A COMPARISON OF SOME CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTITUDES OF SELF-DESCRIBED FUTURE MOTHERS VERSUS NON-MOTHERS

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

By

Jeanne Cofer, B.S.
Denton, Texas
May, 1975
Cofer, Jeanne, *A Comparison of Some Characteristics and Attitudes of Self-Described Future Mothers Versus Non-Mothers*. Master of Science (Clinical Psychology), May 1975, 54 pp., 5 tables, 2 appendices, references, 60 titles.

This study compared women with a highly positive interest in becoming mothers with women having little interest in having children, with respect to biographical data, childrearing attitudes, and personality characteristics. One hundred twenty-one undergraduate college women were administered a biographical questionnaire, the Parental Attitude Research Instrument, the Adjective Check List, and an attitude index designed to assess level of interest in having children. A statistical analysis revealed the remarkable similarity of the two groups of women, as the groups differed significantly in only two areas. Women with little interest in having children scored higher on the subscale Ascendancy of the Mother, and the women also differed in their view of the ideal situation for an adult woman.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter

### I. INTRODUCTION

- Statement of Purpose
- Studies of Perceived Traits of Voluntarily Childless Women
- A Study of Mothers Versus Childless Women
- Studies Regarding Acceptance Versus Rejection of the Feminine Role
- Description of the Parental Attitude Research Instrument (PARI)
- Validity and Reliability of the PARI
- Description of the Adjective Check List (ACL)
- Validity and Reliability of the ACL
- Studies Incorporating the ACL and PARI

### II. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

| 30 |

### III. RESULTS

| 33 |

### IV. DISCUSSION

| 40 |

## APPENDICES

| 45 |

## REFERENCES

| 50 |
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Comparison of Group Means of PARI Subscales</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Comparison of Group Means of ACL Variables</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Comparison of Groups on Several Biographical Variables</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Comparison of Group Frequencies Regarding Desirable Familial</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Comparison of Group Frequencies Regarding Agreement with the</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women's Liberation Movement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Only 17 years ago the birthrate in the United States soared to the highest level in the twentieth century. By mid-1974, however, this rate had plummeted until the nation is now experiencing the most rapid decline in birthrate in its history (Woodring, 1974). A comparison of the 1957 birthrate of 25.2 births per 1,000 population (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1972) with the most recently available statistical data for April, 1974, of 14.2 births per 1,000 population (Monthly Vital Statistics Report, June, 1974) emphasizes this dramatic decrease. Currently the birthrate in the United States has plunged to below replacement level, the level below which population gradually decreases.

The multitude of far-reaching social changes of recent years have significantly contributed to this country's declining birthrate. The Women's Movement has resulted in changes in status and the role of women. Consequently, women are becoming increasingly involved in political activities, continued education and careers, and, according to statistical evidence, decreasingly involved in childbearing. That education and careers influence family
size was demonstrated by Ridley (1959). In a study of 1,794 wives ages 18-39, an inverse relationship was found between expected number of children and educational level and participation in the labor force.

In addition to improvements in birth control technology, the historic 1973 decision of the Supreme Court which placed the responsibility for abortion in the hands of the prospective mother and her physician further aided in the reduction of the birthrate by decreasing unwanted childbearing. Economic pressures in the form of inflation, taxes, food prices, high mortgage rates, and increasing educational costs combine to make childbearing and children financially burdensome.

A growing awareness of population pressures and ecological considerations led to the formation in 1968 of Zero Population Growth, an organization deeply concerned with the dangers inherent in over-population. In addition to ecological goals, this organization's primary aim is the stabilization of the United States population size, followed by reduction to a more ecologically desirable level.

That young women's attitudes regarding parenthood are being influenced by salient social issues was demonstrated by Mills (1974). Reports of her commencement address were widely circulated by the national news media, when as class
speaker of the 1969 graduating class at Mills College she announced, "I am terribly saddened by the fact that the most humane thing for me to do is to have no children at all" (p. 270). Her decision, she reported, stemmed from her concern regarding over-population and ecological issues.

The mass media have played a strategic role in publicizing the previously mentioned factors, resulting in considerable social pressures against childbearing and large families. According to Blake,

> It seems important to take account of a historically unique stimulus that has become dominant during the past six or seven years, namely, that during this time family size has become a public and publicized issue. The population problem, the need for zero population growth, the desirability of the two-child family as a means of achieving a stationary population have, for the first time, become subjects of massive propaganda. . . . Innundated by a sudden wave of antinatalist propaganda respondents . . . may feel embarrassed to say that they want or expect more than two children (1974, p. 26).

