

PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION
FOR PARENTHOOD

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Bachelor of Science in Home Economics

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

1975

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College
of the Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
July, 1977



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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my adviser, Dr. Althea Wright, for her interest, guidance, and assistance throughout this study. A special thanks to other members of my committee: Dr. Frances Stromberg, Dr. Judith Powell, and Dr. Nick Stinnett for their advice and critical reading of the manuscript and for their help and inspiration throughout my graduate studies. I am extremely grateful to Dr. Larry Claypool for his assistance with the analysis of the data. I also wish to thank Iris McPherson for her consultation on the Statistical Analysis System. Appreciation is expressed to the administrators and parents for their cooperation in obtaining the data.

Finally, my greatest appreciation is to my family and friends whose constant support, encouragement, and interest were instrumental in the preparation of this thesis.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Problem

Russell (1974) discussed the proposition that the family is an integrated social system and that adding or removing members will force a major reorganization of that system. Reuben Hill (1949) defined crisis in Families Under Stress as "any sharp or decisive change for which old patterns are inadequate" (p. 51). In his discussion of Simmel's role theory, Mills (1958) suggested that with the shift from the dyad to the triad there is a disruption of affection and intimacy between parents. The birth of the first child into a family would cause this shift to occur and call for a reorganization of living patterns. Therefore, the arrival of the first child could be a crisis or critical event (LeMasters, 1957). Also according to LeMasters:

. . . the total impact of the crisis will depend upon a number of variables; (1) the nature of the crisis event; (2) the state of the organization or disorganization of the family at the point of impact; (3) the resources of the family; and (4) its previous experience with crisis (p. 352).

If one accepts parenthood as a crisis, it becomes clear that persons need an adequate base of resources to deal successfully with the situation. The responsibilities of parenthood are many and varied, yet our society has made little effort to prepare persons for

this vital role. Bell (1975) stated:

Every child has a right to grow up in a happy, loving atmosphere with parents trained in the knowledge and skills necessary to understand and meet his or her social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs. Children brought up in such surroundings will be assured of the opportunity to fulfill their own unique potentials and to participate fully in tomorrow's world (p. 276).

In past years, the family has been the foundation of education for parenthood. Today, fewer families are capable of providing adolescent members with parent education which comes from observing their parents' family roles and caring for younger brothers and sisters (Kruger, 1973). Due to increasing fragmentation of the family, the use of community resources to meet the challenge of preparing for parenting is even more important.

As cited by Kruger (1973), in 1968, approximately one of every ten 17-year-old girls in the United States was a mother. For over 14 percent of the estimated 210,000 school-age girls under the age of 18 who gave birth in 1971, the baby born that year was not their first. Statistics for recent years suggest that six out of ten of these mothers were married by the time their child was born, and that married or not the majority of all school-aged mothers kept their child. School-age parenthood then, involves the formation of young families under "high-risk" conditions that often result from or include inadequate understanding of and preparation for parenthood responsibilities. Consequently, many children are losing out on what ought to be an undeniable right--the right to have parents who know how to be good parents, parents skilled in the art of "parenting" (Bell, 1975). For this reason, a plan for the expansion of programs

for educating young people to assume their future role as parents needs to be developed. If a system for educating future parents is to be developed, the opinions of those participating in the program need to be considered. This idea was expressed by Cohen (1973):

To provide education for young men and women that will make a difference in the way they lead their lives, we must respect what is really on their minds now, and not intrude what others--with the perspective of the adult generation--believe they ought to be thinking and planning (p. 28).

Purpose of the Study

The general purposes of this study were the following:

1. To assess perceptions of parents concerning education for parenthood.
2. To identify the order of importance of selected topics related to education for parenthood as reported by parents.

The specific purposes of this study were:

1. To develop an instrument for assessing perceptions of parents concerning education for parenthood.
2. To determine the relationship between the respondents involvement in parent education classes and the following:
 - (a) Age of respondent
 - (b) Sex of respondent
 - (c) Educational level of respondent
 - (d) Religious commitment of respondent
 - (e) Marital status of respondent
 - (f) Length of marriage
 - (g) Number of children

- (h) Age of respondent at birth of first child
 - (i) Whether or not the pregnancy was planned
 - (j) Degree of crisis reported by the respondent
3. To ascertain the areas which parents feel are potential problems in the parent-child relationship.
 4. To determine the relationship between the degree of crisis reported by respondents and the following:
 - (a) Sex of respondent
 - (b) Educational level of respondent
 - (c) Religious preference of respondent
 - (d) Age of respondent at birth of first child
 - (e) Marital status of respondent at birth of first child
 - (f) Number of years married at birth of first child
 - (g) Whether or not the pregnancy was planned

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were examined:

1. There is no significant difference between parents who have experienced education for parenthood and those who have not concerning the following:
 - (a) Age of respondent
 - (b) Sex of respondent
 - (c) Educational level of respondent
 - (d) Religious commitment of respondent
 - (e) Marital status of respondent
 - (f) Length of marriage
 - (g) Number of children

- (h) Age of respondent at birth of first child
 - (i) Whether or not the pregnancy was planned
 - (j) Degree of crisis reported by the respondent
2. There is no significant difference in degree of crisis felt at the birth of the first child according to the following:
- (a) Sex of respondent
 - (b) Educational level of respondent
 - (c) Religious preference of respondent
 - (d) Age of respondent at birth of first child
 - (e) Marital status of respondent at birth of first child
 - (f) Number of years married at birth of first child
 - (g) Whether or not the pregnancy was planned

Definitions

Several terms have specific meaning as applied to this study. In order to avoid misinterpretation, the following definitions are given:

1. Crisis--"any sharp or decisive change for which old patterns are inadequate. . . . A crisis is a situation in which the usual behavior patterns are found to be unrewarding and new ones are called for immediately" (Hill, 1949, p. 51).
2. Parenting--providing the child with affection, a sense of belongingness, a satisfactory discipline, an opportunity to evolve a personal identity tied to family

identity which supplies inner strengths for meeting new situations, a working set of good physical and psychological habits and attitudes. They set the atmosphere for his (or her) moral and ethical standards, his physical well being, his aesthetic appreciations, his concept of family living and his philosophy of life in general (Breckenridge and Vincent, 1960, p. 194).

3. Prepared parenthood--parents trained in the knowledge and skills necessary to understand and meet their child's social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs (Bell, 1975).
4. Parent education--"an activity using educational techniques in order to effect change in parent role performance" (Brim, 1959, p. 20). "Seeks also to realize the opportunities for the encouragement, extension and structuring of the natural exchange of parental knowledge and experience . . ." (Hall, 1974, p. 388).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several researchers (LeMasters, 1957; Dyer, 1963; Hobbs, 1965, 1968; Russell, 1974) have determined that parenthood is a definite crisis to many people. This situation and potential solutions to the problem will be discussed in this chapter. The "right" of children to have parents who have been prepared for their parental role will also be supported. Possible topics which would be valuable if included in a parent education curriculum will be presented. Various methods currently implemented in parent education programs will also be examined.

Parenthood as a Crisis

The research concerning early parenthood as a crisis has been contradictory in nature. LeMasters (1957) found, in his study of 46 couples experiencing their first pregnancy, that 83 percent or 38 of the couples perceived the birth of their first child as an "extensive" or "severe" crisis. Further, he found little support for the idea that a good marriage eases the adjustment to parenthood, nor was mental disorder found to be a determining factor in the crisis. Thirty-five of the 38 pregnancies were "planned" or "desired"; therefore,

the crisis reaction did not seem to be related to the parents' not wanting children.

The data from Dyer's (1963) study using a similar sample yielded results which resembled those of LeMasters (1957). Fifty-three percent of the 32 couples experienced "extensive" or "severe" crisis with the birth of their first child; while 38 percent have reported "moderate" crisis. Negative relationships were found between the degree of crisis and (1) marital adjustment, (2) number of years married, and (3) having planned for parenthood.

