

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY: THE EFFECTS OF
FAMILY BACKGROUND VARIABLES ON THE
DECISION TO REMAIN CHILDLESS

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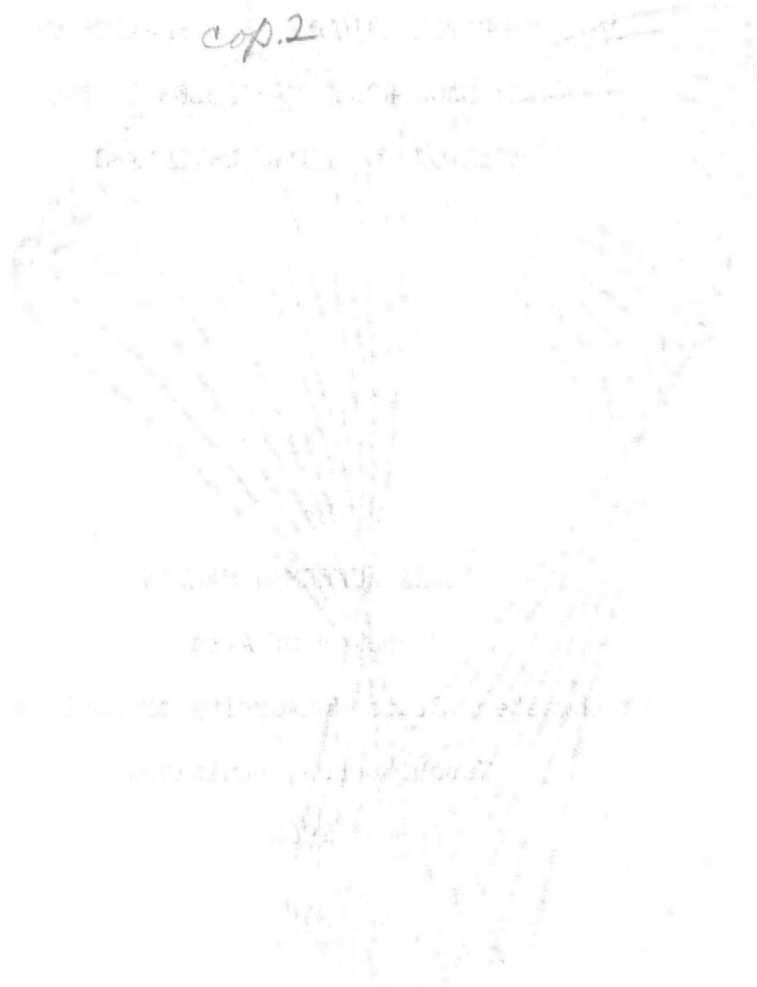
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Children have long been considered a source of pride for parents and grandparents. Men and women have used children as a reference for femininity and virility (Veevers, 1973b). America's economic, political, military and social structures depend at least in part on a steady production of children.

Children require special foods, toys and equipment that all require large industries to produce these needed items. Retirement plans and the social security system are based on the supposition that young workers will replace the old and pay the required deductions. The military strength of the nation is underwritten with the expectation that there will be many young men who will eventually have eighteenth birthdays. The large number of young voters is a vociferous group to be reckoned with politically. Indeed, the presence of children in the American family has many significant implications.

The American family unit has traditionally consisted of a man, a woman and children. The number of children has varied as economic and world conditions vacillated. But, children have always seemed a natural part of the family (Stroup, 1966). It is not surprising that Gurion, Veroff and Feld (1960) found in their study, Americans View Their Mental Health, that Americans listed children and economic-material items most

frequently as sources of happiness.

It is significant that in 1975, the value of children is being questioned. Three major changes have occurred which have influenced individuals' attitudes toward parenthood. These changes are: (1) widespread concern for rapid growth of world population; (2) growth of the Women's Liberation Movement; and (3) effective, reliable means of birth control (Hobart, 1973). It is possible that, at least for some people, the re-evaluation has existed for many years, but the universality of parenthood has obscured those individuals who do not desire children. These three changes have occurred in the last decade and have currently focused new attention on an unfamiliar family concept: the voluntarily childless couple. The childfree are to be distinguished from individuals who, due to subfecundity, are unable to have children. The voluntarily childless couple choose not to have a child. The lack of a desire for a child or children distinguishes the voluntarily childless couple.

The first major change, concern for world population, has the accompanying threat of the quality of life that would prevail in the world of too many people. Home economists Taubin (1974), Johnson (1974) and Wallace (1974) express the view that the commitment to concern for world population growth that has been made by home economists must jointly carry the commitment to present the voluntarily childless role to students. Cox (1974), in her examination of home economics texts, found widespread assumptions that all women will become wives and mothers. All of these researchers feel that there is a great need to present the view that the parent role is not suitable for everyone. The authors suggest that anyone who doubts this concept should study the

divorce, child abuse, and abandonment statistics. However, family life specialists are unprepared to present the childless role due to a vast neglect of the voluntarily childless by social scientists (Veevers, 1973d). New attention to the topic could produce a means of reducing the population growth as well as a means of offering new alternatives to men and women who might be uncomfortable in the roles of mother and father.

Demographer, Blake (1974), feels that at the present time, reduction of world population is hindered by the refusal to consider sex roles apart from procreation. Deviation from the procreation roles has not been tolerated. Yet, if there is to be a significant decline in the birth rate, Americans must first be given the option of being happy and fulfilled without becoming a parent. Blake (1974) asserts that this choice has not been offered in the past.

The Women's Liberation Movement, the second change, has been largely responsible for the transition in male and female roles which Blake (1974) believes are so important. However, Blake (1974) argues that the Women's Liberation Movement champions a woman's right to both work and to have children. Regardless of the conflict of purpose, Bram (1974) expresses the view that the movement has added new dimensions to the concept of woman and the choices of roles available to her.

Biologically, there has and still is a stereotype to sex. Women have babies, and in the past, women have had little control over the reproductive processes of their body. Pregnancy and motherhood were considered inevitable. Although childbearing must always be considered a feminine role, women can now regulate or eliminate their participation in childbearing. Effective and practical birth control, the third

major change, has made voluntary childlessness technically possible.

These changes in world and human perceptions have accrued rapidly. Social scientists are poorly prepared to offer explanations for the cause and effects of the childless choice. Veevers (1973d) has been one of the most active and eminent researchers in the study of voluntary childlessness. It is her contention that social scientists have neglected this area of research. Veevers (1973d) suggests that this neglect demonstrates the preferences and biases of social scientists. Similarly, Popenoe (1936) has cited the lack of explanations for childlessness by the childless themselves. His observation was made many years ago, but the explanations are still uncollected. LeMasters (1970) and Jacoby (1969) have stated that information about childlessness would provide explanations for the dissatisfaction of many parents.

There is a need for such research now, and the indications are that the demand for such knowledge will continue to grow. Evidence of such a need and interest may be found in the growing number of articles about the childfree alternative that have appeared in the popular press. McCalls (Lester, 1974), Psychology Today (Campbell, 1975), Redbook (Michels, 1970), and Look (Rollin, 1970) have all published such articles.

There has similarly been an increase in the number of books which relate to childlessness. Rald's Mother's Day is Over (1973), Silverman and Silverman's The Case Against Having Children (1971), Peck's Baby Trap (1971), and Peck and Senderowitz's Pronatalism, The Myth of Mom and Apple Pie (1974) are some of the more popular books.

National Organization for Non-Parents (N.O.N.) is still another indication of interest in childlessness. The organization, founded in

1972, seeks to promote the cause of non-parenthood and eliminate societal biases against the childless. The organization has more than 42 chapters.

Census figures (United States Bureau of Commerce, 1973, 1974) also reflect this interest. The number of women between the ages of 25 to 29 who expected no births increased from 2.2 per cent in 1967 to 4.1 per cent in 1973. Census figures (United States Bureau of Commerce, 1974) indicated that 11 per cent of women ever married, 25 to 39 years old who had completed high school, and 22 per cent of women ever married, 25 to 39 years old, with some college education were childless. This is significant when compared to 10 per cent and 18 per cent respectively in 1970. These statistics do not allow demographers to predict a large trend toward childlessness. The figures more accurately describe a trend toward smaller families. However, the increase in the numbers of women who intend to remain childless implies that more information is needed on voluntary childlessness.

Veevers (1973a) states that a study of early family experiences could produce valuable information. If social scientists are now discarding the idea of instinctual parenthood, what are the processes of socialization that produce an individual who does not desire children? Such insights would additionally produce new information about those who do desire to bear and raise children. Veevers (1973a) has suggested the quality of the parent's marriage, sibling interaction (or lack of it), childless models, and the mother's role in the home as possible factors in an individual's decision to not have children. It is her contention that more research is needed to examine such relationships.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are:

- A. To determine if parent group and the childless group differ with respect to each of the following areas: (a) the demographic characteristics, (b) the family background characteristics, and (c) the personality characteristics and life philosophies.
- B. To examine the following specific hypotheses:
 1. There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the following demographic characteristics:
 - (a) Race
 - (b) Socio-economic status
 - (c) Conservatism
 - (d) Religious preference
 - (e) Current religious involvement
 2. There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the following family background characteristics:
 - (a) Family of origin size
 - (b) Birth order
 - (c) Intactness of parent's marriage
 - (d) Mother's occupation
 - (e) Mother's employment during childhood
 - (f) Work distribution within the family
 - (g) Church attendance during childhood
 - (h) Presence of a childless model
 - (i) Mother-child relationship

- (j) Father-child relationship
 - (k) Current parental relationship
 - (l) Happiness of parent's marriage
 - (m) Parental history of social or medical problems
 - (n) Happiness of childhood
3. There is no significant difference between the childless couple and the parent couple with regard to the following factors:
- (a) Perception of a woman's ability to combine a career and motherhood
 - (b) Career commitment of the wife (women respondents only)
 - (c) Marital happiness
 - (d) Influence of the spouse on the decision to have or not to have children
 - (e) Influence of other factors in determining attitudes toward marriage and parenting.
4. There is no significant difference between the childless couple and the parent couple with regard to the following:
- (a) General personality characteristics
 - (b) Optimism vs. Pessimism Life Philosophy
 - (c) Self-determination vs. Fatalism Life Philosophy
 - (d) Belief-in-God vs. Atheism Life Philosophy
5. There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the following:
- (a) Mother's attitude toward parenting
 - (b) Father's attitude toward parenting

6. There are no differences between the men and women who compose the childless group with regard to the following:
 - (a) Societal sources of pressure
 - (b) Commitment to childlessness
 - (c) Personal value of childlessness
 - (d) Reasons for the childless choice

CHAPTER II

SELECTED REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In examining previous research relating to voluntary childlessness, it is sometimes necessary to infer meanings from what has been expressed as "normal" for the American people. This is due largely to the lack of research in this area. The American culture has so widely accepted the high value of children that little or no attention has been given to the individuals who do not desire to have children. When childlessness has been discussed, it is often in the context of the couple who want to have children and cannot. Veever (1973d) estimates that of all the women who ever marry, one in twenty, or perhaps one in ten, will not become a mother. She further estimates that of these women, one-half are childless by choice.

Bram (1974) divides previous research into three broad categories: (1) demographic, (2) psychological, and (3) sociological. In examining these areas, it is possible to obtain an overview of voluntary childlessness. These three categories present the past and present attitudes toward childlessness, the incidence of childlessness, the known characteristics of the childless and perhaps, the future of voluntary childlessness.

Demographic

The demographic studies have been very successful in isolating the

characteristics of the population and the probable effects that the characteristics will have on the fertility rate. In 1955, Rainwater (1965) conducted a study under the sponsorship of the Planned Federation of America, Inc. He noted a trend toward a larger family size. At the time of the study, 49 per cent of the sample thought that four children was the ideal family size. Rainwater (1965) questioned whether men and women could perceive trends in family size. He discovered that the perceptions varied greatly according to class. The middle and upper middle classes were more apt to correctly perceive the trend to be toward larger families since more people could then increasingly afford them. The lower classes were inclined to see the trend as a movement toward smaller families due to hard times and to the desire of some to enjoy the American life of ease. Rainwater (1965) notes that the latter impression was followed with concern for the selfish attitudes of those desiring small families or no children.

The tendency to regard the small family or the couple who wanted no children as selfish was practically universal. During the course of the interview, the individuals had the opportunity to give their impressions of the woman who wanted no children and the woman who wanted three or more children. The childless woman was rejected as neurotic, selfish and regarded as in poor health. In contrast, the woman with three or more children was held in high regard and was seen to be kind and loving. Throughout the study, one central norm was clearly evident: A couple should not of course, have more children than they were able to support, but they should certainly have as many as they were able to afford (Rainwater, 1965).

Rainwater (1965) felt that a large family would continue to enjoy

wide popularity as long as social and moral gains were associated with the larger family. "Only if the smaller family comes to have meaningful values apart from its relation to economic scarcity would the situation change" (p. 152).

Whelpton, Campbell and Patterson (1966) in a similar study provided useful information about the factors which influence fertility. The study involved 2414 couples with white wives who were between 18-39 years old in 1960. The sample represented approximately 18 million United States couples with similar characteristics. At the time of the study, the number of children expected varied from 3.2 to 3.7 with 3.4 as the most likely number of children desired.

The woman's ability to predict the number of children that she would have was closely related to the educational attainment of the wife. Religious preferences were also closely related. Catholics expected 28 per cent more children than Protestants and 48 per cent more than Jews. There was no association between most of the measures of religiousness and expected fertility of Protestants. Catholics with great religious involvement were more apt to express a desire for more children. Hill (1959) found that frequent church attendance was an indication of early concern about family size and current family size ideals. Additionally, Hill (1959) indicated that the families who were interested in having a large family, discussed family size more frequently.

Whelpton, Campbell and Patterson (1966) did not find educational attainment to be as influential on fertility as it has been in the past. In regard to other socio-economic status indicators, when wives were grouped on the basis of education, husband's income, occupation, size of place of residence, the wives differed less with respect to number

of children wanted than with the actual number expected. The two strongest associations were (1) the wife's educational attainment and the ability to control family size and (2) the wife's work experience and fertility. The wives who had worked after their marriage had fewer births by the time of the 1960 survey than those women who had not worked. The working wives also expected a significantly smaller completed family (Whelpton, Campbell, Patterson, 1966). They also found that nearly all American couples have a strong aversion to childlessness. Only one per cent of the women in the study in the 18-39 age group expressed a desire not to have children. Voluntary childlessness was thought to be extinct.

Whelpton and Kizer (1946) found an unusually high proportion of childless women in the Indianapolis study (19%). One-third to one-half of the 322 couples were childless by choice. This high proportion may be explained by the fact that the women were born in the 1901-1910 birth cohort which has the distinction of being the largest percentage of voluntary childlessness in the history of America. Since fertility rates are known to be affected by economic conditions, the high incidence of childlessness may have been due to the women reaching their peak childbearing period during the Depression. Most demographers since then have recorded the decline previously mentioned.