Many examples of antinatalist literature have appeared in popular books and magazines of the past few years (Balchin, 1965; Greene, 1963; Michels, 1970; Rollin, 1970; Jones, 1970; Peck, 1971; Silverman and Silverman, 1971; Radl, 1973; and Corman, 1974). These writings, couched in colorful language, present essentially the same message " . . . that for alert women who desire to move freely within the public world outside their homes, childbearing is burdensome and childrearing is unchallenging,
dull, and time consuming" (Lott, 1973, p. 574). In addition, Rollin (1970) proposes that one of the consequences of motherhood is its effect on sexuality. "Often when the stork flies in, sexuality flies out... In the minds of their husbands, when a woman becomes a mother, she stops being a woman" (p. 17). In his article vividly entitled, "Children Are a Waste of Time," Balchin (1965) proclaims,

Any man who criticizes children automatically labels himself a monster. I have five children varying in ages from three to thirty... I find that the whole business is, on the whole, an expensive and unrewarding bore, in which far more has to be invested, both materially and spiritually, than ever comes out in dividends (p. 11).

In 1972 the first organization was established to support the voluntarily childless lifestyle. The group, the National Organization of Non-parents (NON), promotes among its goals the elimination of the cultural bias against non-parents and challenging the media romanticism and glorification of parenthood. To counter Mother's Day and Father's Day the National Organization of Non-parents has designated August first as Non-Parents' Day. Veevers (1973) views this organization as a counter-culture and expects it to meet with considerable success.

Children are society's most important resource. If, however, parenthood is declining in favor, as evidence indeed indicates, who will bear and rear future children? Lott (1973) addressed this question in a study of 242
university undergraduates. Students responded to a background data questionnaire and three additional brief instruments designed to reflect attitudes towards parents, parenthood, and women's liberation. On the basis of responses descriptive of their attitudes toward having and rearing children the subjects were divided into three categories: highly positive, moderate, and low. A statistical analysis of data revealed that although the supporters of Women's Liberation ranked childrearing as more creative than did non-supporters of Women's Liberation, they demonstrated little interest in personally rearing children. Pro-liberation women also remembered less care and attention having been devoted to them by their mothers and fathers than did anti-liberation women.

In interpreting the results of her study Lott cites findings of an unpublished study by Worrell and Worrell in which personality correlates from supporters and opposers of the Women's Liberation Movement were obtained. Using several measures, the Worrells found that the primary characteristic separating the two groups is the liberation supporters' "very strong desire for autonomy. In comparison both to the opposed women and to college girls in general, she wants to be independent, self-sufficient, and free from external control" (p. 580). In contrast, liberation opposers were characterized as self-protective,
fearful of danger, risk avoiding, resistant to change, and low in curiosity and flexibility.

Upon comparing the personality composites of supporters and opposers of Women's Liberation and then asking which would make the best mothers, Lott's answer is emphatic:

On any criterion of competence for motherhood, my choice is for the independent, flexible, and democratically oriented proliberation women. But who do we find planning to have the children and desiring to rear them? Not those who would make the best mothers, but those with the least desirable characteristics (p. 580).

Statement of Purpose

With the nation's birthrate sharply declining, due at least in part to the multi-faceted social changes of recent years, some questions naturally arise: What type of women will aspire to become the future mothers of our society's children. Do these women differ psychologically from those women desiring to remain childless? Are the internalized child-rearing attitudes of one group more conducive to producing well-adjusted children than the attitudes of the other?

It is, therefore, the purpose of this study to compare the child-rearing attitudes and personality characteristics of young women strongly desiring motherhood with those of young women having little or no interest in becoming mothers. Instruments providing a broad spectrum of data,
such as that obtained from the Adjective Check List and the Parental Attitude Research Instrument, would yield valuable, relevant information for the comparison of both groups of women. A correlation of these findings with demographic and biographical variables would provide additional information for group comparison. As a dearth of information exists comparing mothers with non-mothers, a study of this type would serve to provide needed original data and serve as a basis for future investigation.

Studies of Perceived Traits of Voluntarily Childless Women

Studies indicate that there exists a negative stereotype of the voluntarily childless woman. Veevers (1973) conducted unstructured interviews with 52 women who had chosen to remain childless. All of the women expressed feeling stigmatized by their decision not to have children. These women perceived the stereotype of the childless woman as possessing traits as "being abnormal, selfish, unhappy, unfulfilled, and non-feminine" (p. 360).

Pohlman (1970) cites an unpublished study by Rainwater in which 409 married subjects were shown a picture of a woman described as wanting no children. The respondents were instructed to make statements regarding this woman. The image of the childless woman as proposed by the married subjects was totally negative. She was viewed as "either
totally self-involved, neurotic, or in poor health" (p. 7). After informal interviews with intentionally-childless couples Pohlman reports that these couples feel that there is often an implication that they dislike people, are unconcerned with future generations, are selfish, unnatural, or emotionally disturbed.

A Study of Mothers Versus Childless Women

Only one study could be located directly comparing mothers with childless women. Lewis (1972) studied women ages 35-45 and divided them into three groups: women with three children, women involuntarily having a small family (zero or one child), and women voluntarily having a small family (zero or one child). Findings produced a composite of the woman with three children as having been raised in a traditional home, having had a traditional childhood, and having never been seriously committed to a career. These experiences produced a woman whose major goal in life was to be a competent wife and mother. Of the three groups, the women with three children were found to have the highest self-esteem and to be closest to their ideal selves. In addition, these women exhibited a very positive attitude toward aging. The marriages of women with three children were found to be neither particularly close or distant, with much of their marriage interactions focused on their children.
Women involuntarily having a small family, zero or one child, were found to be psychologically very similar to women with three children, having come from primarily the same traditional background and having planned traditional careers as housewives and mothers. The primary problem of these women, Lewis found, was that their anticipated lifestyle never did completely develop, since these women never had a child or a second child. In many cases husbands of these women refused to adopt a child or to seek medical aid for infertility problems, thus causing marital strain or estrangement.