Hobbs' (1965, 1968) results differed from those of LeMasters (1957) and Dyer (1963) as to the severity of the crisis involved in parenthood. Two possible reasons for these variations could have been differences in the samples and methods used to obtain data in the studies. The findings of Hobbs' (1965) study confirmed that initial parenthood is a crisis; however, the degree of crisis was found to be less than earlier studies had shown. None of the couples in Hobbs' study reported "extensive" or "severe" crisis. Eighty-seven percent of the couples experienced "slight" crisis, while 14 percent reported a "moderate" degree of crisis. The corresponding results of Hobbs' (1968) replication were quite similar; 85 percent of the couples reported "slight" crisis, 15 percent showed "moderate" and none were in the "extensive" or "severe" categories.

Simultaneously, yet independent of the 1968 replication of Hobbs, Beauchamp (Jacoby, 1969) also collected data on parenthood as a crisis. Both interview and questionnaire techniques were used by Beauchamp. Although the findings of this study differed greatly

from those of LeMasters, Dyer, and Hobbs; the two techniques yielded roughly similar results. Of the 18 couples interviewed by Beauchamp, approximately 62 percent categorized parenthood as "slight" or "moderate" crisis and 22 percent reported "extensive" or "severe" crisis. The results of the questionnaire technique showed that 68 percent saw parenthood as a "slight" or "moderate" crisis and 21 percent reported "extensive" or "severe" crisis (Jacoby, 1969).

Russell (1974) in a sample of 271 couples using a questionnaire method, found that the crisis reactions of the husband and wife differed slightly. The ratings went as follows:

"Slight"	M- 75.1	F- 57.5
"Moderate"	M- 16.8	F- 39.1
"Extensive"	M- 1.1	F- 3.1
"Severe"	M- 3.7	F- 0

(p. 296).

Further, Russell evaluated the respondents as to the amount of gratification they received from their parental status. The major conclusion drawn in this area was "that babies may be more fulfilling to 'persons' than to 'partners,' but few respondents saw their marriage as deteriorating since becoming parents" (Russell, 1974, p. 301).

Russell also found that the research technique used to obtain data often influenced the results of studies about parenthood as a crisis. Higher crisis scores were consistently associated with the interview method. The age of the babies was also a factor in that lower scores were reported by studies including babies under one year of age, rather than a broader range of babies' ages. Exclusively middle-class samples produced higher crisis scores than more representative samples,

which suggests that social class is positively related to stress during the transition into parenthood.

In an analysis of the transition to parenthood, Rossi (1968) and Jacoby (1969) suggest the following reasons for expecting the transition to be particularly difficult:

- (1) The need of the newborn child for the mother is absolute. The mother must shoulder this entire burden almost immediately after birth.
- (2) Neither formal nor informal preparation for parenthood is available to most young couples today.
- (3) The cultural pressure to become parents is great enough that a couple may plan to bear children in spite of a latent desire to the contrary.
- (4) Conception often occurs in spite of efforts to prevent it.
- (5) Most role transitions are reversible. Parenthood usually is not.
- (6) Definite and unquestioned guidelines as to how the parental role should be enacted are not available.

Meyerowitz and Feldman (1966) proposed that the "crisis" of the first child should be a meaningful transition point in the maturation of the marital relationship--a shift from the dyadic state to a more mature and rewarding triadic system. Jacoby (1969) later points out that the crisis orients one to negative outcomes and blinds one to the possible gratifications of becoming a parent.

The Right of Children to Prepared Parents

Whether the transition to parenthood is seen as a "crisis" or not, it is definitely a time of adjustment for the people involved. In recent years concern had grown for success in this adjustment.

Nelson (1973) mentions that in the 1960's the focus of concern was on the unmarried adolescent mother. As more information on needs is gathered, the concern widens to include married as well as unmarried adolescents and their infants. Eventually, interest expands to take in the young father, the extended family, and the whole complex network of relationships involved in adolescent parenting.

Parenting involves many activities and skills supported by knowledge about which young people know very little. Marland (1973) discussed the serious physical and mental abuses of children whose misfortune it is to be born of parents who lack even a rudimentary understanding of the emotional, nutritional, and early learning needs of the young. DeLissovoy's (1973) study of adolescent parenting reported this lack of knowledge among young parents in semi-rural Pennsylvania. DeLissovoy found this group of 48 couples to be, with a few notable exceptions, an intolerant group--impatient, insensitive, irritable and prone to use physical punishment with their children. Further, DeLissovoy suggested that parents' conceptions of child development often govern their reactions to their children. A questionnaire was given to the 48 couples to determine the developmental expectations they held for their children; the results made it evident that the young parents were not familiar with developmental norms. Sixty-seven percent of the mothers recognized that some babies cry more than others, or that there would be a great deal of crying; while only 39 percent of the fathers chose these answers on the questionnaire. According to DeLissovoy (1973), this low tolerance, combined with unrealistic expectations of development, contributed

to their impatience with their children--and to their sometimes cruel treatment of them. Physical punishment was found to be the major form of discipline used by these young parents, 80 percent of the mothers mentioned physical punishment as a means of control. As a result of this research, DeLissovoy (1973) wrote: "It is my conclusion that the children of many adolescent marriages have a high risk of joining the number of battered and abused babies . . ." (p. 25). These parents are by no means typical; however, there is evidence that too many people are approaching parenthood with a dangerous lack of competency in parenting.

As Cohen (1973) pointed out, most people do become parents. Therefore, a high school course about parenthood may prove its value. As a result of the course, young parents may become more sensitive to the central importance of parents in a child's life, to individual differences among children, and to the broad range of nutritional, medical, and psychological conditions that must be satisfied for a child to develop to his or her full potential. These "prepared parents" will know that there are places to turn for personal help, that there are clinics and other local resources for prenatal and infant care, and that there are agencies, such as the Office of Child Development that offer informational publications. They will also have learned to look for such guidance early during pregnancy, or even before.

Although much attention has been given to providing students with the basic competencies they will need as adults, the parental role has often been either neglected or given extremely low priority in the school curriculum. Parenthood education after high school is

characteristically "too little--too late," a hasty retreat to child care paperbacks when the birth of the first child is imminent (Kruger, 1973).

The Report to the President for the 1970 White House Conference on Children included a list of six categories of children's rights (1971):

- (1) The right to grow in a society which respects the dignity of life and is free of poverty, discrimination, and other forms of degradation.
- (2) The right to be born and be healthy and wanted through childhood.
- (3) The right to grow up nurtured by affectionate parents.
- (4) The right to be a child during childhood, to have meaningful choices in the process of maturation and development, and to have meaningful voices in the community.
- (5) The right to be educated to the limits of one's capability and through processes designed to elicit one's full potential.
- (6) The right to have societal mechanisms to enforce the foregoing rights (p. 350).

Parents trained in the competencies necessary to understand and meet the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of their children, will also be better able to protect these specific rights of children.

Topics for Parent Education

In order to determine what areas should be included in a program for parent education, one must consider the goals and objectives of such a program. Ideally, parent education works toward the optimum development of children, physically, intellectually and emotionally,

from conception to adulthood. Since children are to be the parents of the future, the long-term objective is the improvement in the quality of family living. Parent education should be a positive influence which would enable parents to prevent problems and maladaptions from occurring and allow them to enjoy their children's growing up. The overall goal is to improve parental competence (Hall, 1974).

In response to the general question, "What do young people need to know to enable them to become effective parents?" Kruger (1973) cites the following 14 topics which the Office of Education and the Office of Child Development have found to be important in their analysis of exemplary programs. They are:

- (1) Biological factors of human reproduction and the influences of heredity and environment.
- (2) Pregnancy and childbirth and prenatal and post-natal care for mothers, including the influences of maternal nutrition.
- (3) Prenatal development of the child.
- (4) Infant care, emphasizing nutrition, health, protection, and safety of children.
- (5) Child growth and development (physical; perceptual and cognitive; and personal and social development).
- (6) Individual differences in children.
- (7) The handicapped child, including such topics as prevention of handicaps and working with handicapped children.
- (8) Creative activities for children, including study of play, developmental toys, art, music and dance.
- (9) Family structure and functions, including the influence of family environment on child behavior.
- (10) Parental roles and responsibilities.
- (11) Family planning and population growth.