Nam (1968) also cites the decrease in voluntary childlessness. When women in the 30-40 age group are used, the proportion of voluntary childlessness has dropped by two-thirds from approximately 23 per cent in 1940 to 17 per cent in 1950 to 10 per cent in 1960 to 7 per cent in June, 1964.

Along with the drop in the proportion of voluntary childlessness,

Nam (1968) cites other changes. Religion, socio-economic status, rural-urban residence, levels of education, level of income, occupation and whether or not the wife works no longer seems to be as influential in determining family size. This is due to the increased urbanization, mobility, prosperity, and improved communication systems which all serve to make Americans more uniform despite varied backgrounds. Hobart (1973) similarly concluded that subcultural background variables could no longer successfully predict issues regarding family size and child-bearing practices.

Of the socio-economic factors, occupation does seem to be a more influential indicator. Blue-collar worker's wives expected seven per cent more births than the wives of white collar workers (Nam, 1968). Blake (1969) disagrees with Nam's assessment of the factor of whether or not the wife works. It is her contention that the employment of women outside of the home is the factor most likely to positively influence a desire for a small family.

There are other factors that influence fertility. Stolka and Barnett (1969) in a study of women 18 years and older found that Catholic women were motivated to have children more by the notion that children are necessary for marital happiness than by religious duty. The researchers also found the prevalence of the attitude that childbearing was a woman's main responsibility in life.

The size of cities is also thought to be influential by some demographers. Nam (1968), Grabill, Kiser, and Whelpton (1958) have indicated that this is so. Wives in cities of less than 150,000 people statistically expect more children than the wives from larger cities. Additionally, the percentage of childlessness, including single women, is

greater in cities of more than 250,000 and decreases with the size of the city (Grabill, et al., 1958).

Race has been thought to influence fertility by at least two researchers. Veevers (1973d) and Kunz and Brinkerhoff (1969) have clarified the relationship of race and childlessness. Kunz and Brinkerhoff (1969) state that despite cultural belief, a greater number of non-white couples are childless than are white couples. Veevers (1973d) acknowledges these statistics, but she believes that the large proportion of non-white childlessness has been due to the incidence of venereal disease in the non-white group. She feels that childlessness among non-whites will decline.

Veevers (1973d) cites the decline in voluntary childlessness in Canada, but in the United States the percentage has increased (United States Bureau of Commerce, 1971, 1973, 1974). Hauser (1971) has hypothesized the following three factors as explanations for the trend toward smaller families: (1) popular desire for small families, (2) new household arrangements, and (3) distribution of the age groups.

In a series of unstructured, indepth interviews, Veevers (1973c) has collected many characteristics of the voluntarily childless wife. The average age of the women was 29 years although the ages ranged from 23 to 71 years. The women were from urban areas, white, middle class and many of the women were upwardly mobile. Most of the women had some university experience although the educational range was from grade school to the post doctoral level. The wives were all employed or attending a university with the exception of one housewife. The religious background was primarily Protestant, but most of the women classified themselves as atheist or agnostic. Those individuals who cited a

religious preference were apt to be religiously inactive. The women came from intact, stable homes where their mothers had been fulltime housewives since the birth of their first child. The women tended to be only children or first born. Veevers (1971a) indicates that the assumption that marriage at an older age physiologically deters child-bearing is not totally accurate. It appears that women who marry before the age of 35 are psychologically disinclined toward parenthood as well.

The findings of Gustavus and Henley (1971) support and add to the characteristics of the voluntarily childless that Veevers (1973d) lists. The non-random sample consisted of 72 married couples who applied for assistance from the Association for Voluntary Sterilization for help in obtaining a surgical sterilization.

Most of the couples came from large urban areas in the northeastern portion of the United States. The mean number of years married was 5.2 although one-half of the sample had been married for less than four years. This supports Veevers' (1973d) findings that the decision to be childless is an early one. Nearly one-third of her sample decided before marriage. This is not exclusively true of the childless since 17 per cent of the husbands in the Gustavus, Henley (1971) sample and 10 per cent of the wives were over 40.

Gustavus and Henley (1971) compared their childless sample to United States family heads. They indicate that the two groups are not totally comparable. Nevertheless, the comparisons are enlightening. In the childless sample the men (40%) and women (36%) had a high incidence of no-religion when compared to men (4%) and women (1%) of the general United States population. Both childless men and women have a higher occupational status than the heads of families in 1960. Of the

sample, 62 per cent of the childless men had a college degree or more compared to only 10 per cent of the males in the general population of 1960. This is understandable since most of the childless men are under 30 and would be expected to have a higher educational attainment.

Psychological

The psychological explanations for parenthood are perhaps the most basic to the study of voluntary childlessness. Psychological explanations have guided the conceptualization of the family in the context of what is "normal" and "developmental." The psychological explanations have prevailed for so long that any variation from what is thought to be psychologically healthy and "normal" was considered deviant and unnatural (Veevers, 1973b).

Bram (1974) contends that the field of psychology has been deserving of criticism for the sexism that psychology perpetuates and for the patriarchal attitude toward women. Bram (1974) asserts that further criticism is justified for psychology's subtle prenatal attitudes. Bram's basis for the additional criticism is the abundance of psychological theories that explain personality on the basis of sex. She asserts that the goal of such developmental theory is to produce individuals who follow their biological destinies of mother and father.

The basis of such a concept is Freud's (1935) psychosexual theory of "penis envy" in which a little girl notices her lack of a penis. The child is envious of the little boy and perceives the fault to be with her mother. The girl child turns from her mother to her father in the expectation that he can give her a penis. Since the father is unable to provide a penis, the female desires a child as a penis substitute.

Helene Deutsch (1945), noted author and psychiatrist, feels that the desire for the child as a substitute is often clouded by confusion. The female's fantasies have many motives. While transferring the interest from the outside of the body to the inside, the female may perceive the penis to be an internal organ. The baby and the penis are jointly identified as an internal part of the body.

Erikson (1964) in Inner and Outer Space: Reflections on Womanhood elaborates further. He feels that anatomy is destiny, but that anatomy combines with history and personality to form our "combined destiny" (p. 600). In the same essay, he qualified "penis envy." The female child turns to her father to form a different relationship in which the child has learned to trust. The child has autonomously developed a new love for a person who is ready to respond to her slowly developing womanhood. Erikson (1964) contends that the value of the new relationship will compensate for the old disappointment (lack of penis), but that new endeavors also have the potential for more disappointments. The female's inner self role will result in more disappointment and futility when she realizes that she cannot have her father's children. Erikson (1964) feels that the commitment to an inner self role exposes the female to specific loneliness "to a fear of being left empty or deprived of treasures, of remaining unfulfilled and of drying up" (p. 596). Adulthood begins with the ability to give and receive love. Erikson (1964) states:

The strength of the generations (a basic desposition underlying all varieties of human value systems) depends on the process by which the youths of the two sexes find their respective identities, fuse them in love and marriage, revitalize their respective traditions, and together create and 'bring up' the next generation (p. 586).

The theories of Erikson (1964) and Freud (1935) certainly imply

that bearing children is natural and developmental. Deutsch (1945) expresses similar feelings. In discussing the Marquesas culture, she observed that the women were devoid of maternal instinct. She reflects on how such a thing could happen: Could this be the result of a lack of maternal love in the childhood? Deutsch (1945) notes that in our particular culture, women who do not receive mother love or a substitute love develop less motherliness. Deutsch (1945) feels that the Marquesas violate "the most elementary forces of nature and psychic life" (p. 42).

Sherman (1971) cites studies involving pregnant women and their attitudes toward their pregnancies. The woman with favorable attitudes: (1) appeared less neurotic, (2) had a closer relationship with her mother, (3) had more economic security, (4) had a better marital adjustment, and (5) had a happier home life.

The voluntarily childless couple has not been the focal point of many research efforts. When the childless couple is discussed, the reference is in the context of people who are physically unable to have a child. Deutsch (1945) in referring to the involuntarily childless woman, feels that she receives "severe injury to her femininity" and that the childless couple experiences frustration, but the inability to have a child is much more difficult for the woman since the woman's sexual life is thought to be inseparable from mother (p. 175). Rheingold (1964) echoes this sentiment by stating that motherhood is the "imperative of (sic) self-fulfillment; all else is preparatory" (p. 510).

Pohlman and Pohlman (1969) lists these additional psychoanalytic motivations: (1) proof of virility, (2) competition with one's own parents, (3) oedipal attachment (attachment thought to exist between parent and child of the opposite sex), and (4) extension of the ego.

There are other social motivations which will be discussed in the sociological review.

Pohlman (1970) and Veever (1971c) do not support the idea of frustration of innate natures. If there is an innate desire, the influence is small. It appears that the desire for children is more learned than innate (Pohlman, 1970). Mead (1949) has expressed the view that women do have innate needs to have children. However, she feels that any woman who has learned not to want children is more apt to suffer from social criticism as a consequence of her choice and not from the frustration of desire.

Pohlman (1970) explores the widely accepted notion that voluntarily childless wives and husbands have a high incidence of emotional disturbance. It is his thesis that in a culture with severe societal pressures against the childless choice, the childless couple is apt to be (though not necessarily) slightly maladjusted or ruggedly individualistic.

The assumption of bad mental health is supported by psychological theory and by the opinions of eminent physicians who enjoy the trust and respect of the public. Pohlman (1970) cites a statement by Menninger who states: "The conception and nurture of a child—or several, or (if possible) many children—is of paramount importance in mental health" (p. 8).

A study recently completed at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research by Campbell (1975) appears to refute the correlation of mental health and children. Mothers between the ages of 25 to 34 with small children were the most unhappy group surveyed. Couples with young children reported feeling more stress and pressure than any

other group. Campbell (1975) expresses the view that childfree marriage has in the past been viewed negatively, but that in the future, many young people will recognize the childfree marriage as rewarding and fulfilling.

Recently, feminist writers have written with the purpose of challenging the role of woman as it has previously been presented in history as well as in psychology. Greer's (1971) The Female Eunuch is representative of many of the feminist books which challenge the psychological development of women. In referring to an adolescent girl's passion for horses, she suggests that psychologists grossly misinterpret this as still another example of a desire for a penis. Ms. Greer feels that this is simply a young, passionate person who is responding to an "other."

While writing of the family, Greer (1971) asserts that humanity's problem of survival is certainly not that of producing enough children who will continue to mature and produce more children as Erikson (1974) implies. Humanity's survival problem is how to limit the growth of future generations. There is no longer a debt to nature that a woman must pay before she begins to think of herself (Greer, 1971).

The feminist writers are redefining the previous psychological perceptions of what a "normal" woman does or does not do. Psychoanalytic theory will certainly not be abandoned, but the decline in births reported by the Bureau of Census (United States Bureau of Commerce, 1974) may indicate that American women do not feel that it is their destiny to reproduce. Perhaps a portion of Jong's (1975) recent poetry, "Penis Envy," reflects the feminist sentiment and expresses the implications of commitment to motherhood that women are contending with and which may

ultimately affect the decision to have a child:

But since I am a woman,
 I must not only inspire the poem
 but also type it,
 not only conceive the child
 but also bear it,
 not only bear the child
 but also feed it,
 not only feed the child
 but also carry it
 everywhere, everywhere . . .
 While men write poems
 on the mysteries of motherhood,
 I envy men who can yearn
 with infinite emptiness (p. 66).

Sociological

Margaret Sanger (1969), while writing in 1920 concerning when a woman should not have children, discussed the medical disagreement and suggested that the disagreement had been further clouded by a "babel of voices from the ranks of sociologists" (p. 86). The sociological studies have viewed childbearing as "an essential development phase in the 'career' of the family" (Bram, 1974, p. 1). For the purposes of this study, the sociological aspects will be divided into four broad categories: (1) early socialization for childlessness, (2) motivations for parenthood, (3) effects of children on marital satisfaction, and (4) pre-natalism.

Early Socialization for Childlessness

Veevers (1973a) has been largely responsible for stimulating more scientific inquiry into childlessness through interest generated from her own exploratory study. Although research involving large random samples of voluntarily childless couples is not possible due to the rare statistical incidence of voluntary childlessness (Bram, 1974), a number

of similarities in the family backgrounds of childless women have been isolated by Veevers (1973a, 1973c).

Contrary to what might be expected, almost all of the wives came from intact marriages where the mother had not worked. However, many of the wives felt that their parent's marriage was very unhappy. It is Veevers' (1973a) thesis that the young girl may observe that children do not necessarily bring marital happiness, and that children may bind a woman to a marriage that is unsatisfying. The young girl in a happy home would be more prone to romanticize marriage and children. Bram (1974) in her study of childless couples, parent couples and delay-parents (parents in the future) found the childless to be significantly more realistic than the other groups. This finding is consistent with Veevers' observation that the childless women have an intolerance for working mothers. Most of the childless women had mothers who did not work after the birth of their children. The childless women had not experienced successful mothering combined with a career and were highly doubtful about such a venture succeeding (Veevers, 1973a). It was expected that such liberated women would heartily endorse the working mother.

The sibling interaction may still be another source of early socialization for childlessness. Veevers (1973a) found a high incidence of only children and first born in her study. Veevers (1973a) contends that an only child is denied the opportunity to see her mother care for an infant. In contrast, the first born has had too much exposure to mothering. Several of the women in the study who were the first born in very large families were given a large portion of the responsibility for child care. The romance of mothering was diminished by the reality of

soiled diapers and messy hands. Veevers (1973a) further states:

Motherhood for them means sacrifice and martyrdom, and although they may feel affection, respect and sympathy for their own mother, they do not identify with her and have no desire to be like her (p. 189).

An intolerance for debt also seems to dim the value of children. Although many people do manage the expense of clothing, feeding, child care and education, the childless seem to be unwilling to go into debt for any reason (Veevers, 1973a). There has not been a study of just why this appears to be true. It is also evident that there has been little research into the paternal instinct and the male wish for childlessness.

Motivations for Parenthood

The desire for children has been a widely researched topic. The motives can be grouped under various broad categories. Pohlman (1974c) has listed 14 motivations for wanting conceptions:

(1) Innate factors. This category includes: (a) desire for sexual relations, (b) desire for a fetus in the uterus, (c) desire to experience childbirth and delivery, (d) desire to breastfeed a baby, (e) desire to cuddle a baby next to one's skin, and (f) a desire to care for an older child. The desire to have sexual relations is no longer valid since effective birth control allows sexual relations without conceptions. The desire to cuddle a baby or care for an older child may be satisfied through adoption.

(2) Psychoanalytic factors. This category includes penis envy and virility as well as other theories that have already been discussed in the psychological review.

(3) Conformity to social norms. It is difficult to measure the influence of others on the desire to have a child although Rainwater

(1965) and Gurion, Veroff and Feld (1960) indicate such an influence.

(4) Liking for children. Pohlman (1974c) indicates that this may involve the action and stimulation that children provide, but suggests that there is a difference in "wanting" and "liking." People who wanted larger families talked more of "liking" children. This category also includes the dependence needs of adults.