Women voluntarily having zero or one child were found to significantly differ psychologically from the other two groups of women who desired large families. Women choosing to have only one child or remain childless were raised in a nontraditional home and experienced a nontraditional youth. During youth and adolescence these women did atypical things for women of their era and frequently planned to pursue careers as adults. Even though these women were found to be the most independent of the groups of women, they were found to have the lowest overall self-esteem and to report themselves as being furtherest from their ideal selves. They also exhibited the most negative attitudes towards aging. With respect to their marriages, women voluntarily having only one child reported intimacy to be
an important part of their relationship and that the husband enjoyed being nurtured by the wife. In contrast, however, voluntarily childless women reported that marital intimacy was not important and they appeared to be "particularly independent and uninvolved with personal relationships" (p. 666).

In the previous study women raised in traditional homes aspired to the traditional feminine role of homemaker and childrearer. Most young women today, however, do not desire to embrace this traditional role. Contemporary young women appear to view the feminine role differently from women several years their senior. Epstein and Bronzaft (1972) administered a questionnaire to 1,063 freshmen college women, asking them to project their thoughts 15 years into the future and to choose the feminine role they would like to be true of themselves at that time. A plurality of 48% of the respondents viewed themselves 15 years hence as married career women with children, while only 28% viewed themselves as housewives with one or more children. Similar results are reported by Lipman-Blumen (1972) and Gump (1972). It would appear, therefore, that the traditional feminine role of wife and mother is evolving to include career.
Studies Regarding Acceptance Versus Rejection of the Feminine Role

It has been proposed that the "family planning" approach to birth control, consisting of the distribution of contraceptive devices and services, has little effect on actual family size. Instead, the most critical factor in determining the number of children a couple will produce is seen to be the female's acceptance or rejection of the traditional feminine role (Davis 1967; Blake, 1969).

Clarkson and his associates (1970) administered a sex role stereotype questionnaire to 96 Catholic mothers of male college students. The questionnaire consisted of 122 traits chosen by college students as discriminating between men and women. The positive male-valued traits on this questionnaire (termed "competency" cluster) described a rational, competent, mature individual, while the positive female-valued traits (termed "warmth and expressiveness" cluster) described a gentle, sensitive, expressive individual. The women rated each trait as to whether or not it was self-descriptive. An analysis of the data indicated that mothers high on the competency cluster, that is, women who tended to incorporate more of the masculine stereotypic traits into their self-concepts, had significantly fewer children than women who perceived themselves as more stereotypically feminine on these traits. Clarkson interprets these findings as evidence that "the stereotypic
feminine social role is a critical factor affecting family size in our society" (p. 392).

Rainwater (1968) found several factors associated with the feminine role that are positively related to family size by asking women to list traits which would reveal what kinds of persons they are. Three factors were found to be associated with small families: marriages in which both partners are involved in common interests and activities with the husband the focus of authority, interests outside the home, and concerns with one's ability to handle housewifely tasks. Associated with large families were marriages in which both partners lead relatively separate lives, orientation to children and home, high importance placed on sexual relations, and concern that one might be too egocentric.

Several studies were located comparing various personality traits, values, and demographic variables of women with the traditional view of the female sex role, as opposed to women holding the contemporary view. To clarify, the traditional view of the female role holds the belief that childrearing and homemaking are women's primary duties and that women with children should not expect to pursue a career. In contrast, the contemporary view of the female role is based on the belief that men and women should have equal opportunities for educational and occupational
advancement and that domestic responsibility should be equally shared by both sexes.

An extensive study of the life plans of 1,012 married women was conducted by Lipman-Blumen (1972) by means of a detailed questionnaire inquiring into early childhood experiences, academic achievements and plans, family situations, and life goals. In addition, an index of female role ideology was completed by each respondent, yielding a female-role-ideology score, and on the basis of these scores the women were grouped into two polar categories, contemporary and traditional. In Lipman-Blumen's sample 27% of the women espoused the traditional ideology and 73% held the contemporary view.

Among the differences between the two groups, it was found that women with contemporary ideology were much more likely to aspire to graduate studies than were the traditional women. In addition, it was found that women with contemporary ideology had a pattern of development during adolescence that was different from the pattern of women with traditional ideology. During adolescence, contemporary-ideology women tended to achieve a certain psychological distance from their families, to establish a sense of separateness as individuals (Tangri, 1972, also reports similar findings). They also revealed that they were lonelier than their peers in adolescence, while women with
the traditional viewpoint were less likely to be lonelier than their peers. Critical parents were also associated with contemporary ideology, as 84% of women with the contemporary view reportedly were constantly criticized by both parents. Further regarding parents, the contemporary-ideology women tended to regard both parents as being unsuccessful, while those with the traditional viewpoint tended to see both parents as being successful.