- (12) Community resources to aid in parenting.
- (13) Child care arrangements.
- (14) Skills required for effective work with children, including learning by observation and counseling and tutoring the young child (pp. 6-7).

Delano (1975) conducted a research project to determine which of the parent education topics above were preferred by a group of students and teachers in Oklahoma. The results of the study showed that there was not a significant difference between the views of girls and boys, students and teachers, younger students and older students, single persons and married persons, or for small class size and large class size. The list of topics was shortened to contain eight items. The following list shows the ranking of the topics by the total group (332 students and 13 teachers):

- (1) Pregnancy, childbirth, prenatal, and postnatal care for mothers, including the influences of maternal nutrition.
- (2) Roles and responsibilities of parents.
- (3) Child growth and development (physical, intellectual, social, emotional, including development of a positive self-image).
- (4) Infant care, emphasizing nutrition, health, protection, and safety of children.
- (5) Prenatal development of the child.
- (6) Biological factors of human reproduction and the influence of heredity and environment.
- (7) Family planning and population growth.
- (8) Family structure and functions, including the influence of family environment on child behavior.

Methods of Parent Education

As one considers parent education, the inevitable question of who should be responsible for it evolves. The home-centered life that allowed children years to observe the parental art practiced by their parents, who in turn had learned from their own parents, is a rarity today (Bell, 1975). Many contemporary factors have altered the traditional structure of family life and weakened especially the educational function of the home. Young people can no longer expect to learn all they need to know about parenting from their father and/or mother. Consequently, the schools and other community organizations must react to this need and help prepare these young people for life in many of its personal, social, and professional aspects, including parenthood (Marland, 1973).

In consideration of parent education for adolescents, Cohen (1973) warned that the last role most adolescents wish to assume is that of parent. He also pointed out that this role is one for which these adolescents are least developmentally suited. Further, he suggested that adolescents who are not parents do not need a program that prepares them solely for a role they may not choose. They need educational opportunities that help them with the feelings, concerns and impulses that dominate their lives at the moment.

Several authors (Cohen, 1973; Durbin, 1973; Stapleton, 1973; Clayton and Dow, 1973) propose that the preschool environment, in which developmental, family and community issues are the primary focus, is an ideal setting for adolescents. A program entitled "Exploring Childhood" has been implemented in Boston, as well as many

other cities, which involves high school students in a preschool laboratory. The students are given basic instructions to increase their competencies in dealing with young children. They are then placed in the "teaching" role within the preschool. During this time aspects of child development are topics of class discussion. During the second half of the year, the adolescents begin to study socialization. First they explore the child's immediate world of family and friends; later they include society as a whole.

Another such program was instituted at Gaithersburg High School in Montgomery County, Maryland. Perhaps the best testimonial to the success of this program would be statements by the students themselves.

Dave said:

If I become a father. I'll have a better idea of how to raise kids properly. That's one of the things wrong in our society--the parents are usually at the heart of the problem. I think everybody should take a course like this--there's a lack of discipline with kids today (Durbin, 1973, p. 22).

A Gaithersburg High School football player agrees:

Children accept each other for what they are. They're open to everyone in the group. It's the most satisfactory course I've ever taken. Sometimes the kids have given me a father role in the class. That's a big responsibility to live up to! (Stapleton, 1973, p. 2).

Hall (1974) pointed out that parent education is not merely formal education for adolescent members of society, but seeks also to realize the opportunities for the encouragement, extension, and structuring of the natural exchange of parental knowledge and experience in everyday living. The goal is to improve parental competency in all areas.

One study by Goodman (1975) implemented modeling as a method of parent education. The mothers included in the study were low-income, white, and lived in rural areas. The models introduced were college students who made in-home visits for ten weeks and demonstrated three types of behavior with preschool children: information processing, positive reinforcement, and positive control. Results of the study indicated that modeling can rapidly improve the mother's performance of information processing acts.

Another program has been developed in Lake Charles, Louisiana. In this system, particular attention has been given to the idea that methods need to be suited to the particular people involved in the programs. Gilliam (1975) pointed out that a single approach is not suitable for all groups of parents. For this reason, the Lake Charles program included three different methods. The first method was the "Parent Effectiveness Training" (PET) system developed by Thomas Gordon. Due to the high cost and the reading requirements, the people who chose this method were well educated, middle, and upper class persons. The second method was called "practical parenting" developed by Kenneth Marlin. This method is a general introduction to the basic needs and responsibilities of parents and children. The time requirement and cost are much less, which made this method popular among blue collar workers. The third method was one which required no reading in order to meet the needs of the nonliterate population. Time requirements and content are equal to the "practical parenting" method.

Present social structure makes it possible for parent education to become essentially "mother education." Because the mother often

bears the majority of the childrearing responsibilities, she is also most likely to be more involved in parent education programs while the father receives much of his information secondhand from his wife. The wife, having gained some knowledge, becomes uncomfortable in the home situation and attempts to direct the husband. Many husbands resent these "efforts to help" and marital problems may increase. Therefore, parent education must overcome the father's possible defensiveness by involving him in parent education also (Luterman, 1973).

Statistics show that the majority of adolescent males are not enrolling in family life education classes. In the entire country in 1970-71, only 37,987 young men were enrolled in family relations courses and only 5,503 in child development classes. Less than 3,000 were enrolled in courses covering child care and guidance (Kruger, 1973).

Strogner (1973) described a research project which evaluated the effects of introducing young men of high school age to preschool day care. It was found that both the children and the high school boys benefitted. Research data indicated that most of the male teachers became more masculine, more internally controlled, and more independent as a result of the teaching experience. The children who had male teachers moved slightly to the appropriate sexual preferences.

Summary

Researchers have found that the transition to parenthood is a crisis to many people. However, there has been some question as to the severity of the crisis. The degree of crisis a parent experiences

is dependent upon the individual and his or her ability to adjust to the situation. The future of the child is determined by the success the parents have in dealing with the crisis. It is the right of a child to have parents who are prepared for their parental role. This need for preparation in competencies required for parenting is not currently being met by society. Therefore, a widespread system of parent education needs to be developed. If this program is to be effective, more research is necessary to determine which topics need to be included and what methods could be implemented in such systems.

CHAPTER III

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

Selection of Subjects

The subjects in this study were parents between the ages of 26 and 55 years, of children attending D. D. Kirkland Elementary School in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The data were collected during the spring semester, 1977. A visit was made to an evening program in the school gym to explain the research project and request the participation of those who wished to be respondents in the study. A cover letter, which explained the project and method of participation, accompanied each questionnaire. The respondents were asked to return the questionnaire within 14 days through the mail in the self-addressed, stamped envelope which was provided.

Development of the Instrument

A questionnaire, Parents' Perceptions of Education for Parenthood, developed by the investigator, consists of items designed to obtain information concerning: (1) background characteristics of the respondents; (2) favorableness of perceptions of the subjects concerning education for parenthood; (3) perceptions concerning topics needed in a parent education program. The items used to measure the various

perceptions of the respondents toward education for parenthood were based upon the review of literature.

An evaluation of the respondents' involvement in parent education programs was obtained from the answers given to items 19 through 22 of the questionnaire. The respondents were also asked to respond to a list of selected topics as they perceive their importance in education for parenthood.

The questionnaire, Parents' Perceptions of Education for Parenthood, was evaluated by five professionals in Family Relations and Child Development. The following criteria was used in the evaluation:

- (1) Is the item clear?
- (2) Is the item relevant to the concept under investigation?
- (3) Is the item specific enough?
- (4) Are additional items needed to obtain the desired information?

Changes suggested by two or more members of the panel were made. Modifications were made in the format of the questionnaire, but no major changes were made in the content.