(5) Financial gain. Children can be viewed as an income tax deduction and as a source of help in old age. At one time, children were needed for labor.

(6) A role for woman. Stolka and Barnett (1969) found evidence that childbearing was considered as a role for women.

(7) Factors involving husband-wife relations. Pohlman (1974c) cites studies that have indicated happy marriages and children go together. He reasons that an already happy marriage would not necessarily motivate one to have a child, but would provide a base for the other motivations.

(8) Factors involving existing children. Many families believe that large families are happier or that an only child is damaged by the lack of siblings.

(9) Factors involving the sex of a child. These factors may involve a desire for a child of each sex or a strong desire for a child of a particular sex. These factors can be closely related to the psychoanalytic motives (Pohlman, 1974c)

(10) Influence of parents' family of origin. Pohlman (1974c) cites studies that indicate that age at marriage and knowledge of contraception may be passed from generation to generation in certain families.

(11) Religious factors. Religion certainly affects attitudes

toward contraception and social position on abortion or sterilization. Stolka and Barnett (1969) indicated that religion had influenced women to believe that children made marriages happier.

(12) Motives in wanting pregnancy only. These factors involve shortsightedness. Pohlman (1974c) indicates that some women feel better when they are pregnant, and still others seem to enjoy the extra attention.

(13) Special motives in out-of-wedlock conceptions. This category includes the motives of a woman who may attempt to persuade a man to marry her because of her pregnancy. It may also include the wife who attempts to bind a husband to a faltering marriage.

(14) Other motives. Pohlman (1974c) includes a desire to live a complete life in this category. He points out that many people want to experience as many things as possible.

Veevers' (1973b) delineation has six dimensions: (1) morality, (2) responsibility, (3) naturalness, (4) sexual identity and sexual competence, (5) marriage, and (6) normalcy and mental health. In the delineation of the social meanings of parenthood, Veevers (1973b) observes a "co-definition." For example, an individual may choose to have a child, and the social dimension of this choice is responsibility. Society perceives the parent to be responsible. Parenthood is the final step into adulthood (LeMasters, 1957). The non-parent by choosing not to have a child is characterized or "co-defined" as immature and irresponsible.

Gould (1974) is critical of the motivations that people express in their desire for a child. He feels that many individuals are motivated by reasons that are frequently detrimental to the child and to the

parent. It is Gould's (1974) contention that a prospective parent should carefully examine his motives and lifestyle before making the commitment to parenthood.

Popenoe (1936) conducted an informal study of why some adults are motivated to not choose parenthood. The motives were given by friends and relatives of the childless couples who knew the couple intimately. There were 862 couples and 582 of these were reported to be voluntarily childless. The couples were well educated with an excess of professional people. Many of the couples were teachers. The reasons for childlessness were: (1) self-centered (31%), (2) wife's career (22%), (3) economic pressure (16%), (4) health (9%), (5) dislike for children (8%), (7) eugenics (5%), and (8) marital discord (3%). Popenoe (1936) is careful to indicate that the couples did not give these reasons themselves. The high percentage of couples whose reasons are classified as self-centered is consistent with Rainwater's (1965) finding that the childless are negatively stereotyped as selfish.

Effects of Children on Marital Satisfaction

Pohlman (1970) in discussing the motivations for parenthood, stated that the parent and the voluntarily childless probably have pulls in the opposite directions. That is, for the childless there are probably periods of time in which a child would be welcomed. For the parent, there are similarly, days when the decision to have a child is lamented. Pohlman (1970) indicates that our culture offers few opportunities to experience anything like actual parenthood. Once a couple has a child, there are no socially acceptable means of erasing the decision. There have been many studies that have explored the inter-

action of the parent and the child, and there are also studies that indicate the effects of the child on his parent's marriage.

LeMasters (1957), Dyer (1963) and Hobbs (1965) in three similar studies concluded that parenthood does constitute a crisis. A crisis was defined as "any sharp or decisive change for which old patterns are inadequate" (LeMasters, 1957, p. 353). Almost all of the parents in the studies had planned or desired their babies, but 83 per cent of the couples in LeMasters' (1957) sample reported "severe" or "extensive" crisis. Dyer (1963) reported that 53 per cent of the 32 couples in his study experiences "extensive" or "severe" crisis. Hobbs (1965) in a more controlled study reported that 86.8 per cent of the parents experienced a "slight" crisis.

The crises ranged from loss of sleep to financial problems. The mothers in LeMasters' (1957) study who had professional training were more apt to suffer a "severe" crisis. In each of the studies, the parents seemed to have had a romanticized view of parenthood prior to the birth of the first child (LeMasters, 1957; Dyer, 1963; Hobbs, 1965). However, in the most recent of the studies, Hobbs (1965) reported that 91 per cent of the husbands and 70 per cent of the wives indicated that their marriages were better since the birth of their child.

Ryder (1973) concluded in his study of the relationship between marital satisfaction and children that "wives who have a child become more likely to report, essentially, that their husbands did not pay enough attention to them" (p. 606). Figley (1973) relates similar findings in his study relating child density and marital satisfaction. He reported a dramatic decrease in marital communication and marital adjustment during the childbearing period of the marriage. The couples

in the study also reported a low point in the marital relationship as the children were about to leave the home.

Bernard (1973) concludes that parents may be reluctant to admit that children have decreased their marital satisfaction due to the widespread popular notion that the advantages of having children outweigh the disadvantages of having children. She feels that the overall research has refuted this notion.

Feldman (1974) found that couples with an infant were significantly less satisfied with their marriages than the childless. Feldman (1974) concluded that parenthood had a ". . . pervasive influence on marriage. This continues during the life cycle when children are at home" (p. 224). He calls for more family-life education which can teach the realities of parenthood.

LeMasters (1970) feels that the confusion over the effects of children on a marriage may be due to the terms used to define effects and results. Children may sustain a marriage due to the parent's desire to provide a stable home, but this is not adequate evidence that children improve the marriage.

Chester (1974) feels that the statistics relating childlessness and marriage breakdown have been too easily accepted and explained without further question. In his research he is unable to conclude that such a relationship does not exist and suggests a comprehensive investigation.

Veevers (1973d), while recognizing that research has sometimes shown higher marital satisfaction for childless couples, feels that until there is research that directly compares the parent and the childless while controlling for length of marriage, such research is speculative.

Pronatalism

Peck and Senderowitz (1974) define pronatalism as "any attitude or policy that is 'pro-birth,' that encourages reproduction, that exalts the role of parenthood" (p. 1). Since Veevers (1971c, 1973a, 1973b), LeMasters (1970), Rainwater (1965) and Pohlman (1970) have all previously indicated that there are social pressures that encourage parenthood, it seems beneficial to explore the pronatal pressures.

Hollingworth (1916) felt that society had devices that subtly forced women to bear and rear children. She cited the use of "ideal types" as one such device. This is an abstract social type with characteristics that are so exaggerated that the "ideal type" represents the extreme in conduct and character. The general public is frequently exposed to this "ideal type" and a portion of the public may be unable to determine that the image is exaggerated. In 1975, an "ideal type" might well be the young mother often seen in television commercials. She has two children, a handsome husband who is loving and kind. The woman somehow manages to calmly defuse all crises while looking slim, well-dressed and generally beautiful.

Hollingworth (1916) contends that religion, education, law, and the media all portray woman as having only one alternative, motherhood. Hollingworth (1916) viewed these as social devices that promoted motherhood.

Cox (1974), in her review of home economics texts in a junior high school, reviewed 18 textbooks that were used by one junior high school. Nine of the books were strongly pronatal. These books presented a biased, idealized view of children and the inevitability of marriage and parenthood. Six of the books were highly questionable, and three

were classified as excellent.

Pohlman (1974a) has discovered instances of distortion of data in Burgess and Cottrell data on "Desire for Children." The age of the data and the author's warning on misinterpretation of data were virtually ignored. This instance has prompted Pohlman (1974a) to question the accuracy of other marriage and family texts.

Franzwa (1974) and Peck (1974) have both conducted informal surveys of women's magazine fiction and television with regard to pronatalism views. Both found evidence that these media tend to widely portray motherhood as an ideal role. Of course, the effects of such an influence may be impossible to assess.

Veevers (1973c) has indicated that the widespread assumption of the universality of parenthood tends to make the voluntarily childless feel very isolated. During the interview, many of the childless women reported that they had never seen or heard of voluntary childlessness discussed in the mass media.

Maxwell and Montgomery (1969) have found additional evidence that attitudes exist which exert societal pressure toward early parenthood. It is significant that the young, unmarried women in the study were unaware of the societal pressures.

Summary

In reviewing the demographic research there is evidence that the trend toward larger families has subsided and that the Bureau of Census (United States Bureau of Commerce, 1971) figures indicate that as early as 1971, 51.6 per cent of the United States wives who were between the ages of 18 to 24 years old expected to have two children. Later figures

(United States Bureau of Commerce, 1973, 1974) also indicate the trend to smaller families and an increase in the number of women desiring no children.

The literature has also indicated that although fertility can never be absolutely predicted, there are population characteristics that can be used to explore and gauge trends. The following factors seem to be influential: (1) religion, (2) religious involvement, (3) socio-economic status, (4) wife's working status, (5) residence, (6) educational attainment, (7) occupation, (8) race and (9) age at marriage. Economic and world conditions affect fertility as well. Research in voluntary childlessness has shown voluntary childlessness to be similarly influenced by these factors with the childless men and women varying sharply on religious involvement, income level, educational attainment and wife's working status.

The review of literature has also shown that voluntarily childless women have been negatively stereotyped by most Americans. Additionally, the review indicates a need for more exhaustive research of the characteristics of the voluntarily childless couple. Many researchers feel that the childfree choice is an effective means of slowing world population growth.

The psychological basis for parenthood is responsible for many of the myths relating to parenthood. The psychoanalytic theorists have suggested that the destiny of humans is biologic and developmental. Motherhood is an imperative, and parenthood is the final step to maturity (Freud, 1935; Deutsch, 1945; Erikson, 1964).

Recently, social scientists have questioned the instinctual drive to become a parent. A desire for parenthood is thought to be largely

learned through socialization processes (Pohlman, 1970; Veevers, 1971c). The literature indicates that there are social pressures which advocate the parent role for everyone and that voluntary childlessness is deviant in the pathological context.

Feminists leaders and writers are also questioning the patriarchal views of psychologists (Greer, 1971). There are indications that the psychological meanings of parenthood may be in the transition. Recent research (Campbell, 1975) has indicated that young mothers as a group are very unhappy and report more stress than other groups studied. Campbell (1975) indicates that since young mothers carry the burden of childrearing, the stresses and pressures are more intense. He states: "Children and marriage still go together and always will, but children are becoming less popular" (p. 39).

Throughout the literature there has been a consistent request for more research in the area of voluntary childlessness. The literature suggests that the needed research will have implications for all of the family life area of study.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Selection of Subjects

The research design required two groups of married individuals who had been married for at least two and one-half years who could be assigned to one of the following groups: (1) voluntarily childless couples (defined as theoretically fecund couples who do not intend to have children); (2) parent couples (defined as couples in which the wife is pregnant with the couple's first child). The parent group included 26 men and 30 women and the childless group included 85 men and 86 women. Two forms were sent or given to each couple. However, the respondents were asked to return the forms even if one spouse was unable or unwilling to complete the form.

Sampling has been a major limitation in the research of the voluntarily childless. This is in part due to the rare statistical incidence of voluntarily childless women in the general population (Veevers, 1973c; Bram, 1974). In this study it was necessary to obtain the childless group in a variety of ways. Questionnaires were mailed to each name that appeared on a partial membership list of National Organization for Non-Parents. Two were sent to each couple as it was intended to get a response from both husband and wife. The listing included members in Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas. Since membership could imply interest and support as well as non-parenthood, the cover letter

(see Appendix A) included the request that the member give the forms to a couple who did meet the criteria of being voluntarily childless if the member himself did not meet the criteria. The same letter was mailed to 42 of the National Organization for Non-Parents chapters. Six questionnaires were mailed to each chapter contact with the hope that the contact would distribute the forms to three couples who met the research criteria. Informal communications were used to obtain the names of 54 childless couples. Many of the individuals requested additional forms for childless friends. Voluntarily childless couples usually knew of other childless couples. The percentage of return from the various sources was impossible to ascertain due to anonymity, the enclosure of additional forms, uncertainty of the eligibility of those on the membership list and the uncertainty of the reasons for childlessness among persons selected through informal communications.

One other factor was considered in the inclusion of an individual in the childless group. An effort was made to eliminate any respondents who stated that childlessness was definitely a temporary state or that childlessness was due to physical problems.

Five hospitals were approached for permission to address prenatal classes or to obtain the names of those couples attending such classes. The hospitals contacted were in Stillwater (1), Oklahoma City (3) and Tulsa (1). All but St. Francis Hospital of Tulsa, Oklahoma refused to participate. The names of two couples were supplied by one of the Oklahoma City hospitals which did agree to ask for volunteers at the first meeting. Questionnaires and cover letters (see Appendix B) were distributed to 90 prospective parents.

By using the expectant parents who were enrolled in such a program

and who had been married for at least two and one-half years, it was expected that the expectant wife would have had a greater opportunity to work, pursue a career or education and to contribute to the family's income. It was also anticipated that a parent-to-be, married for at least two and one-half years, would have experienced a lifestyle without children and might also lack bias in regard to children since the parent-to-be (as the childless) had never experienced parenthood.

Development of Instrument

A questionnaire, based on relevant information from a review of the available literature, was developed by the author (see Appendix C). The instrument was designed to assess: (1) demographic characteristics, (2) family background characteristics, (3) personality characteristics, (4) decision to have or not to have a child, (5) reasons for the childless choice, (6) commitment to childlessness and (7) the value of childlessness.

The questionnaire was composed primarily of fixed-alternative questions in which the individual was asked to measure the factors or attitudes on a five point continuum of "very often," "often," "sometimes," "rarely," and "never." The questionnaire also contained open-ended questions designed to obtain the individual views and attitudes of the respondents in the sample.

The subjects were asked to rate their behavior and personality characteristics on a three point continuum of "above average," "average," and "below average." The characteristics to be rated included 25 personality characteristics that are frequently used to describe personal behavior. The personality section also contained the Life Philosophy

Scale that was developed by Stinnett (1975) in which the respondent was asked to circle the degree to which he agreed or disagreed with nine proverbs or sayings about life. This section assessed (1) Optimism vs. Pessimism Life Philosophy, (2) Self-determination vs. Fatalism Life Philosophy, and (3) Belief-in-God vs. Atheism Life Philosophy.

The final section was for the childless group only. It contained the same type open-ended and fixed-alternative questions previously explained and was designed to assess: (1) reasons for the childless choice, (2) commitment to childlessness and (3) the value of childlessness.

