
	<u>1-9</u>		<u>10-12</u>		<u>College</u>		<u>Graduate</u>	
	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
20-30	2	50.0	2	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
30-40	4	11.1	13	36.1	14	38.9	5	13.9
40-50	0	0.0	11	36.7	16	53.3	3	10.0
Above 30	0	0.0	1	20.0	3	60.0	1	20.0

The relationship of age to satisfaction with knowledge of sex information at marriage was tested with no significant relationships found ($\chi^2_3 = 1.14$, $p > .05$). The same proportions of respondents reporting satisfaction or dissatisfaction were found to exist in each age group.

<u>Age in Years</u>	<u>Response</u>			
	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>	
	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
20 to 30 years	3	75.0	1	25.0
30 to 40 years	18	51.4	17	48.6
40 to 50 years	14	48.3	15	51.7
Above 50 years	3	60.0	2	40.0

In testing for a relationship between age and whether or not the respondent believed sex education should be taught in school, no significant relationship was found ($\chi^2_3 = 1.85$, $p > .05$). About the same proportion of respondents in each age group checked "Yes" as checked "No."

<u>Age in Years</u>	<u>Response</u>			
	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>	
	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
20 to 30 years	4	100.0	0	0.0
30 to 40 years	31	91.8	3	8.8
40 to 50 years	25	83.3	5	16.7
Above 50 years	4	80.0	1	20.0

The data revealed that there were no significant relationships between age and whether or not the parent had had sex education in school ($\chi^2_3 = 4.29$, $p > .05$). However, a greater proportion of mothers in the two older age groups had not had sex education in school.

<u>Age in Years</u>	<u>Response</u>			
	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>	
	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
20 to 30 years	2	50.0	2	50.0
30 to 40 years	17	50.0	17	50.0
40 to 50 years	8	27.6	21	72.4
Above 50 years	1	20.0	4	80.0

No significant relationship ($\chi^2_3 = 1.34$, $p > .05$) was found to exist between the mother's age and her ability to discuss sex with her child. About the same proportion of respondents in each age group answered "Yes" as answered "No."

<u>Age in Years</u>	<u>Response</u>			
	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>	
	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
20 to 30 years	4	100.0	0	0.0
30 to 40 years	31	86.1	5	13.9
40 to 50 years	24	80.0	6	20.0
Above 50 years	4	80.0	1	20.0

The number of vocabulary responses was analyzed according to age groups. The average number of vocabulary words checked by the respondents in the first three age groups were very nearly the same. Mothers over age 50 checked fewer vocabulary words used with their children.

<u>Vocabulary Words Taught</u>	<u>Age in Years</u>			
	<u>20-30</u>	<u>30-40</u>	<u>40-50</u>	<u>Above 50</u>
Number of respondents	4	36	30	5
Number of responses	20	203	170	9
Average number of responses	5.0	5.6	5.7	1.8

Respondents in the different age groups checked an average of four to seven subjects they had discussed with their children.

<u>Subjects Discussed</u>	<u>Age in Years</u>			
	<u>20-30</u>	<u>30-40</u>	<u>40-50</u>	<u>Above 50</u>
Number of respondents	4	36	30	5
Number of responses	27	168	118	20
Average number of responses	6.8	4.7	3.9	4.0

Besides the relationship of age, the relationship of education to the different aspects of the study was

investigated using the chi-square test. No significant relationship ($\chi^2_3 = 7.48$, $p > .05$) was found between race and education although only 16.7 per cent of the Negro respondents had attained more than a high school education, whereas 59.4 per cent of the white respondents had attained more than a high school education. However, there was a small proportion of Negro respondents to white respondents.

The relationship between education of the respondent and her satisfaction or dissatisfaction with her knowledge of sex information at the time of marriage was not found to be significant ($\chi^2_3 = 4.06$, $p > .05$). About the same proportions of mothers checked "Yes" as "No" in each educational group with the exception of those holding graduate degrees. Only 25 per cent of the respondents in this group were satisfied with their sex information at marriage.

<u>Educational Level</u>	<u>Response</u>			
	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>	
	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
1 - 9	3	50.0	3	50.0
10 - 12	17	63.0	10	37.0
College	15	46.9	17	53.1
Graduate	2	25.0	6	75.0

In testing for relationship between educational levels and belief in teaching sex education in school no significant

relationship was found ($\chi^2_3 = 2.05, p > .05$). Respondents from the lowest and highest educational groups were 100 per cent in favor of sex education in school as was a majority of respondents from the other two groups.

<u>Educational Level</u>	<u>Response</u>			
	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>	
	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
1 - 9	4	100.0	0	0.0
10 - 12	21	80.8	5	19.2
College	30	90.9	3	9.9
Graduate	9	100.0	0	0.0

Findings indicated that there is no significant relationship ($\chi^2_3 = 2.12, p > .05$) between the respondent's educational level and whether or not she had sex instruction when she was in school. In the first three educational groups a greater percentage of respondents had not had any sex instruction in school. However, 62.5 per cent of the respondents with graduate degrees reported that they had received sex instruction in school.

<u>Educational Level</u>	<u>Response</u>			
	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>	
	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
1 - 9	2	33.3	4	66.6
10 - 12	9	34.6	17	65.4
College	13	41.9	18	58.1
Graduate	5	62.5	3	37.5

No significant relationship ($\chi^2_3 = .72, p > .05$) was found to exist between educational attainment and mothers' ability to discuss sex with their children, although a greater percentage of mothers in the graduate degree group responded "Yes."