In a further effort to maximize the validity of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted with a sample of parents from the University Children's Center on the Oklahoma State University campus. The subjects were 16 men and 16 women whose children were of preschool (3-5) age.

Analysis of Data

Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze various background characteristics of the respondents, to determine the respondents'

perceptions concerning parenthood as a crisis, parent education, problem areas in the parent-child relationship, and the most important topics to be included in a parent education program.

Chi-square tests were used to examine the following hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference between parents who have experienced education for parenthood and those who have not concerning the following:
 - (a) Age of respondent
 - (b) Sex of respondent
 - (c) Educational level of respondent
 - (d) Religious commitment of respondent
 - (e) Marital status of respondent
 - (f) Length of marriage
 - (g) Number of children
 - (h) Age of respondent at birth of first child
 - (i) Whether or not the pregnancy was planned
 - (j) Degree of crisis reported by the respondent
2. There is no significant difference in degree of crisis felt at the birth of the first child according to the following:
 - (a) Sex of respondent
 - (b) Educational level of respondent
 - (c) Religious preference of respondent
 - (d) Age of respondent at birth of first child
 - (e) Marital status of respondent at birth of first child
 - (f) Number of years married at birth of first child
 - (g) Whether or not the pregnancy was planned

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Description of Subjects

A detailed description of the 111 subjects who participated in this study is presented in Table I. Over 38% of the respondents were within a 36-40 year age range and 63% were female.

All of the respondents had graduated from high school, with 38% graduating from a four year college. Almost one fourth (23%) of the respondents completed graduate work for a profession.

Over 77% of the subjects indicated Protestant religious preference. A majority (73%) of the respondents considered themselves to be religious.

Ninety-six percent of the respondents were married with only 2.7% of the respondents being divorced and less than 1% being single. More than 78% of the subjects had been married for more than 12 years, 31% for 12-15 years, and 29% for 15-20 years, 12% for 20-25 years, and 7% for more than 25 years.

All of the respondents in the sample were parents with 50% of the subjects having two children and 33% having three children. The largest percentage (41%) of the respondents were between 22 and 25 years of age when their first child was born. Twenty-three percent of the subjects were between 26 and 29 at the birth of their first

TABLE I
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUBJECTS

Variable	Classification	No.	%
Age	26-30	3	2.7
	31-35	28	25.2
	36-40	43	38.7
	41-45	21	18.9
	45-50	9	8.1
	51-55	6	5.4
	No response	1	0.9
Sex	Male	39	35.1
	Female	70	63.1
	No response	2	1.8
Respondents' Highest Level of Education	Graduated High School	28	25.2
	Attended college 2 yrs.	15	13.5
	Graduated 4-yr. college	42	37.8
	Completed graduate work	26	23.4
Religious Preference	Catholic	7	6.3
	Protestant	85	76.6
	Jewish	2	1.8
	None	6	5.4
	Other	10	9.0
	No response	1	0.9
Religious Commitment	Very religious	11	9.9
	Religious	81	73.0
	Non-religious	16	14.4
	Anti-religious	1	0.9
	No response	2	1.8
Marital Status	Single	1	.9
	Married	107	96.4
	Divorced	3	2.7
Number of Years Married	1-3	4	3.6
	4-6	3	2.7
	7-9	2	1.8
	9-12	12	10.8
	12-15	34	30.6
	15-20	32	28.8
	20-25	13	11.7
	25-more	8	7.2
	No response	3	2.7

TABLE I (Continued)

Variable	Classification	No.	%
Number of Children	1	7	6.3
	2	56	50.5
	3	37	33.3
	4	7	6.3
	5	3	2.7
	6	1	0.9
Age at Birth of First Child	Under 21	22	19.8
	22-25	45	40.5
	26-29	26	23.4
	30-above	15	13.5
	No response	3	2.7
Marital Status at Birth of First Child	Single	1	0.9
	Married	109	98.2
	No response	1	0.9
Number of Years Married at Birth of First Child	1	1	0.9
	2	38	34.2
	3	20	18.0
	4	16	14.4
	5	11	9.9
	6	9	8.1
	7	4	3.6
	8	4	3.6
	9	1	0.9
	10	1	0.9
	11	1	0.9
	12	3	2.7
	No response	1	0.9
Status of Pregnancy	Planned	56	50.5
	Not planned, but accepted	51	46.0
	Regretted	2	1.8
	No response	2	1.8

child and 20% were under the age of 21. Ninety-eight percent of the respondents were married when their first child was born. Almost 21% of the respondents had been married over five years at the birth of their first child; however, over one third (35%) of the subjects had been married for two years or less when their first child was born. Eighteen percent of the respondents experienced the birth of their first child during their third year of marriage and 14% during the fourth year of marriage.

When asked whether or not the pregnancy had been planned, 50% reported they had planned the pregnancy while 46% reported they had not planned the pregnancy. Only two percent of the respondents reported that the pregnancy was regretted, and two percent gave no response.

Perceptions of Parenthood and Parent Education

The respondents were asked to report the degree of crisis they felt with the birth of their first child. Crisis was defined as "any sharp or decisive change for which old patterns are inadequate." Table II shows the responses to this question. The largest percentage (41%) of the subjects reported "slight" crisis. Twenty-nine percent felt "moderate" crisis. No crisis was reported by 20% of the respondents, while 9% of the respondents reported "extensive" or "severe" crisis.

Table III categorized the various reasons that were marked as those which contributed to the degree of crisis felt with the birth of the first child. The respondents could have checked any, all, or

TABLE II
 FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF
 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF CRISIS
 INVOLVED IN THE BIRTH OF
 FIRST CHILD

Degree of Crisis	No.	%
Extensive	4	3.6
Severe	6	5.4
Moderate	32	28.8
Slight	46	41.4
None	22	19.8
No response	1	0.9

TABLE III
 FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE* DISTRIBUTION OF
 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF MAJOR
 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO
 CRISIS

Contributing Factors	No.	%
Adjusting to new responsibilities and routines	76	68.5
Loss of sleep	30	27.0
Upset schedules and routines	23	20.7
Being tied and restricted to the home	21	18.9
Financial worries and adjustments	20	18.0
Changes in the husband-wife relationship	11	9.9
Other	8	7.2
Romanticized view of parenthood	6	5.4

*Due to multiple answers, the percentages \neq 100%.

none of the factors as contributing to their crisis as an individual. Seventy-six of 111 respondents (69%) checked the answer "adjusting to new responsibilities and routines" as contributing to the crisis felt with the birth of the first child. Loss of sleep was marked by 30 of 111 or 27% of the respondents. Upset schedules and routines (21%), being tied down and restricted to the home (19%), and financial worries and adjustments (18%) were checked by similar numbers of respondents.

The respondents were asked to report their involvement in parent education programs. Table IV displays the reported participation of respondents in parent education. Seventy-three percent of the subjects reported that they had no previous involvement in parent education. Only 27% of the subjects reported ever being involved in parent education. Table IV categorizes the types of parent education in which the respondents were involved. Nine percent of the subjects had the parent education through college courses; four percent reported high school classes; hospital classes; and other forms of parent education, such as Parent Effectiveness Training, were indicated by 7% of the respondents. The respondents were then asked when they participated in the parent education program. Table IV shows that 18% of the respondents had their parent education prior to the birth of their first child, while 9% of the respondents participated in parent education classes after their first child was born.

Table V demonstrates that 90% of those who participated in parent education found it of value to them in their role as a parent; however, 10% of the respondents did not find their experience with parent education of value.