Validity

The questionnaire was submitted to a panel of five judges, all of whom hold advanced degrees in psychology, child development, family relations or sociology. The judges were sent a letter of instruction and asked to rate the items in terms of the following questions:

- (1) Does the questionnaire measure all important aspects of the family background?
- (2) Does the questionnaire measure all important aspects of the childless?
- (3) Are the items clear?
- (4) Are the items very specific?
- (5) Are the items significant?
- (6) Are the items inoffensive?

Modifications were made according to the recommendations of the judges. Validity was based on the judgments of the panel members.

Administration of Instrument

The instrument was distributed to the childless group by mail. A stamped, self-addressed envelope was enclosed with the questionnaire and a cover letter of explanation (see Appendix A and B). The instrument was distributed to the parent group by the author at the first prenatal session. A very brief explanation of the study was presented at this time. Many of the respondents completed the form during the free time period following the explanation. Others, desiring more time, were allowed to complete the form at a later time. All of the respondents returning the form by mail were given self-addressed, stamped envelopes and were asked to return the form in two and one-half weeks. Two weeks after the questionnaires were returned, a small group of the childless respondents (20) were asked to complete the forms again as a means of assessing reliability (Appendix D).

Analysis of Data

A percentage and frequency count was used to analyze all information obtained in the returned questionnaires. The chi-square test was utilized in the item analysis of the two sections of the Parental Attitudes Scale and the Life Philosophy Scale as an index of validity. The Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient was used to compute reliability in the test, re-test of the two sections of the Parental Attitudes Scale and the Life Philosophy Scale. The McGuire-White Index of Social Status (1955) was used to compute the socio-economic status of the respondents. The open-ended questions were evaluated and coded by the author.

The chi-square test for two independent groups was used to examine

the following hypotheses:

1. There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the following demographic characteristics:
 - (a) Race
 - (b) Socio-economic status
 - (c) Conservatism
 - (d) Religious preference
 - (e) Current religious involvement

2. There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the following family background characteristics:
 - (a) Family of origin size
 - (b) Birth order
 - (c) Intactness of parent's marriage
 - (d) Mother's occupation
 - (e) Mother's employment during childhood
 - (f) Work distribution within the family
 - (g) Church attendance during childhood
 - (h) Presence of a childless model
 - (i) Mother-child relationship
 - (j) Father-child relationship
 - (k) Current parental relationship
 - (l) Happiness of parent's marriage
 - (m) Parental history of social or medical problems
 - (n) Happiness of childhood

3. There is no significant difference between the childless

group and the parent group with regard to the following factors:

- (a) Perception of a woman's ability to combine a career and motherhood
- (b) Career commitment of the wife (women respondents only)
- (c) Marital happiness
- (d) Influence of the spouse on the decision to have or not to have children
- (e) Influence of other factors in determining attitudes toward marriage and parenting

4. There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the following:

- (a) General personality characteristics

The Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine the remaining factors in Hypothesis IV and Hypothesis V.

- (b) Optimism vs. Pessimism Life Philosophy Scale score
- (c) Self-determination vs. Fatalism Life Philosophy Scale score
- (d) Belief-in-God vs. Atheism Life Philosophy Scale score

5. There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the following:

- (a) Mother's attitude toward parenting
- (b) Father's attitude toward parenting

A percentage and frequency count was used to examine the following hypothesis:

6. There are no differences between the men and women who compose the childless group with regard to the following:

- (a) Societal sources of pressure
- (b) Commitment to childlessness
- (c) Personal value of childlessness
- (d) Reasons for the childless choice

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Description of Subjects

A detailed description of the 227 subjects who participated in this study is presented in Table I. The parent group was composed of 46 per cent male and 54 per cent females. The childless group contained almost equal groups of males (49.71%) and females (50.29%). Ages of the respondents ranged from 20 years to 66 years with the largest number of parents (50.00%) falling into the 20-25 year category. The largest number of childless respondents (43.86%) was in the 26-29 year category.

The great majority of both the parent group (96.43%) and the childless group (98.83%) were Caucasian. Slightly more than one-half per cent of the childless group were Indian in comparison to four per cent of the childless group. There were no Negroes in the study.

The largest proportion of both the parent group (71.43%) and the childless group (50.29%) were married from three to five years. The parent group reported no marriages in excess of 20 years while the childless group had two per cent in this category. By far the greatest majority of both the parent group (96%) and the childless group (92%) had not been previously married. Of the eight per cent of the childless group citing previous marriages, divorce was listed as the major cause (6.43%). The largest proportion of both the parent group (52%) and the childless group (63%) were married between the ages of 21-24 years.

The greatest proportion of both the parent group (76.79%) and the childless group (50.29%) were living in cities of over 100,000 population at the time of the study. Most of the parent group (86%) spent the majority of their youth in the South while the largest proportion of the childless group (30.30%) spent their youth in the northeastern section of the United States.

While 39 per cent of both groups were college graduates, the childless group (29.83%) exceeded the parent group (5.36%) in the proportion who had professional training or graduate school. Occupational status did not vary to a great degree. As previously stated, the childless had more individuals involved in professional occupations while the parents had more individuals who listed homemaker as their occupation. Social class of the sample was predominately upper middle class for both the parent group (51.79%) and the childless group (70.76%) with the childless group showing the greatest variation.

The childless group most frequently (32.89%) described their religious preference as atheist, agnostic or none while no parent chose this description. The largest proportion of the parent group (33.96%) listed Baptist as their preference. The Other description included Unitarian, Christian Science, Yoga, and Buddhism among others.

TABLE I
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUBJECTS

Variable	Classification	Parents		Childless	
		No.	%	No.	%
Sex	Male	26	46.43	85	49.71
	Female	30	53.57	86	50.29
Age	20-25 years	28	50.00	30	17.54
	26-29	18	32.14	75	43.86
	30-34	10	17.86	52	30.41
	35-39	0	0	9	5.26
	40 or more	0	0	5	2.93
Race	Indian	2	3.57	1	.59
	White	54	96.43	169	98.83
	Other	0	0	1	.59
Years married to present	3-5 years	40	71.43	86	50.29
	6-10	12	21.43	67	39.18
	11-19	4	7.14	14	8.19
	More than 20	0	0	4	2.34
Previous marriages ended	Death	0	0	1	.58
	Divorce	2	3.57	11	6.43
	Annulment	0	0	1	.58
Age at time of marriage	17-20 years	22	42.31	28	16.47
	21-24	27	51.92	107	62.94
	25-29	3	5.77	32	18.82
	31-32	0	0	2	1.18
	46	0	0	1	.59
Residence now	Farm or in the country	4	7.14	9	5.26
	Small town under 25,000	5	8.93	28	16.37
	City of 25,000 to 50,000	1	1.79	31	18.13
	City of 50,000 to 100,000	3	5.36	17	9.94
	City of over 100,000	43	76.79	86	50.29
Residence during most of youth	West	2	4.00	12	7.27
	Midwest	3	6.00	25	15.15
	South	43	86.00	46	27.88
	North	0	0	30	18.18
	Northeast	2	4.00	50	30.30
	Other	0	0	2	1.21

TABLE I (CONTINUED)

Variable	Classification	Parents		Childless	
		No.	%	No.	%
Educational Level	Did not finish high school	0	0	1	.59
	High school graduate	11	19.64	14	8.19
	Some college	17	30.36	37	21.64
	College graduate	22	39.29	67	39.18
	Technical or trade school	1	1.79	1	.59
	Business school	2	3.57	0	0
	Professional training	3	5.36	51	29.83
Occupation	Professional	2	3.57	29	16.96
	Business	14	25.00	68	39.77
	White collar	26	46.43	57	33.33
	Blue collar	5	8.93	6	3.51
	Service	1	1.79	1	.59
	Homemaker	8	14.29	10	5.85
Social Class	Upper Class	0	0	8	4.68
	Upper Middle	29	51.79	121	70.76
	Lower Middle	27	48.21	40	23.39
	Upper Lower	0	0	2	1.17
Religious Preference	Baptist	18	33.96	11	7.38
	Catholic	6	11.32	21	14.09
	Episcopal	3	5.66	4	2.69
	Jewish	2	3.77	9	6.04
	Methodist	9	16.98	9	6.04
	Lutheran	1	1.89	14	9.40
	Presbyterian	6	11.32	7	4.70
	Atheist, Agnostic or None	0	0	49	32.89
Other	8	15.09	25	16.80	

The Item Analysis

The Parental Attitudes Scale is divided into two sections of eight questions each which attempt to determine the individual's perception of his parents' attitudes toward children. The scale provides an overview of the parent-child relationship. Two separate sections of questions

were included in the questionnaire to separately evaluate the individual's perception of his mother's attitudes (Section I) and his perception of his father's attitudes (Section II). The two sections are identical except for the insertion of the word, mother, in the first section and the word, father, in the second section. The chi-square test was utilized in obtaining an index of validity of the Parental Attitudes Scale by determining which items significantly discriminated between those scoring in the upper and lower quartiles. Table II indicates that all eight items in section one significantly discriminated at the .0001 level. Similarly, Table III indicates that all eight items in section two also discriminated in the .0001 level.

TABLE II

ITEM ANALYSIS BASED ON COMPARISONS OF UPPER AND LOWER QUARTILES
IN SECTION ONE OF THE PARENTAL ATTITUDES SCALE REFLECTING
THE INDIVIDUAL'S PERCEPTION OF HIS OR HER
MOTHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD PARENTING

Item	df	χ^2	Level of Sig.
My mother had a preference for one of her children.	4	58.37	.0001
My mother praised me as a child.	4	75.07	.0001
I received affection from my mother.	4	82.46	.0001
My mother was pleased about my birth and sex.	4	67.01	.0001
Children were a source of unhappiness and conflict.	4	75.30	.0001
My mother was glad that she had children.	4	79.54	.0001

TABLE II (CONTINUED)

Item	df	χ^2	Level of Sig.
My mother enjoyed the time that she spent with her children.	4	89.51	.0001
Children prevented my mother from doing activities that she enjoyed.	4	29.69	.0001

TABLE III

ITEM ANALYSIS BASED ON COMPARISONS OF UPPER AND LOWER QUANTILES
 IN SECTION TWO OF THE PARENTAL ATTITUDES SCALE REFLECTING
 THE INDIVIDUAL'S PERCEPTION OF HIS OR HER
 FATHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARD PARENTING

Item	df	χ^2	Level of Sig.
My father had a preference for one of his children.	4	45.47	.0001
My father praised me as a child.	4	73.69	.0001
I received affection from my father.	4	88.28	.0001
My father was pleased about my birth and sex.	4	66.95	.0001
Children were a source of unhappiness and conflict.	4	67.93	.0001
My father was glad that he had children.	4	100.40	.0001
My father enjoyed the time that he spent with his children.	4	100.32	.0001
Children prevented my father from doing activities that he enjoyed.	4	47.91	.0001

Stinnett's Life Philosophy Scale (1975) is composed of three sections which are designed to assess the individual's Optimism vs. Pessimism Life Philosophy, Self-determination vs. Fatalism Life Philosophy and Belief-in-God vs. Atheism Life Philosophy. An index of validity was obtained by employing the chi-square test to determine which of the items in the three sections significantly discriminated between the upper and lower quartiles (on the basis of total scores for each section). All of the items in the three sections significantly discriminated at the .0001 level as Table IV, Table V, and Table VI indicate.

TABLE IV

ITEM ANALYSIS BASED ON COMPARISONS OF UPPER AND LOWER QUARTILES
IN SECTION ONE OF THE LIFE PHILOSOPHY SCALE REFLECTING THE
INDIVIDUAL'S OPTIMISM VS. PESSIMISM LIFE PHILOSOPHY

Item	df	χ^2	Level of Sig.
A wise way to live is to look on the bright side of things.	4	70.76	.0001
For every problem that arises there is usually a solution.	4	31.84	.0001
People rarely get what they want out of life.	4	55.27	.0001

TABLE V

ITEM ANALYSIS BASED ON COMPARISONS OF UPPER AND LOWER QUARTILES
 IN SECTION TWO OF THE LIFE PHILOSOPHY SCALE REFLECTING
 THE INDIVIDUAL'S SELF-DETERMINATION VS.
FATALISM LIFE PHILOSOPHY

Item	df	χ^2	Level of Sig.
When all is said and done we really have little control over what happens to us in life.	4	67.96	.0001
To a large degree we are the "captains of our fate."	4	64.11	.0001
Whether we are happy or not depends upon the kinds of things that happen to us in life.	4	74.07	.0001

TABLE VI

ITEM ANALYSIS BASED ON COMPARISONS OF UPPER AND LOWER QUARTILES
 IN SECTION THREE OF THE LIFE PHILOSOPHY SCALE REFLECTING
 THE INDIVIDUAL'S BELIEF-IN-GOD VS.
ATHEISM LIFE PHILOSOPHY

Item	df	χ^2	Level of Sig.
There is a higher power (God) that operates in the daily lives of people.	4	100.00	.0001
God answers prayer.	4	100.00	.0001
There is no power higher than man.	4	92.49	.0001

Reliability

The Spearman Correlation Rank Order Coefficient was used to analyze the reliability of the two sections of the Parental Attitudes Scale and the Life Philosophy Scale in the questionnaires returned in the test, re-test. The analysis obtained a rho of .87 on both sections of the Parental Attitudes Scale. A rho of 1.00 was obtained on the Life Philosophy Scale. Although the test, re-test letter (Appendix D) was sent to 20 childless individuals who did not choose to conceal their identities, only three individuals returned the second form. The parent group could not be involved in the test, re-test since permission to distribute the forms at the St. Francis Hospital prenatal program was given with the understanding that the parents-to-be remain anonymous. The low return rate is, in part, attributable to the length of the questionnaire (Appendix C).

Examination of Hypotheses and

Discussion of Results

Hypothesis I (a). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to race.

The chi-square test indicated that no significant difference existed. The relationship between race and childlessness remains unclear. Veevers (1971b) contends that the incidence of childlessness has previously been higher among non-whites, and that this may, in part, be due to the high incidence of venereal disease among non-whites. Trends toward smaller families and improved control of venereal disease as well as a greater dissemination of birth control information may contribute

to a greater understanding of race as a factor in voluntary childlessness in the future.

Hypothesis I (b). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to social class.

The chi-square test indicated that a significant difference did exist between the two groups. A higher proportion of the childless group (70.76%) than the parent group (51.79%) were in the upper middle class as assessed by the McGuire-White Index of Social Status (1955). Approximately twice as many of the parent group than the childless group were categorized in the lower middle class. The data in Table VII add substance to the findings of Gustavus and Henley (1971) who concluded that the childless couples in their sample were of significantly higher social status than the United States population in general when using education, occupation or income as a means of measurement.

TABLE VII

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF THE PARENT GROUP AND THE CHILDLESS GROUP

Attribute*	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
Upper Middle Class	29	51.79	121	70.76		
Lower Middle Class	27	48.21	40	23.39	10.63	.001

*"Upper Class" and "Upper Lower Class" were eliminated due to an insufficient number of cases.