In terms of values, the women with the contemporary viewpoint differed from the traditionals along several dimensions. The contemporary-ideology position most highly valued intellectual curiosity, whereas the traditional position placed emotional maturity, morals and ethics first. In addition, the traditional women attached special meaning to interpersonal skills, happiness and conscientiousness.

There were no differences between the two groups of women in many areas. Both groups devalued perseverance, the ability to work under pressure, ambition, competitiveness, and physical stamina, and both groups unexpectedly gave low ratings to the qualities of self-confidence, enthusiasm, courage, physical attractiveness, and sexuality. There was also agreement on honesty and understanding people as crucial qualities.
Regarding psychological adjustment, no difference between the groups was found for level of anxiety, and both groups had remarkably similar self-esteem profiles. Women who held contemporary ideology were just as likely to express satisfaction with their husbands and the maternal role (if they had children) as traditional role women. Contemporary-role women, however, were noticeably less enthusiastic about homemaking.

Members of a mothers' club (traditionals) and members of the National Organization of Women (contemporaries) were studied by Baker (1972). A Woman's Attitude Scale was developed to assess belief systems (dogmatism, rigidity, and alienation) and the need for autonomy. No difference between the groups was found on the dimension of dogmatism, but the traditionals were found to be more rigid in thought processes. The contemporary women, on the other hand, expressed greater feelings of alienation, greater need for autonomy, and greater expressed hostility and externality.

Tangri (1972) grouped 200 female college seniors according to their choice of occupation, as stated in a senior-year questionnaire. They were classified as Role Innovators (occupations with fewer than 30% women in them), Moderates (occupations with 30% to 50% women in them), and Traditionals (occupations with more than 50%
women). The senior-year questionnaire also provided a wide variety of additional information. An analysis of the data revealed that the characteristics most strongly differentiating Role Innovators and Traditionals were personality-motivational factors. In contrast to women planning to pursue traditional feminine occupations, Role Innovators were found to be more autonomous, individualistic, and motivated by internally imposed demands to perform to capacity. In addition, the Role Innovators viewed themselves as less feminine than did the Traditionals.

It appears, however, that adoption of the innovative role does not come without a price.

What one may consider the psychological costs of this freer posture are expressed in feeling greater conflict between marriage and having a career, describing oneself as "not to successful," feeling that one is "always acting, not being myself," and being concerned about identity (p. 189).

The relationship between personality maladjustment and career aspirations was investigated by Angrist (1970). Participants in the study were 87 college women studied from their freshman through senior years. Highly-oriented career girls were identified through scores on the Life Style Index and maladjustment in college was measured by the College Maladjustment Scale. Correlations between life style aspirations and college maladjustment were low and not statistically significant. An additional variable,
whether the girls participating in the study had received counseling during their four years of college, was also analyzed as a behavioral measure of adjustment. It was found that 36% of career-oriented girls had received counseling, as compared with 15% of non-career aspirants.

One of the explanations offered for the discrepancy between the counseling and maladjustment data is the fact that seeking counseling may reflect a girl's wish to understand herself. Girls oriented toward careers may be the ones who desire to explore their potential and life options. Seeking counseling may, therefore, be for purposes of self-enrichment rather than to cope with maladjustment. In conclusion, Angrist states, "the evidence for career-aspiring girls as maladjusted is small in this study" (p. 7).

Wessman and Ricks (1966) correlated fluctuations in mood with personality factors among Radcliff College women. Mood fluctuations were measured by means of an Elation-Depression scale composed of ten points ranging from "utter depression and gloom" to "complete elation and soaring ecstasy." Results revealed that women characterized as unhappy placed almost exclusive emphasis on scholastic and intellectual achievement, while the women characterized as happy placed a high emphasis on social interaction.
Simply stated, achievement-oriented women tended to be less happy than women whose primary focus was upon sociability.

The psychological well-being of traditionally-oriented women, as compared to achievement-oriented women, was investigated by Gump (1972). On the basis of scores on the Fand Inventory, senior college women were designated as either self-oriented or other-oriented. The self-oriented women were perceived as embracing an achievement orientation, while the other-oriented women were conceptualized as being traditional in outlook. Using the Elation-Depression scale, the average level of happiness for each woman was obtained. Contrary to the findings of Wessman and Ricks, results revealed no difference in the level of happiness between the two groups of women.

A measure of ego strength was also obtained for the two groups of women, using Barron's Ego Strength Scale. It was found that women with high ego strength scores (at least one standard deviation above the mean) were more self-oriented than their counterparts. An examination of the future plans of the high and low ego-strength scorers revealed that none of the high scorers were uncertain about what they would do the following year, whereas several low scorers were uncertain about plans for the following year. Seventeen high scorers planned to enter graduate school,
while only eight low scorers planned to pursue graduate studies.