TABLE IV
 FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF
 RESPONDENTS' PARTICIPATION IN
 PARENT EDUCATION

Description	No.	%
<u>Participation in Parent Education</u>		
Yes	30	27.0
No	81	72.9
<u>Type of Parent Education (N=30)</u>		
College courses	10	9.0
High school classes	4	3.6
Hospital classes	8	7.2
Other	8	7.2
<u>When in Parent Education (N=30)</u>		
Before birth of first child	20	18.0
After birth of first child	10	9.0

TABLE V
 FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF
 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE VALUE
 OF PARENT EDUCATION

Participation of Value (N=30)	No.	%
Yes	27	90.0
No	3	10.0

Several questions were asked to determine whether or not the respondents felt parents had been prepared for their role and whether or not a system of parent education would be helpful in the preparation for parenthood. When asked if they felt all persons were suited to the parental role, 99% of the respondents answered "No," as shown in Table VI. Eighty-eight percent of the subjects did not feel that persons were adequately prepared for their parental role. When asked if parent education was necessary to prepare persons for the parental role, 48% of the subjects replied "Yes" and 49% answered "No." However, many respondents wrote in comments which suggested that parent education programs would be beneficial.

TABLE VI
FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF
RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE
STATUS OF PARENTHOOD

Description	No.	%
<u>Suitability to parental role</u>		
Yes	1	0.9
No	110	99.1
<u>Parents adequately prepared</u>		
Yes	12	10.8
No	98	88.3
No response	1	0.9
<u>Necessity of Parent Education</u>		
Yes	53	47.8
No	54	48.6
No response	4	3.6

The age at which it was believed parent education should begin was then investigated. The ages given by the subjects ranged from birth to 23 years of age as Table VII demonstrates. No response was given by 25% of the respondents and 26% felt that education for parenthood should begin at age sixteen. Other responses were scattered along the entire continuum. The type of parent education which would be most beneficial was also explored. Thirty-seven percent of the subjects checked several of the answers indicating a need for a variety of methods. The most frequently marked individual type of parent education was high school classes (27%).

A list of common problems experienced by parents was given and the respondents were asked to rate each problem on a scale from one to five as to the importance of including it in a parent education program. Fifty of 111 respondents misinterpreted the instructions given in the questionnaire; therefore, the percentages were calculated on the answers given by the 61 respondents who correctly followed the directions. Table VIII shows that 77% of these respondents with children 12 and under felt the most important problem area was discipline. School related problems and sex education were seen most important by 36% of the 61 respondents. Restriction of material possessions (10%) and bedtime (13%) were seen as the least important problems to be included in a parent education program. The respondents who had children over the age of 13 were asked to rate a second list of problems. Thirty-two of 111 respondents completed this section of the questionnaire correctly and were included in the percentage calculations. Use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco was given by 66% of these respondents as the most important problem to be included in

TABLE VII
 FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF
 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF PARENT
 EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Description	No.	%
<u>Age to begin parent education</u>		
1 year	4	3.6
2 years	2	1.8
3 years	1	0.9
5 years	2	1.8
6 years	1	0.9
8 years	2	1.8
9 years	1	0.9
10 years	2	1.8
11 years	1	0.9
12 years	8	7.2
13 years	8	7.2
14 years	5	4.5
15 years	6	5.4
16 years	29	26.1
17 years	1	0.9
18 years	6	5.4
20 years	3	2.7
23 years	1	0.9
No response (non-classifiable)	28	25.2
<u>Type of parent education most beneficial</u>		
High school classes	30	27.0
College courses	2	1.8
Workshops	9	8.1
Night classes	3	2.7
Parent meetings	10	9.0
Other	6	5.4
Multiple answer (checked several)	41	36.9
No response	10	9.0

TABLE VIII
 FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE* DISTRIBUTION OF
 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF AREAS
 TO BE INCLUDED IN PARENT
 EDUCATION

Description	No.	%
<u>Problem area (birth to 12) (N=61)</u>		
Discipline	47	77.1
School related problems	22	36.1
Sex education	22	36.1
Chronic illness	18	29.5
Feeding	16	26.2
Television watching	9	14.8
Toileting	9	14.8
Bedtime	8	13.1
Restriction of material possessions	6	9.8
<u>Problem area (above 13) (N=32)</u>		
Use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco	21	65.6
Choice of friends	16	50.0
School related problems	13	40.6
Sex education	13	40.6
Peer group influence	12	37.5
Financial management	10	31.3
Dating	9	28.1
Participation in family activities	8	25.0
Church attendance	7	21.9
Curfew hours	5	15.6
Language patterns	3	9.4
Physical appearance	2	6.3
Transportation (use of family car)	1	3.1
Working outside the home	1	3.1

*Due to multiple answers, the percentages \neq 100%.

parent education. Fifty percent of the 32 respondents saw choice of friends as the most important problem. School related problems (41%), sex education (41%), and peer group influence (37%) were found to be of similar importance to the respondents. Transportation (3%) and working outside the home (3%) were seen as the least important problems to be included in parent education.

A major purpose of this study was to identify the order of importance of selected topics considered appropriate for parent education by this group of parents.

A ranking of eight topics was developed by studying the frequency of responses which placed a topic in the category of "most important" to be included in parent education. Therefore, the topic that received the greatest number of one (1) responses was put at the top of the rank order. Each topic was put in order according to the number of one (1) responses it received. The following ranking resulted:

- (1) Child growth and development (physical, intellectual, social, emotional including development of a positive self-image).
- (2) Roles and responsibilities of parents, including guidance and discipline, child nutrition, child health and safety, and development of daily living skills.
- (3) Family structure (constitution and make-up) and functions (purpose), including the influence of family environment on child behavior.
- (4) Infant care, emphasizing nutrition, health, protection and safety of children.

- (5) Pregnancy, childbirth, prenatal and post-natal care for mothers, including the influences of maternal nutrition.
- (6) Prenatal development (from conception to birth) of the child.
- (7) Family planning and population growth.
- (8) Biological factors of human reproduction and the influences of heredity and environment.

A previous study (Delano, 1975) of students' and teachers' perceptions of topics to be included in parent education yielded a rank order of the eight topics above. To compare the similarities and differences of these two studies, see page 15.

Several questions were asked to determine the respondents' perceptions of parent education as a part of the public school system. Table IX shows that 73% of the subjects felt that parent education should be part of the public school curriculum. When asked if they felt a parent education course should be required for all students, 57% of the respondents answered "Yes." Seventy-seven percent of the subjects answered that there were no topics they would not want taught to their children in a public school setting.

Examination of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1A. There is no significant difference between parents who have experienced education for parenthood and those who have not concerning the age of the respondent.

Since the chi-square value obtained corresponds to a probability value of .27, it was concluded that there is no significant relationship

TABLE IX
 FREQUENCY AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF
 RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE ROLE
 OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL IN PARENT
 EDUCATION

Description	No.	%
<u>Parent education part of public school curriculum</u>		
Yes	81	73.0
No	28	25.2
No response	2	1.8
<u>Parent education course required</u>		
Yes	63	56.8
No	45	40.5
No response	3	2.7
<u>Topics not taught in public school</u>		
Yes	17	15.3
No	85	76.6
No response	9	8.1

between involvement in parent education and the age of the respondent (Table X).

Hypothesis 1B. There is no significant difference between parents who have experienced education for parenthood and those who have not concerning the sex of the respondent.

A chi-square test showed that there was a significant relationship ($p < .01$) between involvement in parent education and the sex of the respondent. There were 35.7% of the females who had been involved in parent education compared with 12.8% of the males (Table XI).

TABLE X
 CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
 PARTICIPATION IN PARENT EDUCATION
 ACCORDING TO AGE

Age of Respondent	Participation in Parent Educa.		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	Yes	No		
	No.	No.		
26-30 years	0	3		
31-35 years	11	17		
36-40 years	13	30	6.43	N.S.
41-45 years	4	17		
46-50 years	2	7		
51-55 years	0	6		
No response (1)				

TABLE XI
 CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
 PARTICIPATION IN PARENT EDUCATION
 ACCORDING TO SEX

Sex of Respondent	Participation in Parent Educa.		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	Yes	No		
	No.	No.		
Male	5	34	6.58	.01
Female	25	45		
No response (2)				

Hypothesis 1C. There is no significant difference between parents who have experienced education for parenthood and those who have not concerning the educational level of the respondent.