Hypothesis I (c). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to conservatism.

Table VIII reflects a significant difference with regard to the two groups' conservatism rating. The childless group was clearly inclined to rate themselves as liberal while the parent group more frequently chose the moderate category. There are undoubtedly multiple explanations. The social status of the childless sample supports their liberal choice. Table I indicates that 30 per cent of the childless group spent most of their youth in the northeastern United States, which may be considered more urban and liberal. It may also be theorized that the decision to remain childfree in a society that almost universally chooses parenthood requires much self-examination, individualism and tenacity. The decision process which involves one against many may reinforce the childless' support of liberal political or social issues.

The sampling technique does not allow great generalizability. However, Hypothesis I (c) is particularly interesting when the research of McClosky (1963) is considered: "By every measure available to us, conservative beliefs are found most frequently among the uninformed, the poorly educated, and so far as we can determine, the less intelligent" (p. 224). He indicates that perhaps individuals are led to conservatism not by facts but how the facts are perceived. His second thesis as to how this occurs is that the individual learns his or her views through group influences and indoctrination. Thus, the person who develops in this conservative environment does not have any special awareness of alternatives. In discussing the childless choice, the individual's awareness seems particularly pertinent.

TABLE VIII
CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES
CONCERNING THE CONSERVATISM RATING

Attribute	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
Very Liberal	2	3.57	35	21.61		
Liberal	9	16.07	78	48.15		
Moderate	34	60.71	35	21.61	43.20	.0001
Conservative or Very Conservative*	11	19.64	14	8.64		

*The categories of "Conservative" and "Very Conservative" were collapsed due to insufficient number of cases.

Hypothesis I (d). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to religious preference.

The chi-square value, 33.04, shown in Table IX indicated that a significant difference exists at the .0001 level. The greatest proportion of the childless group (32.89%) indicated that they preferred to describe themselves as Atheist, Agnostic or None, while none of the of the parent group responded in this way. The preference of the majority of the parent group (69.81%) was Protestant; less than half as many of the childless group indicated Protestant.

The religious preference chosen by the childless is supported by Veevers (1973c) who described the childless in her exploratory study as primarily atheists or agnostics from Protestant backgrounds. Gustavus and Henley (1971) similarly reported that this was the most theoretically

interesting discovery in their study. They reported a "disproportionate number among them (childless) who have no religion whatever" (p. 287). It is noteworthy that 14 per cent of the childless group indicated that Catholic was their religious preference.

TABLE IX

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN THE RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE OF THE CHILDLESS GROUP AND THE PARENT GROUP

Attribute	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
Protestant*	37	69.81	45	30.20		
Catholic	6	11.32	21	14.09		
Atheist, Agnostic or None	0	0	49	32.89	33.04	.0001
Other	10	18.87	34	22.82		

*The Protestant denominations were collapsed to form "Protestant" due to insufficient number of cases in each of the specific demoninations.

Hypothesis I (e). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to current religious involvement.

The data did not support this hypothesis. A significant difference did exist between the two groups. A majority of the childless (63.16%) never attend church or church activities as indicated in Table X. In

contrast, more than three times as many of the parent group (37.50%) than the childless group (11.11%) attended church frequently (three times or more per month). These findings are supported by Veevers (1973c) who indicated that even when a religious preference was cited, almost all of the childless were inactive. This finding may, in part, be explained by Veevers' (1973c) contention that religion has previously viewed having children as a religious and moral obligation. The child-free individual may avoid an institution that may be critical of the childfree choice.

TABLE X
CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
CURRENT RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT

Attribute	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
Frequently (3 times or more per month)	21	37.50	19	11.11		
Occasionally (6-12 times per year)	8	14.29	13	7.60		
Infrequently (a few times per year)	13	23.21	31	18.13	30.70	.0001
Never Attend	14	25.00	108	63.16		

Hypothesis II (a). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the family of origin size.

The chi-square value obtained showed no significant difference between the parent group and the childless group concerning family of origin size.

Hypothesis II (b). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to birth order.

There was no significant difference in the birth order of the two groups. The childless group did have a larger proportion of only children (10%) and first born children (40%) in comparison to the parent group in which four per cent of the respondents were only children and 35 per cent were first born.

Some of the childless respondents explained their decision to remain childless in terms of their birth order. One young woman explained that as only children neither she nor her husband had child models. She felt that the only child status does not allow the child to perceive the parent-child relationship in the same context that the individual with siblings might perceive it.

Hypothesis II (c). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the intactness of the parent's marriage during childhood.

No significant difference existed between the two groups concerning the intactness of the parent's marriage during childhood. Veivers' (1973a) studies have also reflected that the childless tend to come from intact families. Nearly all of the voluntarily childless wives in her study indicated that their parents had never been divorced or separated.

Hypothesis II (d). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the mother's occupation.

It is possible to theorize that the childless wives may have had a higher incidence of professional women for mothers who were not engulfed by motherhood. However, the chi-square value obtained indicated no significant difference.

Hypothesis II (e). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the mother's employment during the major portion of childhood.

A significant difference was found to exist between the childless group and the parent group concerning the mother's employment during the major portion of childhood. As Table XI indicates, a chi-square value of 9.73 was obtained and was significant at the .02 level. The greatest difference was that a larger proportion of the childless group (14.71%) than the parent group (9.62%) reported their mothers being employed part-time. However, the mothers of the parent group more frequently worked full-time. Previous research (Veevers, 1973a) indicates that many childless women had mothers who did not work. A dichotomous variable of full-time employment and no-employment would not have shown a significant difference. The significance appears to be in the amount of time that the mother worked.

TABLE XI

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN MOTHER'S
EMPLOYMENT DURING MAJOR PORTION OF CHILDHOOD

Employment	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
No	33	63.46	109	64.12		
Yes (part-time)	5	9.62	25	14.71	9.73	.02
Yes (full-time)	14	26.92	36	21.18		

Hypothesis II (f). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the work distribution within the family.

Work distribution within the family was not significant. The largest proportion of both groups indicated that their share of the housework and child care was very reasonable and fair.

Hypothesis II (g). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to church attendance during childhood.

There was no significant difference between the two groups with regard to their childhood church attendance. The decline of interest in religion or religious activities that is reflected in Table VII is not traceable to a lack of interest in religion by the family of origin.

Hypothesis II (h). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the presence of a childless model.

No significant difference was found to exist between the two groups with regard to the presence of childless models. This finding seems to have implications for those agencies and individuals who desire to present voluntary childlessness as an alternative to parenthood and as a means of controlling population. Pohlman and Pohlman (1969) indicated that respected childless models failed to influence college students to choose childlessness.

Hypothesis II (i). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the mother-child relationship.

As Table XII indicates, there was a significant difference between the two groups concerning the mother-child relationship. The parent group (44.64%) more frequently characterized their relationship as very good than did the childless (29.76%). The childless (10.12%) characterized the relationship as poor or very poor approximately three times more frequently than did the parent group (3.57%). One childless respondent replied that her relationship with her mother had improved since her childhood days. She recounted that she saw many similarities between herself and her mother and that she had no desire to put a child through experiences similar to hers.

TABLE XII

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN THE MOTHER-CHILD
RELATIONSHIP OF THE PARENT GROUP AND THE CHILDLESS GROUP

Attribute	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
Very Good	25	44.64	50	29.76		
Good	28	50.00	65	38.69		
Fair	1	1.79	36	21.43	16.01	.001
Poor or Very Poor*	2	3.57	17	10.12		

*The categories of "Poor" or "Very Poor" were collapsed due to an insufficient number of cases.

Hypothesis II (j). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the father-child relationship.

There was no significant difference in the father-child relationships of the two groups. The largest proportion of both the childless group (38.55%) and the parent group (37.50%) described their relationships with their father as good.

Hypothesis II (k). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the current parental relationship.

The data in Table XIII indicate a significant difference between the parent group and the childless group. There were 12 per cent of the

childless who described their current relationship with their parents as poor or very poor while no parent respondent selected this category. The parents (95%) more frequently selected the very good or good categories than did the childless (75%). However, the large proportion of the childless who did select the very good or good categories seems to indicate that the decision to remain childless does not necessarily hinder the relationship between the childless adult and his or her parent. It is noteworthy that several of the childless respondents indicated that they have not discussed their childfree decision with their parents for fear of upsetting the relationship. They chose, instead, to let the parent believe that the childlessness was temporary or due to subfecundity.

TABLE XIII
CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
THE CURRENT PARENTAL RELATIONSHIP

Attribute	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
Very Good	41	74.55	69	42.07		
Good	11	20.00	53	32.32		
O.K.	3	5.46	23	14.02	19.70	.0003
Poor or Very Poor*	0	0	19	11.59		

*The categories of "Poor" or "Very Poor" were collapsed due to an insufficient number of cases.

Hypothesis II (1). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the happiness of the parent's marriage.

A significant difference at the .004 level is indicated in Table XIV. The parent group (75%) more frequently described their parent's marriages as very happy or happy than did the childless group (46%). Conversely, a larger proportion of the childless group (25%) described the marriages of their parents as unhappy or very unhappy than did the parent group (14%). Veevers (1973a) reported that many of the childless wives in her study also characterized their parent's marriages as very unhappy. It may be noted that several of the female respondents indicated that their mothers support their childfree choice and that their mothers probably wish that they (mothers) had also made such a choice. Additionally, many of the childless respondents viewed children as an entrapment. A respondent stated that "Children are about the only thing that I can think of that you get into and can't get out of." It may be hypothesized that children were viewed as the glue that kept unsatisfactory marriages together. It is also important to remember that had the parents been questioned, their own evaluations of their marriages might be quite different.

TABLE XIV

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN THE
HAPPINESS OF THE PARENT'S MARRIAGE

Attribute	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
Very Happy	15	26.79	19	11.18		
Happy	27	48.21	59	34.71		
O.K.	6	10.71	49	28.82	17.59	.004
Unhappy	6	10.71	26	15.29		
Very Unhappy	2	3.57	17	10.00		

Hypothesis II (m). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to their parent's history of social or medical problems.

The chi-square value obtained reflected no significant difference between the two groups. A larger proportion of the parent group (75%) reported no problem than did the childless group (59%).

Hypothesis II (n). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the happiness of childhood.

Table XV indicates that a difference significant at the .0002 level did exist. Almost three times as many childless (14.88%) described their childhood as unhappy or very unhappy than did the parents (5.45%). Bram (1974) indicated that 50 per cent of the childless women in her study assessed the relative happiness of their families as "less happy" than

the average or "very unhappy" than did the delay parents (20%) or the parents (20%).

TABLE XV
CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN
THE HAPPINESS OF CHILDHOOD

Attribute	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
Very Happy	20	36.36	22	13.10		
Happy	28	50.91	83	49.41		
Uncertain	4	7.27	38	22.62	20.04	.0002
Unhappy or Very Unhappy*	3	5.45	25	14.88		

*The categories of "Unhappy" or "Very Unhappy" were collapsed due to an insufficient number of cases.

Hypothesis III (a). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to their perception of a woman's ability to combine a career and motherhood.

No significant difference was found to exist between the parent group and the childless group concerning their perception of a woman's ability to combine a career and motherhood. Nearly equal proportions of the parent group (46%) and the childless group (43%) thought that a woman could combine both a career and motherhood. A greater proportion

of the childless (17.16%) than the parent group (7.69%) felt that a woman could rarely or never combine a career and motherhood.

Hypothesis III (b). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to career commitment of the women.

Table XVI indicates a significant difference at the .0001 level. The percentage of childless women indicating that their career drive was very great was six times that of the parent women who indicated this. Conversely, the number of parent women indicating that they had little or very little career commitment was more than four times the number of childless women who indicated little or very little commitment. Many of the childfree women expressed the view that children might interfere with the intensity of a career as well as type of career that they might choose to pursue. Several of the childfree respondents indicated that they had already changed careers several times and that a child might not allow such spontaneity in career decisions. Career commitment alone does not totally account for the lack of desire for a child since there are many women who successfully combine both motherhood and a career. At least one respondent in the parent group, a speech pathologist who planned to continue working, expressed dismay at her own mother's total devotion to motherhood. It is possible that career commitment is a form of justification for at least some childfree women. At least two childless women who were homemakers complained that they were made to feel guilty because they did not have careers outside the home and did not desire a career. They expressed the view that they had absolutely no "excuse" for not pursuing a career.

TABLE XVI

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN THE CAREER
COMMITMENT OF PARENT WOMEN AND CHILDLESS WOMEN

Attribute	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
Very Great	2	6.90	39	45.88		
Great	8	27.59	25	29.41	22.62	.0001
Moderate	8	27.59	14	16.47		
Little or Very Little*	11	37.93	7	8.24		

*The categories "little" or "very little" were collapsed due to an insufficient number of cases.

Hypothesis III (c). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to their marital happiness.

Table XVII indicates that a significant difference did exist. A larger proportion of the parent group (66%) described the happiness of their marriage as very good than did the childless (42%). More than twice as many childless respondents as parent respondents reported their marriage happiness as moderate to poor. The higher marital happiness of the parent group may, in part, be due to the expected birth of the first child. This time period may be a time of sharing and expectation. Campbell (1975) has reported that marital happiness and satisfaction diminishes after children are born and that marital happiness and satisfaction do not rise again until after the last child leaves home.

Feldman (1974) reported that couples with an infant were significantly less satisfied with their marriages than the childless. However, this lack of satisfaction is not evident before the first child is born. It may be noted that this finding along with the more negative assessment of the happiness of childhood [Hypothesis II (n)] by the childless group is supported by Bowman (1970) who indicates that the happiness of childhood affects the marital happiness.

When asked to state what they valued most highly about their marriage, the childless women in Bram's (1974) study most frequently indicated "companionship" and "ego support." The childless men mentioned "companionship" slightly less often than did the parent men or delay parent. Slightly more childless men indicated "love" and "ego support" than did the parent men or delay parent men. Both childless men and women desired more "cohesiveness" in their marriages. Bram's (1974) research may indicate that childless men and women have very high expectations of marriage and of their spouse. The parent may have access to ego support, love and companionship through a child as well as through a spouse.

TABLE XVII

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN THE MARITAL HAPPINESS
OF THE PARENT GROUP AND THE CHILDLESS GROUP

Attribute	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
Very Good	37	66.07	72	42.35		
Good	16	28.57	77	45.29	9.72	.01
Moderate to Poor*	3	5.36	21	12.35		

*The categories "moderate" and "poor" were collapsed due to an insufficient number of cases.

Hypothesis III (d). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the influence of the spouse on the decision to have or not to have children.

As illustrated in Table XVIII, a significant difference did exist between the parent group and the childless group. Among the childless, 15 per cent indicated that their spouse had no influence in regard to their decision to have or not to have children. In contrast, no parent selected this response. Almost twice as many of the parent respondents (25%) indicated that their spouses had very much influence on their decision than did the childless (14%).