Brummer (1970) investigated factors associated with satisfaction and contentment among homemakers who adhere to the traditional feminine role. Members of the American Association of University Women completed a questionnaire designed to reveal the individual's concept of and degree of satisfaction manifested with homemaking. All subjects were married college graduates, and all had children. A statistical analysis of data disclosed that women who viewed homemaking as a challenging, creative endeavor expressed more satisfaction with their roles as homemakers than those holding the opposite view. No relationship was found between the women's educational or occupational goals and their concept or satisfaction scores. Not surprisingly, the respondents viewed housecleaning as the least satisfying part of homemaking, while childrearing was rated as the most satisfying and gratifying aspect of the homemaking role.

Description of The Parental Attitude Research Instrument (PARI)

The Parental Attitude Research Instrument was developed by Schaeffer and Bell (1958) based upon earlier research (Symonds, 1939; Radke, 1946; Orlansky, 1949) supporting the thesis that the mother-child relationship is a paramount
factor in the child's personality development. Schaeffer and Bell proposed that the "development of measures of those components of her personality which are relevant to her role as a mother would permit prediction of her behavior with her child and the future personality adjustment of her child" (p. 340). By utilizing a wide variety of responses regarding childrearing and family life, the PARI measures a broad range of maternal personality components and childrearing attitudes.

The format of the PARI is based upon the questionnaire format of earlier maternal attitude scales by Shoben (1949) and Mark (1953) and consists of 23 five-item subscales, each of which is composed of generalized third-person statements about childrearing and family life. The respondents are offered four response alternatives: strongly agree, mildly agree, mildly disagree, strongly disagree. To control for response sets an attempt was made to increase the social acceptability of the test items by presenting them when possible as colloquialisms, cliches, rationalizations, or in other non-threatening forms. In addition, vague items, chosen for the purpose of enhancing projective responses, were also employed to explore difficult areas.

The items on the PARI are arranged for ease of scoring. A cyclical arrangement of items is employed so that the first scale (Encouraging Verbalization) is composed of items 1,
24, 47, 70, and 93. The same pattern is followed throughout the additional subtests, with the second scale (Fostering Dependency) including items 2, 25, 48, 71, and 94, for example. For purposes of score tabulation Schaeffer and Bell adapted an analysis developed by Wheery and Weiner (1953) which estimates the loading of an item on the centroid scale in which it is included. On the PARI, Strong Agreement is given a score of four points, Mild Agreement receives three points, Mild Disagreement receives one point. The score for each individual subtest is obtained by totaling the scores for the five individual items comprising each respective subscale. The possible score for any given subscale may range from 5 to 20. For 20 of the scales high scores reveal a more deviant maternal attitude resulting in a potentially greater disruptive effect on the child's development. The remaining three scales (Encouraging Verbalization, Equalitarianism, and Comradeship and Sharing) are scored in the opposite direction, with a lower score suggesting a more deviant attitude.

Validity and Reliability of the PARI

Zuckerman and his co-workers have performed the most extensive validity studies on the PARI. Their work in this area is too exhaustive to cite herein; thus a representative study will serve to support the validity of the PARI and
report representative findings. Zuckerman and Oltean (1959) investigated the validity of the PARI by correlating it with several instruments: The Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS), the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI), the F scale, and a test of self-acceptance based on the discrepancy between self- and ideal-concepts. Three groups of subjects were tested, including 60 female acute psychiatric patients (most of them mothers), 24 mothers of college students, and 88 unmarried student nurses. Zuckerman and Oltean obtained correlations of .61 with the F scale, .67 with the MMPI, and .52 with the EPPS. It was concluded that the level of validity was demonstrated to be sufficient for the purposes for which the PARI was developed.

The original authors (Schaeffer and Bell, 1957; Schaeffer and Bell, 1958) have statistically demonstrated the internal consistency and test-retest reliability of the PARI. Subsequent studies reflecting the reliability of the PARI have been reported by Yates, Olivier, and Barclay (1958), who studied mothers of Head Start children, by Cline, Richards, and Needham (1963), who investigated fathers' responses on the PARI, and by Freedheim and Reichenberg-Hackett (1969), who compared responses of mothers of schizophrenics and mothers of normal children. The results of the preceding studies substantiate the
reliability of the PARI as an instrument for the measurement of childrearing attitudes.

Description of the Adjective Check List (ACL)

The Adjective Check List (Gough and Heilbrun, 1965), consisting of 300 adjectives commonly used in describing the characteristics of an individual, has been in use by psychologists throughout the country since 1952. The forerunners of the ACL can be traced back to 1936 when Allport and Gordon published a classic monograph presenting 17,953 English trait names. Cattell (1943, 1946) assumed the important task of editing the list and making it psychologically manageable in his factorial studies of personality structure. Cattell termed his shortened list of 171 adjectives "... a kind of basic English for the complete description of personality" (1946, p. 217).

Gough began compiling the ACL in 1949 by adding to Cattell's list words essential for the description of personality according to traditional theoretical positions (Freud, Jung, Murray, etc.). During the next three years additional words were added to increase the ACL to its present 300 words.