The chi-square value indicated that there was a significant relationship ($p < .01$) between involvement in parent education and the educational level of the respondent. The higher the respondents' educational level, the more likely he/she was to be involved in parent education. Those respondents who graduated from a four-year college or completed graduate work composed 74.5% of the participants in parent education with the remaining 25.5% graduating from high school or completing only two years of college (Table XII).

Hypothesis 1D. There is no significant difference between parents who have experienced education for parenthood and those who have not concerning the religious commitment of the respondent.

Since the chi-square value obtained yields a probability value of .51, it was concluded that there is no significant relationship between experience in parent education and religious commitment (Table XIII).

Hypothesis 1E. There is no significant difference between parents who have experienced education for parenthood and those who have not concerning the marital status of the respondent.

As Table XIV shows, over 96% of the respondents were married. Consequently, a chi-square test under these circumstances would be inappropriate.

TABLE XII

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
PARTICIPATION IN PARENT EDUCATION
ACCORDING TO EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Educational Level of Respondent	Participation in Parent Educa.		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	Yes	No		
	No.	No.		
Graduated high school	1	27		
Attended College 2 yrs.	4	11		
Graduated 4-yr. college	15	27	11.14	.01
Completed grad. work	10	16		

TABLE XIII

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
PARTICIPATION IN PARENT EDUCATION
ACCORDING TO RELIGIOUS
COMMITMENT

Religious Commitment	Participation in Parent Educa.		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	Yes	No		
	No.	No.		
Very religious	5	6		
Religious	21	60		
Non-religious	4	12	2.31	N.S.
Anti-religious	0	1		
No response (2)				

TABLE XIV
 FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION REFLECTING DIFFERENCES
 IN PARTICIPATION IN PARENT EDUCATION
 ACCORDING TO MARITAL STATUS

Marital Status	Participation in Parent Educa.	
	Yes	No
	No.	No.
Single	1	0
Married	28	79
Divorced	1	2

Hypothesis 1F. There is no significant difference between parents who have experienced education for parenthood and those who have not concerning the length of the respondent's marriage.

Since the chi-square value corresponds to a probability value of .07, it was concluded that there is no significant relationship between involvement in parent education and the length of the respondent's marriage (Table XV).

Hypothesis 1G. There is no significant difference between parents who have experienced education for parenthood and those who have not concerning the respondent's number of children.

Since the chi-square value obtained corresponds to a probability value of .50, it was concluded that there was no significant relationship between experience in parent education and the respondent's number of children (Table XVI).

TABLE XV

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
PARTICIPATION IN PARENT EDUCATION
ACCORDING TO LENGTH OF MARRIAGE

Length of Marriage	Participation in Parent Educa.		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	Yes	No		
	No.	No.		
1 - 3	1	3		
4 - 6	1	2		
7 - 9	2	0		
9 - 12	3	9		
12 - 15	9	25	13.00	N.S.
15 - 20	12	20		
20 - 25	0	13		
25 - above	1	7		
No response (3)				

TABLE XVI

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
PARTICIPATION IN PARENT EDUCATION
ACCORDING TO NUMBER OF
CHILDREN

Number of Children	Participation in Parent Educa.		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	Yes	No		
	No.	No.		
1	1	6		
2	17	39		
3	9	28		
4	1	6	4.34	N.S.
5	2	1		
6	0	1		

Hypothesis 1H. There is no significant difference between parents who have experienced education for parenthood and those who have not concerning the age of the respondent at the birth of the first child.

Due to the small number of respondents in several of the age categories, they were collapsed as follows: twenty-one and under, 22-25, 26-29, and 30 and above.

Since the chi-square value obtained corresponds to a probability value of .42, it was concluded that there is no significant relationship between involvement in parent education and the age of the respondent at the birth of the first child (Table XVII).

TABLE XVII

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
PARTICIPATION IN PARENT EDUCATION
ACCORDING TO RESPONDENTS' AGE
AT BIRTH OF FIRST CHILD

Age at birth of first child	Participation in Parent Educa.		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	Yes No.	No No.		
Under 21	4	20		
22-25	14	27	2.82	N.S.
26-29	7	18		
30-above	2	9		

Hypothesis 1I There is no significant difference between parents who have experienced education for parenthood and those who have not concerning whether or not the pregnancy was planned.

Since the chi-square value obtained corresponds to a probability value of .58, it was concluded that there is no significant relationship between involvement in parent education and whether or not the pregnancy was planned (Table XVIII).

Hypothesis 1J. There is no significant difference between parents who have experienced education for parenthood and those who have not concerning the degree of crisis reported by the respondent.

The crisis categories "extensive" and "severe" were deleted due to the low response. Only four respondents experienced "extensive" crisis and six respondents reported "severe" crisis. Therefore, the following crisis categories were included: moderate, slight, and none.

Since the chi-square value obtained corresponds to a probability value of .76, it was concluded that there is no significant relationship between involvement in parent education and the degree of crisis reported by the respondent (Table XIX).

Hypothesis 2A. There is no significant difference in the degree of crisis felt at the birth of the first child according to the sex of the respondent.

The chi-square value indicated that there was a significant relationship at the .009 level between the degree of crisis and the sex of the respondent. Women are more likely to experience crisis with

TABLE XVIII

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
PARTICIPATION IN PARENT EDUCATION
ACCORDING TO WHETHER OR NOT THE
PREGNANCY WAS PLANNED

Status of Pregnancy	Participation in Parent Educa.		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	Yes	No		
	No.	No.		
Planned	17	39		
Not planned, accepted	13	38	1.09	N.S.
Regretted	0	2		

TABLE XIX

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
PARTICIPATION IN PARENT EDUCATION
ACCORDING TO THE DEGREE OF
CRISIS REPORTED

Degree of crisis	Participation in Parent Educa.		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	Yes	No		
	No.	No.		
Moderate	8	24		
Slight	14	32	.54	N.S.
None	5	17		

the birth of their first child than are men. More than three times as many women (42.9%) reported a "moderate" degree of crisis compared with 13.9% of the men (Table XX).

Hypothesis 2B. There is no significant differences in the degree of crisis felt at the birth of the first child according to the educational level of the respondent.

Since the chi-square value obtained corresponds to a probability value of .10, it was concluded that there is no significant relationship between the degree of crisis felt and the educational level of the respondent (Table XXI).

Hypothesis 2C. There is no significant difference in the degree of crisis felt at the birth of the first child according to the religious preference of the respondent.

Since the chi-square value obtained corresponds to a probability value of .63, it was concluded that there is no significant relationship between the degree of crisis felt and the religious preference of the respondent (Table XXII).

Hypothesis 2D. There is no significant difference in the degree of crisis felt at the birth of the first child according to the age of the respondent at the birth of the first child.

Since the chi-square value obtained corresponds to a probability value of .61, it was concluded that there is no significant relationship between the degree of crisis felt and the age of the respondent at the birth of the first child (Table XXIII).

TABLE XX

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
DEGREE OF CRISIS FELT AT BIRTH OF
FIRST CHILD ACCORDING TO SEX

Sex of respondent	Degree of Crisis			χ^2	Level of Sig.
	<u>Moderate</u> No.	<u>Slight</u> No.	<u>None</u> No.		
Female	27	26	10	9.28	.009
Male	5	20	11		

TABLE XXI

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
DEGREE OF CRISIS ACCORDING TO
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

Educational level	Degree of Crisis			χ^2	Level of Sig.
	<u>Moderate</u> No.	<u>Slight</u> No.	<u>None</u> No.		
Graduated high school	11	8	6	10.59	N.S.
Attended college - 2 years	4	6	4		
Graduated 4 year college	14	15	9		
Completed graduate work	3	17	3		

TABLE XXII
 CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
 DEGREE OF CRISIS ACCORDING TO
 RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE

Religious preference	Degree of Crisis			χ^2	Level of Sig.
	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Slight</u>	<u>None</u>		
	No.	No.	No.		
Catholic	1	2	3		
Protestant	24	36	18		
Jewish	1	1	0	6.13	N.S.
None	2	3	0		
Other	4	3	1		

TABLE XXIII
 CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
 DEGREE OF CRISIS ACCORDING TO
 RESPONDENTS' AGE AT BIRTH
 OF FIRST CHILD

Age at birth of first child	Degree of Crisis			χ^2	Level of Sig.
	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>Slight</u>	<u>None</u>		
	No.	No.	No.		
Under 21	8	11	4		
22-25	11	19	11		
26-29	9	13	3	4.47	N.S.
30-above	4	3	4		

Hypothesis 2E. There is no significant difference in the degree of crisis felt at the birth of the first child according to the marital status of the respondent at the birth of the first child.