TABLE XVIII

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN THE INFLUENCE OF THE SPOUSE ON THE DECISION TO HAVE OR NOT TO HAVE CHILDREN

Attribute	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
No Influence	0	0	25	14.62		
Little Influence	8	14.29	26	15.21		
Moderate Influence	17	30.36	54	31.58	11.81	.02
Much Influence	17	30.36	42	24.56		
Very Much Influence	14	25.00	24	14.04		

Hypothesis III (e). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to the influence of other factors in determining attitudes toward marriage and parenthood.

A significant difference was found to exist between the parent group and the childless group with regard to the influence of other factors in determining their attitudes toward marriage and parenthood. Among the parent group, 43 per cent felt that their friends had the greatest influence in shaping their ideas while only 28 per cent of the childless shared this view. Table XIX indicates that 19 per cent of the childless group felt that their attitudes were largely self-determined. This difference may reflect the great introspection that the childfree respondent has undoubtedly endured as the childless option was considered. The childfree individual may well feel that he or she is beyond the control of group influence.

TABLE XIX

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES IN THE INFLUENCE OF
OTHER FACTORS IN DETERMINING ATTITUDES TOWARD
MARRIAGE AND PARENTING

Factors	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
Friends	21	42.86	45	27.95		
Family	6	12.25	18	11.18		
Institutions* (School, Church)	14	28.57	17	10.56	23.34	.0003
Mass Media	4	8.16	24	14.91		
Self-determination	0	0	31	19.26		
Other**	4	8.16	26	16.15		

*The categories "school" and "religion or church" were collapsed to form "institutions" due to an insufficient number of cases.

**The categories "spouse" and "other" were collapsed due to an insufficient number of cases.

Hypothesis IV (a). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to their general personality characteristics.

Significant differences were observed between the two groups with regard to their general personality characteristics (see Table XX). It is noteworthy that with three exceptions ("deliberate," "enjoy children," "do what others want me to do") the largest proportion of the childless group perceived themselves to be above average in intelligence, perfectionism, independence, enjoyment in being alive and in aggressiveness,

With no exceptions, the largest proportion of the parent group chose the average description for all of those categories showing a significant difference. "Enjoy children" and "do what others want me to do" characteristics are directly related to the childfree choice since it is frequently assumed that a couple choosing not to have children would not enjoy them as much as a parent presumably might. Similarly, it might be assumed that the childless do not easily do as others wish since the childfree choice represents a great deviation from the major portion of society. A few childless respondents were annoyed that the childfree couple is frequently depicted as not liking children. They contended that the childless do enjoy children and are frequently involved in youth activities. However, Table XX indicates that the largest proportion of the childless (52.63%) perceived that their enjoyment of children is below average. It is surprising that the greatest proportion of the parent group (58.93%) perceive that their enjoyment of children is average. It might be expected that prospective parents would rate their enjoyment higher.

The data suggest that the parent does not generally perceive himself as special. They are doing what most people do. However, the childless respondent appears to generally view himself as special and above average in many ways.

TABLE XX

CHI-SQUARE VALUE REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PARENT
GROUP AND THE CHILDLESS GROUP CONCERNING THEIR
GENERAL PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristic	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
<u>Intelligent</u>						
Above Average	25	44.64	122	71.35		
Average	30	53.57	49	28.66	15.22	.001
Below Average	1	1.79	0	0		
<u>Perfectionist</u>						
Above Average	17	30.36	90	52.63		
Average	27	48.21	66	38.60	11.07	.004
Below Average	12	21.43	15	8.77		
<u>Independent</u>						
Above Average	22	39.29	107	62.57		
Average	28	50.00	53	30.99	9.33	.01
Below Average	6	10.71	11	6.43		
<u>Enjoy Being Alone</u>						
Above Average	11	19.64	79	46.20		
Average	39	69.64	78	45.61	12.53	.002
Below Average	6	10.71	14	8.19		
<u>Deliberate</u>						
Above Average	11	19.64	69	40.35		
Average	41	73.21	86	50.29	9.33	.01
Below Average	4	7.14	16	9.36		

TABLE XX (CONTINUED)

Characteristic	Parent		Childless		χ^2	Level of Sig.
	No.	%	No.	%		
<u>Enjoy Children</u>						
Above Average	21	37.50	17	9.94		
Average	33	58.93	64	37.43	8.14	.0001
Below Average	2	3.57	90	52.63		
<u>Aggressive</u>						
Above Average	15	26.79	70	41.18		
Average	33	58.93	64	37.65	8.14	.04
Below Average	8	14.29	36	21.18		
<u>Do What Others Want Me To Do</u>						
Above Average	8	14.29	19	11.11		
Average	42	75.00	88	51.46	14.20	.001
Below Average	6	10.71	64	34.43		

The general personality characteristics which were not found to be significant included the following: (1) Physically active, vigorous; (2) Enjoy life; (3) Tense; (4) Easily pleased; (5) Slow to get things done; (6) Friendly; (7) Accept responsibility; (8) Moody; (9) Accepted by others; (10) Nervous; (11) Careless; (12) Impatient; (13) Cooperative; (14) Self-reliant; (15) Attractive; (16) Irritable; and (17) Mature.

Hypothesis IV (b, c, d). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to their Optimism vs.

Pessimism Life Philosophy, Self-Determination vs. Fatalism Life Philosophy, or Belief-in-God vs. Atheism Life Philosophy.

Comparisons were made of the scores of the two groups on Stinnett's Life Philosophy Scale (1975) utilizing a Mann-Whitney U test (Table XXI). The comparison of the two groups indicated that a significant difference did exist between the two groups with regard to the Optimism vs. Pessimism Life Philosophy and the Belief-in-God vs. Atheism Life Philosophy. The parent group indicated a significantly higher degree of optimism than did the childless group. The parent group also expressed a significantly greater tendency toward positive Belief-in-God than did the childless group. An analysis of the Self-determination vs. Fatalism Life Philosophy indicated no significant difference. Table XXII reflects the responses of the two groups to the Life Philosophy Scale.

TABLE XXI

MANN-WHITNEY U SCORES: LIFE PHILOSOPHY CLASSIFIED BY
OPTIMISM VS. PESSIMISM, SELF-DETERMINATION VS.
FATALISM AND BELIEF-IN-GOD VS. ATHEISM

Life Philosophy	<u>z</u>	Level of Sig.
Optimism Vs. Pessimism	-3.49	.0002
Self-Determination Vs. Fatalism	-0.46	n.s.
Belief-in-God Vs. Atheism	-7.33	.00003

TABLE XXII
 RESPONSES TO STINNETT'S LIFE PHILOSOPHY SCALE

Life Philosophy		Strongly Agree		Agree		Unsure		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<u>Optimism vs. Pessimism</u>											
A wise way to live is to look on the bright side of things.	Parents	28	50.00	24	42.86	3	5.36	0	0	1	1.77
	Childless	45	26.47	94	55.29	8	4.71	19	11.18	4	2.35
For every problem that arises there is usually a solution.	Parents	19	33.93	31	55.36	4	7.14	2	3.57	0	0
	Childless	58	34.12	90	52.94	5	2.94	15	8.82	2	1.18
People rarely get what they want in life.	Parents	0	0	4	7.14	5	8.93	32	57.14	15	26.79
	Childless	8	4.73	24	14.20	16	9.47	100	59.17	21	12.43
<u>Self-determination vs. Fatalism</u>											
When all is said and done we really have little control over what happens to us in life.	Parents	1	1.85	1	1.85	3	5.55	24	44.44	25	46.30
	Childless	5	2.92	15	8.77	14	8.19	70	40.94	67	39.18
To a large degree we are the "captains of our fate."	Parents	13	23.21	31	55.36	5	8.93	2	3.57	5	8.93
	Childless	47	27.65	89	52.35	11	6.47	16	9.41	7	4.12
Whether we are happy or not depends upon the kinds of things that happen to us in life.	Parents	4	7.27	24	43.64	8	14.55	15	27.27	4	7.27
	Childless	13	7.88	62	37.58	23	13.94	57	34.55	10	6.06

TABLE XXII (CONTINUED)

Life Philosophy	Strongly Agree		Agree		Unsure		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
<u>Belief-in-God vs. Atheism</u>											
There is a higher power (God) that operates in the daily lives of people.	Parents	29	51.79	17	30.36	9	16.07	1	1.79	0	0
	Childless	21	12.43	34	20.12	47	27.81	20	11.83	55	32.54
God answers prayer.	Parents	27	49.10	17	30.91	10	18.18	1	1.82	0	0
	Childless	16	9.47	19	11.24	59	34.91	20	11.83	55	32.54
There is no power higher than man.	Parents	0	0	2	3.57	8	14.29	10	17.86	36	64.29
	Childless	15	8.82	14	8.24	56	32.94	38	22.35	47	27.65

Hypothesis V (a, b). There is no significant difference between the childless group and the parent group with regard to their mothers' attitude toward parenting and to their father's attitude toward parenting.

Comparisons of the two groups were made utilizing a Mann-Whitney U test. Table XXIII indicates that both the mother's attitude toward parenting and the father's attitude toward parenting differed significantly between the two groups. Respondents in the parent group generally viewed their mothers' and fathers' attitudes toward parenting as more positive than did respondents in the childless group. Responses to the Parental Attitude Section I and Section II are shown in Table XXIV and XXV.

TABLE XXIII

MANN-WHITNEY U SCORES: CLASSIFIED BY MOTHER'S
ATTITUDE TOWARD PARENTING AND FATHER'S
ATTITUDE TOWARD PARENTING

Description	<u>z</u>	Level of Sig.
Mother's Attitude Toward Parenting	-3.21	.001
Father's Attitude Toward Parenting	-2.95	.002

Descriptive statistics were used to examine the remaining hypotheses:

TABLE XXIV

RESPONSES TO PARENTAL ATTITUDES SCALE SECTION I

Item		Very Often		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
My mother had a preference for one of her children.	Parent	2	3.64	6	10.91	13	23.64	17	30.91	17	30.91
	Childless	13	7.74	21	12.50	32	19.05	47	27.98	55	32.74
My mother praised me as a child.	Parent	11	19.64	25	44.64	15	26.79	5	8.91	0	0
	Childless	29	17.06	53	31.18	58	34.12	25	14.71	5	2.94
I received affection from my mother.	Parent	26	46.43	17	30.36	10	17.86	3	5.36	0	0
	Childless	47	27.65	57	33.53	46	27.06	15	8.82	5	2.94
My mother was pleased about my birth and sex.	Parent	37	66.07	14	25.00	4	7.14	1	1.79	0	0
	Childless	70	42.17	66	39.76	24	14.46	6	3.61	0	0
Children were a source of unhappiness and conflict.	Parent	3	5.36	2	3.57	6	10.71	16	28.57	29	51.79
	Childless	8	4.73	11	6.51	38	22.49	64	37.87	48	28.40
My mother was glad that she had children.	Parent	40	71.43	9	16.07	5	8.93	0	0	2	3.57
	Childless	81	48.21	52	30.95	29	17.26	4	2.38	2	1.19
My mother enjoyed the time that she spent with her children.	Parent	32	57.14	14	25.00	7	12.50	1	1.79	2	3.57
	Childless	62	36.69	71	42.01	24	14.20	12	7.10	0	0
Children prevented my mother from doing activities that she enjoyed.	Parent	0	0	0	0	13	23.21	31	55.36	12	21.43
	Childless	9	5.33	9	5.33	46	27.22	74	43.79	31	18.34

TABLE XXV
 RESPONSES TO PARENTAL ATTITUDES SCALE SECTION II

Item		Very Often		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
My father had a preference for one of his children.	Parent	4	7.27	4	7.27	13	23.64	18	32.73	16	29.09
	Childless	13	7.88	22	13.33	39	23.64	48	29.10	43	26.06
My father praised me as a child.	Parent	9	16.07	17	30.36	19	33.93	10	17.86	1	1.79
	Childless	19	11.24	46	27.22	55	32.54	38	22.49	11	6.51
I received affection from my father.	Parent	15	26.79	18	32.14	15	26.79	7	12.50	1	1.79
	Childless	23	13.61	46	27.22	58	34.32	31	18.34	11	6.51
My father was pleased about my birth and sex.	Parent	32	58.18	16	29.09	5	9.09	1	1.82	1	1.82
	Childless	57	34.34	64	38.55	28	16.87	13	7.83	4	2.41
Children were a source of unhappiness and conflict.	Parent	3	5.36	1	1.79	8	14.29	20	35.71	24	42.86
	Childless	7	4.19	5	2.99	48	28.74	69	41.32	38	22.75
My father was glad that he had children.	Parent	36	64.29	9	16.07	8	14.29	0	0	3	5.36
	Childless	61	36.53	58	34.73	40	23.95	8	4.79	0	0
My father enjoyed the time that he spent with his children.	Parent	29	51.79	13	23.21	8	14.29	3	5.36	3	5.36
	Childless	50	29.59	57	33.73	44	26.04	16	9.47	2	1.18
Children prevented my father from doing activities that he enjoyed.	Parent	3	5.46	3	5.46	9	16.36	28	50.91	12	21.81
	Childless	6	3.57	12	7.14	42	25.00	67	39.88	41	24.41

Hypothesis VI (a). There are no differences between the men and women who compose the childless group with regard to the societal sources of pressure.

Table XXVI indicates marked differences existed in the responses of the childfree men and women with regard to the societal sources of pressure. Childfree men (19.53%) indicated more frequently than did the childfree women (11.57%) that they felt no pressure. Perhaps this difference reflects a greater tendency for society to link children with the image of womanhood. Childfree men may not spend as much time in situations where children are the topic of conversation and interest. Society may not expect men to desire children; therefore, men may feel less pressure against their childfree choice.

Childfree men and women expressed very few differences in their perceptions of other societal sources of pressure. Both men and women indicated that the mass media exerted more pressure than their parents.

TABLE XXVI

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF THE MEN AND WOMEN
OF THE CHILDLESS GROUP CONCERNING THE
SOCIETAL SOURCES OF PRESSURE

Source of Pressure	Men		Women	
	No.	%	No.	%
Friends	21	16.41	32	21.77
Parents	26	20.31	28	19.05
Siblings	5	3.91	8	5.44
Mass Media	27	21.09	33	22.45

TABLE XXVI (CONTINUED)

Source of Pressure	Men		Women	
	No.	%	No.	%
Co-Workers	18	14.06	22	14.97
Grandparents	4	3.13	5	3.40
No Pressure	25	19.53	17	11.57
Other	2	1.56	2	1.36

Hypothesis VI (b). There are no differences between the men and women who compose the childless group with regard to their commitment to childlessness.

No marked differences existed in the responses of the childless husbands and wives with regard to their commitment to childlessness. The majority (65%) of the childfree respondents indicated that neither had a greater commitment.

Hypothesis VI (c). There are no differences between the men and women who compose the childless group with regard to the personal value of childlessness.