A series of experimental scales for the ACL based on the need-trait theory of personality proposed by Murray (1938) were developed by Heilbrun in 1958. Since that time, Heilbrun and Gough have added several additional
scales and have developed a system of standard score conversions for the 24 scales now contained in the ACL.

The administration of the ACL is extremely easy. The subjects are given protocols bearing 300 adjectives and are instructed to check those adjectives which they consider to be self-descriptive.

The scoring of the ACL, if done by hand, is a complicated, time-consuming, and laborious process requiring many tabulations and providing an extensive opportunity for error. The 15 need scales, which will be employed in the present study, are composed of adjectives indicating and contraindicating the presence of a need. Scores for the scales are obtained by subtracting the number of adjectives checked contraindicating a specific need from the number of adjectives checked indicating the presence of that need. The need scales measure needs for achievement, deference, order, exhibition, autonomy, affiliation, intraception, succorance, dominance, abasement, nurturance, change, endurance, heterosexuality, and aggression.

Foreman and Marsh (1968) have developed a somewhat simplified key-scoring method for the ACL; however, this system, too, harbors many opportunities for scoring mistakes. Fortunately, commercial machine-scoring services are available which automatically tabulate scores which are
then converted to standard scores and plotted on profiles. Machine-scoring was utilized in the present study.

Validity and Reliability of the ACL

There are an abundance of studies investigating the validity of the ACL. The studies are too voluminous to discuss in their entirety herein; however, three of the representative investigations will suffice to demonstrate the ACL's validity.

MacKinnon (1963) studied creativity among architects on the lability, exhibition, autonomy, and aggression and change scales. Lower scores were obtained by the creative architects on the defensiveness, self-control, endurance, order, intraception, nurturance, abasement and deference scales. In this study differences in individual adjectives were also found. For example, 32 out of 40 highly creative architects checked "independent" as self-descriptive, whereas it was checked much less frequently among the 84 control subjects.

The need scales on the ACL (scales 9-23) were correlated with their counterparts on the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule, by Heilbrun (1958). Correlations on 10 of the 15 scales were significant at or beyond the .01 level of significance. The coefficients, however, were not high; so the scores on one test should not necessarily be equated with those on the other.
Heilbrun (1960) utilized the need scales of the ACL to compare personality differences between maladjusted and adjusted college students. The scores on the ACL were compared with the judgments of psychologists as to relevant personality correlates of adjustment for each subject. Results revealed that the psychologists' judgments were in agreement with ten of the ACL need scales for male subjects and for five of the scales for female subjects.

The reliability of the ACL has been demonstrated by the original authors. Four groups were tested at varying intervals: 56 male and 23 female college students were tested ten weeks apart, 100 adult males were tested six months apart, and a five and one-half year interval lapsed between the testings of 34 medical students. Most of the scales, with the exception of defensiveness, endurance, and succorance among the group of college women, possessed adequate reliability over the ten-week interval. It was also found that some of the scales, such as dominance, exhibition, and autonomy, had remarkable stability over the five and one-half year period. Two scales, lability and succorance, exhibited rather low reliabilities and the authors, therefore, suggest that they be interpreted with caution.
Studies Incorporating the ACL and PARI

Two studies were located in which the ACL and PARI were conjointly utilized to distinguish between normal subjects and those with incipient psychopathology. Heilbrun (1962) administered the PARI and ACL to female college freshmen who had been grouped into a Control Normal group (CN) and an Incipient Psychopathology group (IP) on the basis of their profiles on the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. On the PARI the subjects were given special instructions to "Answer it as you think your mother would." A statistical analysis of data revealed that the IP group attributed significantly more deviant childrearing attitudes to their mothers. As compared to mothers of the CN group, the IP group perceived their mothers as significantly more authoritarian, controlling, and more hostile and rejecting of their homemaking role.

Using the subjects' scores on the ACL, Heilbrun also compared the personality patterns of the IP and CN subjects who attributed deviant attitudes to their mothers. Results revealed that of those daughters who viewed their mothers as authoritarian and controlling, the IP subjects tended to be less deferent and more autonomous, exhibitionistic, dominant, and desirous of change than the CN subjects. These personality findings were interpreted as suggesting that perceived maternal authoritarian-control tendencies
are most pathogenic when the daughter resists because of her own independent traits and less pathogenic when she accepts the authoritarian-control because of her dependent characteristics. Since the IP subjects were making an essentially adequate adjustment at the time of the study, Heilbrun concludes that "perception of deviant maternal childrearing attitudes may be of etiological significance in the development of behavior disorders" (p. 82).