<u>Educational Level</u>	<u>Response</u>			
	<u>Yes</u>		<u>No</u>	
	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Num- ber</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
1 - 9	5	83.3	1	16.7
10 - 12	21	80.8	5	19.2
College	25	78.1	7	21.9
Graduate	9	90.0	1	10.0

In analyzing the vocabulary responses by educational levels, it was found that respondents at each level reported similar average numbers of responses.

<u>Vocabulary Words Taught</u>	<u>Educational Level</u>			
	<u>1-9</u>	<u>10-12</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>Graduate</u>
Number of re- spondents	6	27	33	9
Number of re- sponses	39	159	162	62
Average number of responses	6.5	5.9	4.9	6.9

The average number of responses to the sex education subjects respondents had discussed with their children were very similar for the four educational groups.

<u>Subjects Discussed</u>	<u>Educational Level</u>			
	<u>1-9</u>	<u>10-12</u>	<u>College</u>	<u>Graduate</u>
Number of re- spondents	6	27	33	9
Number of re- sponses	38	122	111	54
Average number of responses	6.3	4.5	3.4	6.0

CHAPTER IV

S U M M A R Y , C O N C L U S I O N S , A N D R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S

The purposes of the study were: 1) to determine whether mothers of junior high school students desire help in teaching their children about sex; 2) to determine what kinds of sex information mothers are providing their children; and 3) to discover what kinds of sex information mothers are neglecting to give their children. The 75 participants were mothers of girls enrolled in eighth grade Home-making classes at Congress Junior High School, Denton, Texas, during the spring semester of 1970.

The "Survey Form for Mothers" was used to obtain data. It was adapted for use in this study from the "Family Survey of Lincoln Parish" and included 14 questions from that study. The remaining four questions were developed by the investigator of the present study.

Sixty-nine white and eight Negro mothers participated in the study. Eighty-eight per cent of all mothers were between the ages of 30 and 50 years. All but four mothers were of protestant preference with 11 different denominations represented. A majority of mothers were Baptist. Eighty

per cent of the participants had attended high school or high school and college. Eighty-eight per cent were married, and all but two mothers had had one husband. Those two mothers had had two husbands. Almost half of the mothers, 48.2 per cent, had lived on a farm before 18 years of age.

All of the respondents reported knowing that babies came as a result from having sexual intercourse when they were first married; however, half of the mothers revealed they would have liked to have known more. All of the participants wanted their children to have this information by the time they were married.

Thirty-one of the respondents listed their mothers as their first source of sex information, and 16 respondents listed girl friends as their first source. The participants believed that this responsibility of first information belonged to both parents, schools, and mothers in that order according to their responses.

The majority of the mothers believed in continuous sex education from the time children start asking questions, although 38.7 per cent of the mothers checked puberty as the proper time for sex instruction. Eighty-four per cent of mothers favored teaching sex education in school. Fifty per cent of the mothers who opposed sex education in school revealed it might be all right if it were taught to boys and girls separately.

Of the 75 participants 30 had received instruction in sex education in school. Twenty-six of these mothers reported that this instruction was given between grades 7 and 12.

A large majority of mothers wanted their children to be informed on methods of family planning and listed both parents, medical personnel, and schools, in that order as the proper agents for informing their children. Again participants preferred that children continuously be taught about these matters from the time they begin asking questions or by puberty. The majority of mothers opposing informing children about birth control said that they should not be informed until the time of marriage or engagement.

Sixty-two mothers reported being able to discuss sex with their child frankly and honestly without embarrassment. Eight of the 13 who revealed that they were unable to discuss sex with their child indicated that they were brought up to feel that talking about sex was improper.

Findings showed that a majority of the participants used the proper vocabulary for body processes and female parts, but a smaller percentage of mothers used the proper terminology for parts of the male body. However, the average number of vocabulary responses by participants who indicated they had been brought up to feel that talking about sex was

improper was less than half of the average number of vocabulary responses by mothers who reported being able to discuss sex with their children.

Ninety-six per cent of mothers had discussed menstruation and 90.7 per cent had discussed where babies come from with their daughters. However, fewer than half of the mothers had discussed any of the nine other possible subjects indicated in the questionnaire. A majority of mothers agreed with all of the statements in the last question taken from writings of educators favoring programs of sex education in the schools. In comparing the responses, no significant differences were found to exist between the various age level groups or between the various educational level groups represented in this study.

Data from the present investigation revealed that mothers desire help in teaching their children about sex. Mothers in this study provided their children with terminology for body processes and female parts and with information about menstruation and where babies come from. Data revealed that mothers participating in this study were neglecting to give their daughters the proper vocabulary for parts of the male body as well as information on the nine other possible sex-related subjects beyond menstruation and where babies come from.

Due to the fact that the majority of the participants expressed a belief in continuous sex education from the time children start asking questions, the author recommends that a program of sex education be implemented in the public schools beginning in kindergarten and the first grade. Special emphasis should be placed on anatomy and physiology and the building of a vocabulary for intelligent, unembarrassed discussion. Included in the program should be a complete study of changes that take place in the physical maturation of both sexes. The emotional aspects of sex, including the differences in the sexes, should be explored to promote understanding between the sexes and a healthy attitude of the student's own sexuality, especially at the junior high school level.

Findings of the study indicate that mothers believe that parents share the responsibility of sex education with the schools. As a result, parent involvement in the program should be encouraged by the school administration. Programs of sex instruction should be adequately explained to parents through parent-teacher groups. Suggestions from parents for course content and special needs would be helpful to teachers, and teachers could be of help to parents in discussing parent-child relationships.

As parents sometimes report the inability to communicate with their children, especially about matters of sex, parent-student interaction should be a goal of a sex education program. Community leaders should be utilized as resource people for the course. A panel discussion of parents might give students a new insight to their problems, to their parents as sources of help, and help to eliminate barriers of communication where ever they may exist.

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