There were marked differences in the responses of the men and women of the childless group with regard to two of the categories. Almost twice as many of the responses given by the childfree women (13.87%) indicated that they valued the lifestyle afforded by childlessness. This difference may be largely due to the traditional greater involvement

of women with children. The childfree woman may observe great differences in her lifestyle and that of a woman with children. The lifestyle of a childfree man and a father may not differ so sharply.

More than four times as many men (8.55%) listed other values than did the childfree women (1.73%). Other included "the opportunity for personal growth," "contribution to society" and "lack of sacrifice" among others.

Table XXVII indicates that the greatest proportion of both men (32.89%) and women (35.83%) stated that they valued the freedom of childlessness. Undoubtedly, freedom may overlap and encompass some of the other categories, but freedom was usually listed separately along with other categories. Freedom seemed to indicate an overall absence of ties and commitments that frequently engulf the parent.

TABLE XXVII

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF THE MEN AND WOMEN OF
THE CHILDLESS GROUP CONCERNING THE PERSONAL
VALUE OF CHILDLESSNESS

Reason	Men		Women	
	No.	%	No.	%
Career	5	3.29	6	3.47
Marriage Relationship	18	11.84	20	11.56
Spontaneity	12	7.90	15	8.67
Freedom	50	32.90	62	35.84
Absence of Dependent Person	20	13.16	19	10.98
Financial Freedom	19	12.50	21	12.14

TABLE XXVII (CONTINUED)

Reason	Men		Women	
	No.	%	No.	%
Peace and Quiet	3	1.97	3	1.73
Lifestyle	12	7.90	24	13.87
Other	13	8.55	3	1.73

Hypothesis VI (d). There are no differences between the men and women who compose the childless group with regard to their reasons for the childless choice.

Table XXVIII indicates that there were marked differences in the responses of the men and women of the childless group. Almost twice as many of the responses by women (12.12%) as those by men (6.82%) indicated that occupational involvement was their reason for opting for the child-free life. Almost twice as many of the males' responses (16.82%) indicated concern for population growth as one of their reasons than did the females' responses (8.66%). These two-fold differences may be explained by considering the traditional male and female roles. Men have not traditionally lost their freedom, careers, or physical appearance due to the assumption of the parent role. It seems plausible that the man's reasons for the childfree choice would more frequently reflect reasons for the common good of the world or mankind while the woman's reasons are of a more personal nature.

The childfree men and women were given an opportunity to cite

additional reasons for childlessness (Table XXVIII) not listed in the questionnaire. Very few of the respondents listed additional reasons, but those that did usually indicated that they were childfree because of their dislike of children or because their spouse did not want children.

TABLE XXVIII
DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF THE MEN AND WOMEN
OF THE CHILDLESS GROUP CONCERNING THEIR
REASONS FOR THE CHILDLESS CHOICE

Reason	Men		Women	
	No.	%	No.	%
Concern for Population Growth	37	16.82	20	8.66
Concern for World Conditions	21	9.55	20	8.66
Occupational Involvement	15	6.82	28	12.12
Desire to Maintain Childfree Lifestyle	69	31.36	70	30.30
Wish to Avoid the Responsibility of Raising Children	34	15.46	37	16.02
Unsuited Temperamentally	16	7.27	25	10.82
Wish to Avoid Pregnancy and Childbirth	2	0.91	7	3.03
Lack of Financial Responsibility	25	11.36	21	9.09
Distaste for Physical Changes of the Body During Pregnancy	1	0.46	1	1.30

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The overall purpose of this research was to explore the differences in the family backgrounds of the childless group and the parent group and to consider how these differences may have affected the decision to remain childless. The study included 56 prospective parents enrolled in the prenatal class at St. Francis' Hospital in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and 171 childless men and women who are childless by choice (voluntarily childless or childfree). The men and women in the parent group were expecting the birth of their first child. All of the respondents had been married for at least two and one-half years. The childfree respondents were obtained in a variety of ways. Letters were sent to the chapter contacts of the National Organization for Non-Parents (N.O.N.) and to the names on a N.O.N. membership list of members in Arkansas, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas. A portion of the childfree respondent's names were obtained through informal communications.

A questionnaire was designed to assess (1) demographic characteristics, (2) family background characteristics, (3) personality characteristics and life philosophy (Stinnett's Life Philosophy Scale, 1975), (4) the decision to have or not to have a child, (5) the reasons for the childfree choice, (6) the commitment to childlessness and (7) the value of childlessness. The questionnaire was composed primarily of fixed-alternative questions, but open-ended questions were also included.

The last portion of the questionnaire was administered to the childless group only.

Frequencies and percentages were obtained for all information. The chi-square test was used in an item analysis of Stinnett's Life Philosophy Scale (1975) and both sections of the Parental Attitudes Scales to determine those items that significantly differentiated between the individuals scoring in the upper quartile and those scoring in the lower quartile. A Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient was computed in the test, re-test of the Life Philosophy Scale and both sections of the Parental Attitudes Scale. The chi-square test for two independent samples and the Mann-Whitney U test were utilized in examining the hypotheses.

The results and conclusions of the study were as follows:

1. All of the items in Section I and Section II of the Parental Attitudes Scale were significantly discriminating between the upper and lower quartiles at the .0001 level.
2. All of the items in the three sections of the Life Philosophy Scale were significantly discriminating between the upper and lower quartiles at the .0001 level.
3. In the Life Philosophy Scale a test, re-test reliability coefficient of 1.00 was reached. In Section I and Section II of the Parental Attitudes Scale, a test, re-test reliability of .87 was reached.
4. The childless group was in a significantly higher socioeconomic class.
5. The childless group was significantly more liberal in regard to most social and political issues.

6. The two groups differed significantly concerning religious preference. The largest proportion of the childless group (32.89%) classified their religious preference in the atheist, agnostic or none category.
7. A significant difference at the .0001 level existed between the two groups with regard to their current religious involvement. The majority of the childless (63%) indicated that they never attend church or church activities.
8. The two groups differed significantly with regard to the employment of their mothers during the major portion of their childhood at the .02 level. When given the options of no-employment, full-employment or part-time employment, the mothers of the parent group had a higher incidence of full-time employment while the mothers of the childless group had a higher incidence of part-time employment.
9. A significant difference at the .001 level existed between the two groups concerning the mother-child relationship. The parent group (95%) more frequently characterized their childhood relationship with their mother as very good or good than did the childless group (68%).
10. The two groups differed significantly at the .0003 level with regard to the current parental relationship. The parent group (95%) more frequently selected the very good or good description than did the childless group (74%).
11. A significant difference existed in the groups' perception of the happiness of their parents' marriages at the .004 level. A larger proportion of the parents (75%) perceived their

parents' marriages to be very happy or happy than did childless (46%)

12. A significant difference at the .0002 level existed between the two groups concerning the happiness of their childhood. The parents perceived their childhoods to be significantly happier.
13. The women of the childless group were found to have a significantly greater career commitment than the women of the parent group.
14. A significant difference at the .01 level existed between the two groups concerning their marital happiness. The parents (66%) had a higher proportion of very good marriages than did the childless (42%).
15. The childfree spouse had significantly less influence on his or her spouse concerning the decision to have or not to have a child.
16. A significant difference at the .0003 level existed between the two groups concerning the influence of others on their attitudes concerning marriage and parenting. The childless indicated a greater degree of self-determination in the formation of their attitudes concerning marriage and parenting.
17. Significant differences existed between the two groups concerning their general personality characteristics. The childless group more frequently described themselves as above average in intelligence, enjoyment of being alone, perfectionism, independence, and in their aggressiveness. The childless indicated that they were below average in their willingness

- to do what others wishes and in their enjoyment of children.
18. The parent group indicated a significantly higher degree of optimism than did the childless group. The parent group had a significant tendency toward positive Belief-in-God while the childless generally do not.
 19. Respondents in the parent group generally viewed their mothers' and fathers' attitudes toward parenting as more positive than did the childless respondents.
 20. A marked difference existed in the responses of the childless men and women concerning sources of societal pressure. The childfree men (20%) indicated that they more frequently felt no pressure than did the childfree women (12%).
 21. A marked difference existed between the childfree men and women with regard to the personal value of childlessness. Almost twice as many childfree wives (14%) indicated that they valued the childfree lifestyle than did the childfree husbands (8%). More than four times as many men (9%) than women (2%) cited other values which included the opportunity for personal growth and contributions to society among others.
 22. Marked differences existed between the childless men and women concerning their reasons for the childfree choice. Almost twice as many women (12.12%) indicated that occupational involvement was their reason for choosing the childfree life than did the men (6.82%). Men (16.82%) cited concern for population growth more frequently than did the women (8.66%).

Discussion

This study seems to indicate that for at least some childless respondents there is a correlation between family background variables and the decision to remain childfree. Generally, the childless group assessed the happiness of their childhood, the relationship with their mother, their parents' marital happiness and the attitudes of their mother and father toward parenting in significantly more negative terms. Additionally, a greater proportion of the childless group than the parent group described their marital happiness as moderate to poor. The childless group indicated that they were slightly less optimistic than the parent group. The self-perception of themselves as above average in intelligence and in perfectionism is reflected in many of the responses of the childless group. Their responses to open-ended questions indicated that the respondents in the childless group had observed many of the parenting mistakes made by friends. The childless group seemed to have a very good idea of what the "ideal" parent should do and a very negative view of the effects of children on the marital relationship. The childless respondents appeared skeptical of an individual's ability to parent well in today's world and still maintain a good marital relationship. The childless respondents seemed to assume that parenthood would necessarily mean an end to personal development and to a satisfying marital relationship. One respondent stated that although she was glad that her own mother had chosen to become a parent and a full-time mother, she could never dedicate her entire life to mothering.

It is noteworthy that the two groups did not significantly differ on whether or not there had been a knowledge of childless models during childhood. Many of the respondents indicated that the childless models

were not voluntarily childless and that the childless couples were pitied by the parents of the childfree respondents. This finding has implications for those who propose voluntary childlessness as one method of population control. If voluntary childlessness is to be used as a force for reducing or controlling population growth, it is desirable that the advantages and rewards of the childfree lifestyle be presented to young people. This study implies that the alternative of remaining voluntarily childless will receive support from women who desire careers and from those who view the past roles of women as unacceptable.

A significantly higher proportion of the childfree respondents were concentrated in the higher socio-economic classes. Gustavus and Henley (1971) also found this to be true. It may be theorized that childbearing will eventually be the pasttime of the lower socio-economic groups. While it is impossible to say that this will not happen, it seems more likely that as the number of childfree individuals increases and as young people become more aware of the available choices, couples will give more consideration to their motives for parenthood rather than abandon the process. The creation of an awareness of alternatives for those who do not desire the role of parenthood may be the greatest general value of voluntary childlessness.

Areas of Possible Future Study

This study indicates a need for additional research: to evaluate the marital relationship of the childfree couple; to evaluate the costs and rewards of voluntary childlessness during the later periods of marriage; to evaluate the childfree decision process; and to further evaluate the personality characteristics of the voluntarily childless

individual. The childfree respondents frequently indicated that they were envied by their friends with children. Perhaps, research is needed to determine how parents, in retrospect, view their decision to become parents.

The childless respondents were generous in sharing their feelings and explanations. The respondents indicated that they felt that research was needed concerning how the childfree person relates to his or her parents. They felt that a study was needed to explore the many ways that the childfree person can be involved with children without actually giving birth. The childless asked for research concerning the regret and ambivalence that may accompany the childfree choice, and by far, the childless respondents most frequently indicated that research was needed to examine the community's attitudes toward the childfree.

Limitations

It is particularly important that the reader understand the context in which this study was undertaken. The scarcity of prior research and apparent neglect of the subject by social scientists seemed to indicate that any new findings or exploration would be worthwhile. A major limitation in research of the voluntarily childless has been (and still is) the difficulty in locating voluntarily childless couples. Researchers with an interest in this area have found it necessary to sacrifice a purely scientific approach and large, randomly selected samples. The focus has been on obtaining any information in an exploratory manner.

These difficulties were anticipated and a diligent effort was made to overcome the problems. However, the statistical rarity of voluntarily childless couples and their distribution in the general population pro-

hibit many of the desirable controls. Using previous studies as a guide, it was estimated that a childless group consisting of 50 respondents would be remarkable. However, the voluntarily childless person appeared ready to share the childless lifestyle. The large, unexpected return was surprising. The surprise was negatively compounded by great difficulty in obtaining permission to distribute the questionnaires to the prospective parents involved in the prenatal programs of private hospitals. Nevertheless, the large number of childfree respondents and the scarcity of previous research, distinguishes this study. It is hoped that in the future, this exploratory effort will provide the basis for more studies in the area of voluntary childlessness.

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APPENDIX A

LETTER OF REQUEST SENT WITH QUESTIONNAIRE
TO CHILDLESS RESPONDENTS


OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY • STILLWATER

 Department of Family Relations & Child Development
 (405) 372-6211, Ext. 6084

74074

June 17, 1975

There are few areas of social behavior that have been as neglected as that of voluntary childlessness (couples who are physically able to have children, but who choose not to). The result of such neglect is often bias, misunderstanding and negative stereotyping.

A major limitation in such research is the difficulty in locating voluntarily childless couples. Your cooperation and participation in this research project will provide new insights into the childfree alternative. Your participation is crucial to the success of the project.

I am fully aware that most of you are involved in careers and projects that consume much of your time. I wish that it were possible to conduct the research with a one page form. However, the scarcity of previous research and the magnitude of the issue require a comprehensive examination. I am deeply appreciative of your time and cooperation.

If you have been married for at least 2½ years and do not intend to have children, please assist in this research by filling out the enclosed questionnaires. The two questionnaires are identical (one for the husband and one for the wife). As you answer the questions, please do not consult or compare answers. A stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. I hope to have the returned forms by July 7, 1975. If for some reason one of you cannot assist with the research, please return the one completed form.

You are asked not to put your name on the questionnaire. This assures your anonymity. Therefore, you are encouraged to answer all questions as honestly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers.

A brief summary of the research findings will be available in the fall. If you would like a copy, please send a postcard or a request in a separate envelope giving your name and address. This will further assure your anonymity.

It is possible that you have received a questionnaire, and that you do not meet the research criteria. In this case, would you please assist this research and give the material to a childfree couple who does meet the criteria?

Again, your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sandra A. Martin
 Graduate Student
 Family Relations & Child Development
 Oklahoma State University

Althea Wright, Ed.D.
 Assistant Professor
 Family Relations & Child Development
 Oklahoma State University

APPENDIX B

LETTER OF REQUEST SENT WITH QUESTIONNAIRE
TO PARENT RESPONDENTS


OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY • STILLWATER

 Department of Family Relations & Child Development
 (405) 372-6211, Ext. 6084

74074

June 25, 1975

You and your mate have made the decision to become parents. Therefore, you are well qualified to participate in a graduate research program at Oklahoma State University concerning the decision to have children. This is an important decision. This research is badly needed since very little is known of why a couple decides to have a child. Today, an increasing number of couples are choosing to remain childless. Your cooperation in this project will provide valuable insights into the decision to have or not to have a child.