Heilbrun (1964) expanded the previous study by administering a masculinity-femininity index to 25 IP subjects and 23 CN subjects from his earlier study who had remained in school. The index scores revealed the extent to which the girl's personality characteristics more closely resembled those of her mother or father, and the extent to which the traits of the mother were sexually stereotypic. An analysis of the previously obtained scores on the PARI and ACL in conjunction with the masculinity-femininity index scores revealed that in addition to perceiving their mothers as more authoritarian and controlling, the IP girls also expressed a higher degree of maternal identification than did the CN group. In addition, the mothers of the IP subjects were also viewed by their daughters as being more masculine. From these findings Heilbrun suggests the following antecedents to incipient psychopathology in adolescent girls: "(a) perception of the mother as an
authoritarian-controlling parent and as a masculine maternal model, (b) identification with the mother, (c) development of a masculine personality make-up in the daughter" (p. 38). The product of this sequence, the dominant, aggressive girl, Heilbrun proposes, will be rejected by peers who have made the appropriate sexual identification. It is cautioned, however, that the above factors are not necessarily the only or most important sources of psychological maladjustment in adolescent girls.
CHAPTER II

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

One hundred twenty-one female undergraduate students at North Texas State University were the subjects in this study. Their ages ranged between 17 and 24 years, with a mean age of 18.8 years. All of the subjects were unmarried, and none of the subjects had children.

Seventy-six of the subjects were enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses and received extra credit on their course grades for participating in the present research. These subjects were tested in groups of approximately 20 subjects per group in a large room in a university classroom building.

An additional 45 subjects were obtained by a canvass of individual rooms in a large campus dormitory. Each of the subjects completed the test forms in her own room. Even though no course credit was given the dormitory residents for research participation, only two women declined when asked if they would participate in this study.

Neither the psychology students nor the dormitory residents were informed of the true purpose of the research. All were told that they were participating in a study concerning the attitudes of college women.
All subjects completed a battery consisting of four parts. The initial instrument was an interest and attitude index composed of eight 9-point scales, ranging from "very much" to "very little." Only Scale 3 (designed to assess the individual's level of interest in having children) and Scale 6 (designed to measure the individual's level of agreement with the Woman's Liberation Movement) were considered. The remaining six scales were included as distractors. The subjects next completed a one-page questionnaire for the purpose of obtaining demographic and biographical data. Samples of the interest and attitude index and the biographical questionnaire are included in the Appendix. The third and fourth parts of the battery consisted respectively of the Parental Attitude Research Instrument (PRAI) and the Adjective Check List (ACL). Completion of the four-part battery required approximately 50 minutes.

On the basis of their responses to Scale 3 on the 9-point scale index (How eagerly do you anticipate having children?), the subjects were grouped into three categories descriptive of their attitudes toward having children. Those subjects responding 1, 2, or 3 were ranked as highly positive. Seventy-three subjects (60.3%) scored in this category. Twenty-eight subjects (23.1%) responded 4, 5, or 6, revealing a moderate attitude, and 20 subjects (16.6%)
responded 7, 8, or 9, suggesting low interest in having children. Because the great majority of the subjects revealed a highly positive attitude toward having children, it was decided that a score of 6 reflected a marked deviation from the majority attitude. It was determined, therefore, that a score of 6 could justifiably be considered as revealing low interest in having children. After adjusting the low interest category to include responses of 6, 7, 8, or 9, 30 subjects (24.8%) scored in this range.

Of the 73 subjects scoring in the highly positive category, every second subject was selected until a group of 30 was obtained. This group, designated Group A, was compared with the 30 subjects in the low interest category, designated Group B, with respect to biographical variables, PARI scores, and ACL scores.
CHAPTER III

RESULTS

One hundred twenty-one undergraduate college women were administered an interest and attitude index, a biographical questionnaire, the Parental Attitude Research Instrument (PARI), and the Adjective Check List (ACL). On the basis of their responses to Item 3 of the interest and attitude index (How eagerly do you anticipate having children?), the women were classified as having highly positive, moderate, or low interest in having children. Thirty women highly positive toward having children (Group A) and 30 women with little interest in becoming mothers (Group B) were statistically compared with regard to biographical data and scores on the two test instruments.

The differences between means for Groups A and B on each of the 23 PARI subtests and the 15 ACL variables were determined by performing a two-tailed t-test for each subscale or variable. A significant difference ($p < .05$) between the means of Groups A and B was found on only one subscale of the PARI, Ascendancy of the Mother ($p = .04$). Two additional subscales, Marital Conflict ($p = .06$) and Rejection of the Homemaking Role ($p = .07$) approached significance. A listing of the PARI subscales, means
for Groups A and B, \( t \)-values, and probabilities follows in Table I.