As Table XIV shows, over 97% of the respondents were married at the time their first child was born. Therefore, a chi-square test under these circumstances would be inappropriate.

TABLE XXIV
 FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION REFLECTING DIFFERENCES
 IN DEGREE OF CRISIS ACCORDING TO MARITAL
 STATUS AT BIRTH OF FIRST CHILD

Marital status at birth of first child	Degree of Crisis		
	<u>Moderate</u> No.	<u>Slight</u> No.	<u>None</u> No.
Single	0	1	0
Married	32	45	22

Hypothesis 2F. There is no significant difference in the degree of crisis felt with the birth of the first child and the number of years married at the birth of the first child.

Since the chi-square value obtained corresponds to a probability value of .17, it was concluded that there is no significant relationship between the degree of crisis and the number of years the respondent was married at the birth of the first child (Table XXV).

TABLE XXV

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
DEGREE OF CRISIS ACCORDING TO NUMBER
OF YEARS MARRIED AT BIRTH OF
FIRST CHILD

Number of years married at birth of first child	Degree of Crisis			χ^2	Level of Sig.
	<u>Moderate</u> No.	<u>Slight</u> No.	<u>None</u> No.		
Less than 1 year	0	0	1		
1 year	13	19	3		
2 years	9	7	4		
3 years	2	7	5		
4 years	3	4	4		
5 years	3	3	2	25.94	N.S.
6 years	0	3	1		
7 years	1	3	0		
8 years	0	0	1		
9 years	1	0	0		
10 years	0	0	1		

Hypothesis 2G. There is no significant difference in the degree of crisis felt with the birth of the first child and whether or not the pregnancy was planned.

Since the chi-square value obtained corresponds to a probability value of .45, it was concluded that there is no significant relationship between the degree of crisis felt and whether or not the pregnancy was planned (Table XXVI).

TABLE XXVI

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
DEGREE OF CRISIS ACCORDING TO WHETHER
OR NOT THE PREGNANCY WAS PLANNED

Status of pregnancy	Degree of Crisis			χ^2	Level of Sig.
	<u>Moderate</u> No.	<u>Slight</u> No.	<u>None</u> No.		
Planned	19	21	14		
Not planned, but accepted	13	23	7	3.68	N.S.
Regretted	0	1	1		

The Statistical Analysis System (SAS) was used to analyze the data in this study. There were areas in which the categories were collapsed; however, other changes could have been made. Calculations were performed to determine the differences in values achieved, with a variety of groupings, but the differences found did not change the significance of the chi-square values.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purposes of this study were to assess the perceptions of parents concerning education for parenthood, to identify a list of topics parents feel are important to include in parent education, to determine the factors which influence participation in parent education, to ascertain the areas which parents feel are potential problems in the parent-child relationship, and to identify the factors which influence the degree of crisis felt at the birth of the first child.

The subjects for this study were 111 men and women who are parents of children enrolled in D. D. Kirkland Elementary School, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, during the spring of 1977. There were 70 women, 39 men, and 2 subjects who did not answer the question requesting sex of respondent.

The instrument used was a fixed-alternative questionnaire developed by the investigator to assess parents' perceptions concerning parenthood and parent education. The instrument is entitled Parents' Perceptions of Education for Parenthood.

The data were examined to determine the factors which influence participation in parent education and/or the degree of crisis felt

with the birth of the first child. The hypotheses were tested by chi-square analysis.

The findings of this research were as follows:

Evidence was presented to suggest there was a significant relationship between participation in parent education and sex and/or the educational level of the respondent. There was not a significant relationship between participation in parent education and age of the respondent, religious commitment of respondent, marital status of respondent, length of marriage, number of children, age of respondent at birth of first child, whether or not the pregnancy was planned, and the degree of crisis reported by the respondent.

The results of the study showed that there was a significant relationship between the degree of crisis felt with the birth of the first child and the sex of the respondent. There was not a significant difference between the degree of crisis reported and the educational level of the respondent, religious preference of the respondent, age of the respondent at the birth of the first child, marital status of the respondent at the birth of the first child, number of years married at the birth of the first child, and whether or not the pregnancy was planned.

One purpose of this study was to assess parents' perceptions concerning education for parenthood by utilizing a questionnaire. The results show that 73% of the respondents had no experience with parent education compared to 27% who had been involved in some type of education for parenthood. College courses was the most frequent type of parent education in which the respondents had been involved. Two-thirds

(67%) of those who participated in parent education classes did so before the birth of their first child as opposed to the one-third (33%) who participated after the birth of their first child. Although those who had experienced parent education were in the minority, they indicated their involvement had been of value to them in assuming the parental role. The vast majority of this group of parents (99%) felt that all persons are not suited to the parental role. When asked if they felt parent education was necessary to be a prepared parent, 48% answered "Yes" and 49% answered "No." However, many of the respondents commented that parent education would be beneficial to those in the parental role. The ages given by the respondents at which parent education should begin ranged from birth to 23 years of age, but 16 years of age was given by 26% of the respondents. The type of parent education seen as most beneficial by these respondents was high school classes. As would be expected from the above results, when asked if they felt parent education should be part of the public school curriculum, 74% of the subjects felt it should be included. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents also felt parent education should be required for all students. Seventy-seven percent of the subjects indicated there were no topics they would not want taught in the public school setting. Thus, the evidence suggests that the respondents felt parent education would be of benefit in handling the roles and responsibilities of parenthood. They also felt that high school was the age when this education should begin and that the public school was an appropriate place for this education.

The following ranking of the topics that are appropriate for parent education classes resulted:

- (1) Child growth and development (physical, intellectual, social, emotional, including development of a positive self-image).
- (2) Roles and responsibilities of parents, including guidance and discipline, child nutrition, child health and safety, and development of daily living skills.
- (3) Family structure (constitution and make-up) and functions (purpose) including the influence of family environment on child behavior.
- (4) Infant care, emphasizing nutrition, health, protection and safety of children.
- (5) Pregnancy, childbirth, prenatal and post-natal care for mothers, including the influences of maternal nutrition.
- (6) Prenatal development (from conception to birth) of the child.
- (7) Family planning and population growth.
- (8) Biological factors of human reproduction and the influences of heredity and environment.

Implications of the Study

The results of this study clearly show both a need and a desire for a system to prepare persons for their role as parents as viewed

by the subjects in this study. There are also indications that adolescence is the period in which this preparation should begin. Furthermore, the respondents showed an overwhelming acceptance of parent education as a part of the public school curriculum. Therefore, it seems that steps should be taken to institute such a program as soon as possible. The results of this study could be valuable to public school administrators and teachers as they plan the curriculum for the future.

The findings of this study show that although high school is the most appropriate beginning point, this parent education is a continuing need. For this reason, a variety of methods should be included which would involve people of all ages. The study would be valuable to persons involved in family counseling as well as persons working in the field of adult education.

Recommendations for Further Study

As a result of this study, the writer presents the following suggestions for further investigation:

- (1) A larger sample be used to insure a more valid assessment.
- (2) A similar study be made in several other schools in order to determine if there is a typical pattern for parents related to geographical region.
- (3) A similar study be made with a totally male sample in order to determine the needs of men in education for parenthood.