I am fully aware that most of you are involved in careers and projects that consume much of your time. I wish that it were possible to conduct the research with a one page form. However, the scarcity of previous research and the magnitude of the issue require a comprehensive examination. Your cooperation is essential to the success of the project. I am deeply appreciative of your time and cooperation.

If you have been married for at least 2¹ years and are expecting your first child, please assist in this research by completing the enclosed questionnaires. The two forms are identical (one for the husband and one for the wife). As you answer the questions, please do not consult or compare answers. A stamped, addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. I hope to have the returned forms by _____. If for some reason one of you cannot assist with the research, please return the one completed form.

You are asked not to put your name on the questionnaire. This assures your anonymity. There are no right or wrong answers. Therefore, you are encouraged to answer all questions as honestly as possible.

A brief summary of the research findings will be available in the fall. If you would like a copy, please send a postcard or a request in a separate envelope giving your name and address. This will further assure your anonymity.

Althea Wright, Ed.D.
 Assistant Professor
 Family Relations & Child Development
 Oklahoma State University

Sandra A. Martin
 Graduate Student
 Family Relations & Child Development
 Oklahoma State University

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN THE RESEARCH

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. Your time is valuable, and your effort and time used in completing the questionnaire will provide valuable insights into human relationships. Please do not sign the questionnaire. This assures your anonymity. All responses are confidential. There are no right or wrong answers. Therefore, you are urged to be as honest and accurate as possible. Some of the questions may be applicable only to the childless couple while others are intended for the parent (for example, How many children do you have?). Please answer all of the questions that are applicable to you.

1. Sex 1. Male 2. Female
2. Age years
3. Race 1. Black 2. Indian 3. White
 4. Other (Please specify) _____
4. How many years have you been married to your present spouse? years
5. How many children do you have? _____
6. Are you pleased and excited about your expected child?
 1. Yes 2. No 3. Uncertain
7. What are the ages of your children? _____
8. If this is not your first marriage, how was your previous marriage ended? If you have been married more than twice, please indicate.
 1. Death 2. Divorce 3. Annulment
9. On most social issues, (for example, abortion, birth control information for teenagers, war in Viet Nam, amnesty) would you usually classify yourself as:
 1. Very liberal 2. Liberal 3. Moderate
 4. Conservative 5. Very conservative
10. Do you usually attend church or church activities
 1. Frequently (3 times or more per month)
 2. Occasionally (6-12 times per year)
 3. Infrequently (a few times per year)
 4. Never attend
11. Religious preference:
 1. Baptist 5. Methodist
 2. Catholic 6. Mormon
 3. Episcopal 7. Presbyterian
 4. Jewish 8. Other (specify) _____

12. Your residence now:
- ___ 1. On a farm or in the country
- ___ 2. Small town below 25,000 population
- ___ 3. City of 25,000 to 50,000 population
- ___ 4. City of 50,000 to 100,000 population
- ___ 5. City of over 100,000
13. Is this a suburb? ___ 1. Yes ___ 2. No
14. Your education:
- ___ 1. Did not finish high school ___ 5. Technical or trade school
- ___ 2. High school graduate ___ 6. Business school
- ___ 3. Some college ___ 7. Professional training (medicine,
law or graduate school)
- ___ 4. College graduate
15. What is the primary source of the income of your family?
- ___ 1. Inherited savings and investments
- ___ 2. Earned wealth, transferable investments
- ___ 3. Profits, royalties, fees
- ___ 4. Salary, commissions (regular, monthly or yearly)
- ___ 5. Hourly wages, weekly checks
- ___ 6. Odd jobs, seasonal work
- ___ 7. Private charity or public relief
16. Who earns most of the income for your family?
- ___ 1. Husband ___ 2. Wife ___ 3. Other ___ 4. Husband and wife
equally
17. Check the group in which your annual, joint income most nearly falls before taxes.
- ___ 1. \$5,000 to \$10,000 ___ 5. \$25,000 to \$30,000
- ___ 2. \$10,000 to \$15,000 ___ 6. \$30,000 to \$35,000
- ___ 3. \$15,000 to \$20,000 ___ 7. More than \$35,000
- ___ 4. \$20,000 to \$25,000
18. Your occupation: _____

19. Spouse's occupation: _____
20. Age at time of marriage: _____ years
21. In which state did you spend most of your youth? _____
22. Was this:
- ____ 1. On a farm or in the country
- ____ 2. Small town below 25,000 population
- ____ 3. City of 25,000 to 50,000 population
- ____ 4. City of 50,000 to 100,000 population
- ____ 5. City of over 100,000 population
23. Number of children in your family:
- ____ 1. Brothers living ____ 2. Sisters living ____ 3. Deceased
24. You were the _____ child born into your family.
(first, second, etc.)
25. Mother living? ____ 1. Yes ____ 2. No
26. If your mother is deceased, how old were you when she died? _____
27. Father living? ____ 1. Yes ____ 2. No
28. If your father is deceased, how old were you when he died? _____
29. Parents' marital status during your childhood:
- ____ 1. Married ____ 2. Divorced ____ 3. Separated
30. Parents' marital status now:
- ____ 1. Married to each other ____ 3. Separated
- ____ 2. Divorced ____ 4. Divorced and remarried
31. Father's occupation (if retired, then prior to retirement):

32. Mother's occupation (if retired, then prior to retirement):

33. Was your mother employed for the major part of your childhood?
- ____ 1. No ____ 2. Yes (part-time employment) ____ 3. Yes (full-time employment)

34. Were you an adopted child? ___1. Yes ___2. No
35. Do you think that a woman can combine both a career and motherhood?
 ___1. Very often ___2. Often ___3. Sometimes
 ___4. Rarely ___5. Never
36. Father's education:
 ___1. Did not finish high school ___5. Technical or trade school
 ___2. High school graduate ___6. Business school
 ___3. Some college ___7. Professional training (medicine,
 ___4. College graduate law or graduate school)
37. Mother's education:
 ___1. Did not finish high school ___5. Technical or trade school
 ___2. High school graduate ___6. Business school
 ___3. Some college ___7. Professional training (medicine,
 ___4. College graduate law or graduate school)
38. As a child, did you have any relationship or activities with a married childless couple? If yes, please briefly explain. ___1. Yes ___2. No
39. As a child, I usually attended church or church activities:
 ___1. Frequently (3 times or more per month)
 ___2. Occasionally (6-12 times per year)
 ___3. Infrequently (a few times per year)
 ___4. Never attended
40. Indicate the amount of quarreling that characterized your parent's marriage:
 ___1. Very often ___2. Often ___3. Sometimes
 ___4. Rarely ___5. Never

41. For each statement below decide which of the following best describes your mother. Place the number of the response which you feel that best describes your mother on the line at the left of the statement.

1. Very often 2. Often 3. Sometimes 4. Rarely 5. Never

- ___ 1. My mother had a preference for one of her children.
 ___ 2. My mother praised me as a child.
 ___ 3. I received affection from my mother.
 ___ 4. My mother was pleased about my birth and sex.
 ___ 5. Children were a source of unhappiness and conflict.
 ___ 6. My mother was glad that she had children.
 ___ 7. My mother enjoyed the time that she spent with her children.
 ___ 8. Children prevented my mother from doing activities that she enjoyed.

42. For each statement below decide which of the following best describes your father. Place the number of the response which you feel that best describes your father on the line at the left of the statement.

1. Very often 2. Often 3. Sometimes 4. Rarely 5. Never

- ___ 1. My father had a preference for one of his children.
 ___ 2. My father praised me as a child.
 ___ 3. I received affection from my father.
 ___ 4. My father was pleased about my birth and sex.
 ___ 5. Children were a source of unhappiness and conflict.
 ___ 6. My father was glad that he had children.
 ___ 7. My father enjoyed the time that he spent with his children.
 ___ 8. Children prevented my father from doing activities that he enjoyed.

43. My mother had activities outside the home:

___ 1. Very ___ 2. Often ___ 3. Sometimes
 ___ 4. Rarely ___ 5. Never

44. How often did your family change residences:

___ 1. Very often ___ 2. Often ___ 3. Sometimes
 ___ 4. Rarely ___ 5. Never

54. Which of the following most closely describes the type of discipline that you received as a child from your mother:
- ___ 1. Very permissive ___ 2. Permissive ___ 3. Moderate degree of both
 permissiveness and strictness
- ___ 4. Strict ___ 5. Very strict
55. Most parents use a variety of disciplinary methods. Select the type of discipline that you feel that your parents used most frequently.
- ___ 1. Physical punishment ___ 4. Withdrawal of love
- ___ 2. Deprivation of privileges ___ 5. Reasoning
- ___ 3. Isolation ___ 6. Tangible rewards
56. Which parent do you feel has had the greatest influence in determining the type of person that you are today?
- ___ 1. Mother ___ 2. Father ___ 3. Both
57. Which of the following do you feel has had the greatest influence in determining your attitudes toward marriage and parenthood:
- ___ 1. Friends ___ 4. Religion or church
- ___ 2. Brother and sister ___ 5. Mass media
- ___ 3. School ___ 6. Other (specify)
58. Please check the phrase that most closely describes your relationship with your brothers and sisters.
- ___ 1. Never had conflict ___ 4. Frequent conflict
- ___ 2. Rarely had conflict ___ 5. Very frequent conflict
- ___ 3. Moderate amount of conflict
59. Do your married brother and sister have children?
- ___ 1. Yes ___ 3. Some do (specify)
- ___ 2. No ___ 4. Will eventually

67. Indicate how you would judge the happiness of your parents' marriage on a 5 point scale with 5 representing the greatest degree of happiness and 1 representing the least happiness.

5 4 3 2 1

68. Were you sure of the number of children that you wanted (or did not want) prior to marriage? ____1. Yes ____2. No

69. Indicate the degree of influence that your spouse had on your decision to have (or not to have) children.

____1. No influence ____4. Much influence
 ____2. Little influence ____5. Very much influence
 ____3. Moderate amount of influence

70. If you were newly married again would you still decide to have (or not to have) children?

____1. Yes ____2. No ____3. Unsure

71. What would you do differently from your parents as far as children and childrearing practices are concerned? Use back if needed.

Answer each of the following items with a check in the column that most appropriately describes your behavior and characteristics.

	more than the average person	average	less than the average person
___ 1. Physically active, vigorous			
___ 2. Enjoy life			
___ 3. Intelligent			
___ 4. Tense			
___ 5. Easily pleased			
___ 6. Slow to get things done			
___ 7. Friendly			
___ 8. Perfectionist			
___ 9. Accept responsibility			
___ 10. Moody			
___ 11. Independent			
___ 12. Enjoy being alone			
___ 13. Accepted by others			
___ 14. Nervous			
___ 15. Careless			
___ 16. Deliberate			
___ 17. Impatient			
___ 18. Cooperative			
___ 19. Enjoy children			
___ 20. Self-reliant			
___ 21. Aggressive			
___ 22. Attractive			
___ 23. Irritable			
___ 24. Mature			
___ 25. Does what others want me to			

72. Please rate the happiness of your marriage on the following 5 point scale (5 represents the greatest degree of happiness and 1 represents the least degree of happiness). Circle the point which most nearly describes your degree of marital happiness.

5 4 3 2 1

73. Following are some proverbs and sayings about life. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each by circling the appropriate letter. The response code is:

SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, U = Undecided, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

- | | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|---|----|
| 1. A wise way to live is to look on the bright side of things. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 2. For every problem that arises there is usually a solution. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 3. People rarely get what they want in life. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 4. When all is said and done we really have little control over what happens to us in life. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 5. To a large degree we are the "captains of our fate." | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 6. Whether we are happy or not depends upon the kinds of things that happen to us in life. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 7. There is a higher power (God) that operates in the daily lives of people. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 8. God answers prayer. | SA | A | U | D | SD |
| 9. There is no power higher than man. | SA | A | U | D | SD |

74. On a scale of 1 to 5 please indicate your commitment to a career for yourself or your wife (outside of the home). 5 represents the greatest commitment and 1 represents the least commitment.

5 4 3 2 1

75. How old were you when you initially realized that you might not want to have children?
____ years
76. Is one of you more committed to childlessness? ____ 1. No ____ 2. Yes
77. Which? ____ 1. Husband ____ 2. Wife
78. Have either of you insured childlessness through sterilization?
____ 1. Yes ____ 2. No
79. If one of you has been sterilized indicate which.
____ 1. Husband ____ 2. Wife
80. Which groups have exerted the greatest pressure against your childlessness? Number the categories according to the amount of pressure exerted. (1 is the greatest pressure, 2 is the second greatest.)
- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|
| ____ 1. Friends | ____ 5. Co-workers |
| ____ 2. Parents | ____ 6. Grandparents |
| ____ 3. Brothers and sisters | ____ 7. No pressure |
| ____ 4. Mass media | |
81. Have you considered adoption?
____ 1. Yes ____ 2. No ____ 3. Uncertain
82. What do you value most about childlessness? Use back of page **if** necessary.

APPENDIX D

LETTER OF REQUEST SENT FOR TEST, RE-TEST

**OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY • STILLWATER**Department of Family Relations & Child Development
(405) 372-6211, Ext. 6084

74074

July 15, 1975

Thank you for your cooperation in the voluntary childlessness research project. The response has been good. In an effort to further substantiate the research findings, it is necessary to have measures of reliability. Therefore, it is necessary that a small number of respondents complete the questionnaire twice. Although the length of the form makes this no small task, I am hopeful that you will further assist in this manner. If you will further assist by completing the form again, your contribution has been substantial. Thank you for your continuing cooperation!

Althea Wright

Althea Wright, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor
Family Relations & Child Development
Oklahoma State University

Sandra A. Martin

Sandra A. Martin
Graduate Student
Family Relation & Child Development
Oklahoma State University

VITA

Sandra Ackerman Martin

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY: THE EFFECTS OF FAMILY BACKGROUND
VARIABLES ON THE DECISION TO REMAIN CHILDLESS

Major Field: Family Relations and Child Development

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Mobile, Alabama, October 11, 1943, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William C. Ackerman. Married on July 2, 1965 to Gerald Austin Martin.

Education: Graduated from West Jefferson High School, Harvey, Louisiana in May, 1962. Received the Bachelor of Arts degree from Northwestern State University of Louisiana, January, 1966, with a major in Elementary Education; completed requirements for the Master of Science degree in December, 1975 at Oklahoma State University.

Professional Experience: First grade teacher, Jefferson Parish Public Schools, Gretna, Louisiana, January, 1966 to June, 1966; Special education teacher and primary teacher, Selma Public Schools, Selma, Alabama, September, 1966 to August, 1967; Special education teacher, Portsmouth Public Schools, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, March, 1969 to June, 1969.

Professional Organizations: National Council on Family Relations, Omicron Nu and Phi Kappa Phi.