- (4) The instrument be further refined to improve its usefulness. The directions given on page 3 and 4 of the questionnaire were misinterpreted by a large number of the respondents. The respondents ranked the topics rather than rating each topic. For this reason, it might be beneficial to add a sample question.

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APPENDIX

**OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY • STILLWATER**

Department of Family Relations & Child Development

74074

April 5, 1977

Dear Parents:

How important is it that people are prepared for their responsibilities as parents? What is the value of parent education in this process of preparation? The Department of Family Relations and Child Development at Oklahoma State University is conducting a research project to determine the perceptions of parents concerning education for parenthood. Because you are currently dealing with the roles and responsibilities of parenthood, we thought you would be well qualified to assist us in this research.

We would like to ask you to participate in this research by completing the enclosed questionnaire. Both you and your spouse are asked to complete the questionnaire. Please complete the questionnaire separately. If both of you cannot complete the questionnaire, we would appreciate receiving a response from one of you. A self-addressed, prepaid envelope has been provided for the return of each questionnaire. Please return the completed questionnaire by April 19, 1977.

Your answers are anonymous and confidential since you are asked not to put your name on the questionnaire. Please answer each question as honestly as you can. We are not interested in how you think you should answer the question, but we are interested in what you actually believe about education for parenthood. It is expected that the information gained from this research will be of benefit to educators and persons involved in the improvement of family life.

If you would like a brief summary of the findings of this research study when it is completed, we will be happy to send it to you if you will send a postal card or request in a separate envelope giving your name and address. This summary should be available in the latter part of the summer.

Your assistance with this research is greatly appreciated. It is through the participation of individuals such as you that we gain greater knowledge and understanding of family life as it is today.

Sincerely yours,

Becky Riggs
Department of Family Relations
and Child Development

Althea Wright, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor, Department
of Family Relations and Child
Development

GENERAL INFORMATION

Please answer the items below as frankly as possible. The absence of your name from the information assures anonymity. Check or fill in answers as appropriate.

1. Age: 18-25 36-40 51-55
 26-30 41-45 56-60
 31-35 46-50
2. Sex: Female Male
3. Educational level completed by your and your spouse:

Self	Spouse	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Less than 8th grade
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed 8th grade, but not beyond 9th grade
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attended high school, but did not graduate
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Graduated from high school
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attended college for two or more years
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Graduated from a 4-year college
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Completed graduate work for a profession
4. What are the occupations of the adults in your household? Describe fully.

Self:

Spouse:
5. Main source of income for your household is:
 - Inherited savings and investments
 - Earned wealth, transferable investments
 - Profits, royalties, fees from business or profession
 - Salary, commissions (regular, monthly, yearly)
 - Hourly wages, weekly checks
 - Odd jobs, seasonal work, private relief
 - Public relief
6. Religious preference: (optional)

<input type="checkbox"/> Catholic	<input type="checkbox"/> Mormon
<input type="checkbox"/> Protestant	<input type="checkbox"/> None
<input type="checkbox"/> Jewish	<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ (Specify)
7. Degree of religious commitment: (optional)

<input type="checkbox"/> Very religious	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-religious
<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	<input type="checkbox"/> Anti-religious

8. Marital status:
- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single | <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Married | <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed | |
9. If married, how long have you been married?
- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 12-15 years | If over 25 years,
how many?
_____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4-6 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 15-20 years | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7-9 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 20-25 years | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9-12 years | | |
10. How many children do you have? _____
11. List below the sex and age of your children:
- Sex: _____ Age: _____
12. What was your age at the time your first child was born? _____
13. What was your marital status at the time your first child was born?
- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single | <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Married _____ years | <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed |
14. Was the pregnancy:
- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Planned |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not planned, but easily accepted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regretted |
- As defined by Reuben Hill, a crisis is "any sharp or decisive change for which old patterns are inadequate. . . . A crisis is a situation in which the usual behavior patterns are found to be unrewarding and new ones called for immediately" (Hill, 1949, p. 51).
15. According to the above definition, indicate below the degree of crisis you felt during the first six months of your child's life:
- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Extensive | <input type="checkbox"/> Slight |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Severe | <input type="checkbox"/> None |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate | |
16. Check the following factors which you feel contributed to the degree of crisis you experienced with the birth of your first child:
- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Romanticized view of parenthood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting to new responsibilities and routines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Upset schedules and routines |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Financial worries and adjustments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being tied down and restricted to the home |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of sleep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in the husband-wife relationship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) _____ |
-

17. Have you ever participated in a Parent Education program?
 Yes No
 If you answered "No" to Question 17, please skip down to question #21.
18. Check below the type of program in which you were involved.
 College courses
 High school courses
 Hospital classes
 Other (specify) _____
-
19. Did you have the course before or after the birth of your first child?
 Yes No
20. Do you feel your involvement in parent education was of value to you?
 Yes No
 Please explain your answer.

 If not, what would have made it more valuable?
21. Do you feel that all persons are suited to the parental role?
 Yes No
 Please explain your answer.
22. Do you feel that most people who are parents have been adequately prepared for this role?
 Yes No
 Please explain your answer.
23. Do you believe a parent education program is necessary to prepare people for their responsibilities as parents?
 Yes No
24. At what age do you feel education for parenthood should begin?
 _____ Why do you feel it is important at this age?
25. What type of parent education do you feel would be most beneficial?
 High school courses Night classes
 College courses Parent meetings
 Workshops Other (specify) _____
-

26. Below is a list of common problems experienced by parents. Rate each of the problem areas with respect to how important you think it is to include information about the particular problem area in a Parent Education Program, with one (1) being the most important and five (5) being the least important.

From birth through 12 years of age:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeding | <input type="checkbox"/> Discipline |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toileting | <input type="checkbox"/> Television viewing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bedtime | <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic illness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> School related problems | <input type="checkbox"/> Restriction of material possessions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sex education | |

If you have children over 13 years of age, continue:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dating | <input type="checkbox"/> Use of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Choice of friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dress (physical appearance) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sex education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Language patterns | <input type="checkbox"/> Peer group influence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Curfew hours | <input type="checkbox"/> School related problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in family activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation (use of family car) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Church attendance | <input type="checkbox"/> Working outside the home |

27. What aspects of parenthood do you feel you were least prepared for?

28. Below are eight (8) topics which may be desirable to study before one has children. For this research study, I hope to find out which topics you believe to be most important for people to learn about before becoming parents. Read the entire list carefully and thoughtfully. Then place a number (1-5) which identifies your feeling of how important the topic is to a comprehensive parent education program, with one (1) being the most important and five (5) being the least important.

_____ Biological factors of human reproduction and the influences of heredity and environment.

_____ Pregnancy, childbirth, prenatal and post-natal care for mothers, including the influences of maternal nutrition.

_____ Prenatal development (from conception to birth) of the child.

_____ Infant care, emphasizing nutrition, health, protection and safety of children.

_____ Child growth and development (physical, intellectual, social, emotional, including development of a positive self-image).

_____ Family structure (constitution and make-up) and functions (purpose) including the influence of family environment on child behavior.

_____ Roles and responsibilities of parents, including guidance and discipline, child nutrition, child health and safety, and development of daily living skills.

_____ Family planning and population growth.

29. Do you feel Parent Education should be a part of the public school curriculum?

Yes No

30. Should a Parent Education course be required for all students?

Yes No

Please explain your answer.

31. If Parent Education were a part of the public school curriculum, are there any topics which you would not want taught to your child in this setting?

Yes No

List specific topics below:

VITA

Rebecca Schumann Riggs

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: PARENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATION FOR PARENTHOOD

Major Field: Family Relations and Child Development

Biographical:

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Education: Graduated from Putnam City High School, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in May, 1971. Attended Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, from 1971 to 1975; received a Bachelor of Science degree in Home Economics from Oklahoma State University in 1975; completed requirements for an Early Childhood Education and an Elementary Teaching Certificate in 1975; and completed requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Family Relations and Child Development in July, 1977.

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