**TABLE I**  
COMPARISON OF GROUP MEANS OF PARI SUBSCALES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARI Subscales</th>
<th>Group A Means</th>
<th>Group B Means</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging verbalization</td>
<td>17.93</td>
<td>17.80</td>
<td>.244</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fostering dependency</td>
<td>8.47</td>
<td>9.30</td>
<td>1.477</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seclusion of mother</td>
<td>9.63</td>
<td>9.47</td>
<td>.240</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking the will</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>10.43</td>
<td>.697</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martyrdom</td>
<td>10.73</td>
<td>10.50</td>
<td>.289</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of harming baby</td>
<td>13.17</td>
<td>13.57</td>
<td>.646</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital conflict</td>
<td>14.37</td>
<td>15.80</td>
<td>1.891</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strictness</td>
<td>11.73</td>
<td>11.17</td>
<td>.783</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irritability</td>
<td>12.80</td>
<td>14.00</td>
<td>1.466</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excluding outside influences</td>
<td>9.00</td>
<td>9.60</td>
<td>.895</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deification</td>
<td>11.33</td>
<td>10.87</td>
<td>.543</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppression of aggression</td>
<td>10.63</td>
<td>10.80</td>
<td>.261</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejecting of homemaking role</td>
<td>12.47</td>
<td>13.77</td>
<td>1.835</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equalitarianism</td>
<td>16.60</td>
<td>16.23</td>
<td>.634</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval of activity</td>
<td>12.53</td>
<td>13.10</td>
<td>.746</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance of communication</td>
<td>9.67</td>
<td>9.30</td>
<td>.501</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsiderateness of husband</td>
<td>10.70</td>
<td>11.80</td>
<td>1.489</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppression of sexuality</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ascendancy of mother</td>
<td>9.33</td>
<td>11.10</td>
<td>2.069</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrusiveness</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>7.97</td>
<td>.233</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comradeship and sharing</td>
<td>17.23</td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td>.509</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceleration of development</td>
<td>11.97</td>
<td>12.93</td>
<td>.331</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency of mother</td>
<td>12.87</td>
<td>13.43</td>
<td>.839</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No differences between group means were found on any of the 15 ACL variables. Table II lists the ACL variables, means for Groups A and B, \( t \) values, and probabilities.
TABLE II
COMPARISON OF GROUP MEANS OF ACL VARIABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACL Variables</th>
<th>Group A Means</th>
<th>Group B Means</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>47.13</td>
<td>48.93</td>
<td>.764</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance</td>
<td>50.43</td>
<td>50.70</td>
<td>.110</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endurance</td>
<td>45.70</td>
<td>47.57</td>
<td>.849</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Order</td>
<td>45.67</td>
<td>46.83</td>
<td>.506</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrusiveness</td>
<td>49.00</td>
<td>48.43</td>
<td>.280</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturance</td>
<td>47.23</td>
<td>47.43</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td>45.27</td>
<td>46.17</td>
<td>.424</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexuality</td>
<td>51.80</td>
<td>53.70</td>
<td>.963</td>
<td>.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition</td>
<td>55.27</td>
<td>53.23</td>
<td>.801</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>53.47</td>
<td>52.70</td>
<td>.328</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>54.77</td>
<td>53.17</td>
<td>.756</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>54.20</td>
<td>53.30</td>
<td>.371</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soccurance</td>
<td>52.57</td>
<td>48.07</td>
<td>1.723</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abasement</td>
<td>47.50</td>
<td>45.93</td>
<td>.555</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deference</td>
<td>46.87</td>
<td>44.80</td>
<td>.817</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The biographical data of Groups A and B were compared by means of a Chi-square analysis. Results revealed the groups to be remarkably similar in these areas, with no significant differences in the investigated dimensions. Table III illustrates the observed frequencies, expected frequencies, and Chi-squares of the biographical data under consideration.
### TABLE III

**COMPARISON OF GROUPS ON SEVERAL BIOGRAPHICAL VARIABLES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biographical Variables</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>x²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>Group B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remembered Home Atmosphere</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very happy</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>.8668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhappy</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very unhappy</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment of mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.4100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not employed</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status of parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.6888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One parent deceased</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both parents deceased</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Preference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.5642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


TABLE III (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biographical Variables</th>
<th>Frequencies</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>x²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>Group B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children in family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>(1.5)</td>
<td>(1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>(7.0)</td>
<td>(7.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>(7.0)</td>
<td>(7.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>(8.0)</td>
<td>(8.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>(3.5)</td>
<td>(3.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six or More</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>(2.5)</td>
<td>(2.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal number of children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>(0.5)</td>
<td>(0.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>(1.5)</td>
<td>(1.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>(16.5)</td>
<td>(16.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four or more</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>(6.0)</td>
<td>(6.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness to parents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closer to mother</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>(13.0)</td>
<td>(13.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closer to father</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
<td>(5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equally close to both</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>(10.5)</td>
<td>(10.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference (p < .01) between Groups A and B with regard to their views
of the most desirable familial situation for an adult woman. Group A primarily favored the Married Career Woman with children situation, while Group B favored both the Married Career Woman with Children situation and the Married Career Woman without Children situations. Table IV illustrates the observed group frequencies and expected frequencies of the various familial situations.

TABLE IV

COMPARISON OF GROUP FREQUENCIES REGARDING DESIRABLE FAMILIAL SITUATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Familial Situations</th>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unmarried career woman</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife with children and</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housewife with no children</td>
<td>(6.0)</td>
<td>(6.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married career woman with no children</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.5)</td>
<td>(4.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married career woman with children</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(19.5)</td>
<td>(19.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 10.590$

$p < .01$

Finally, the groups were compared regarding their level of agreement with the dominant positions of the Women's Liberation Movement. Results of a Chi-square analysis revealed no significant group differences. Table V
illustrates the marked similarity between group frequencies with regard to this issue.

TABLE V

COMPARISON OF GROUP FREQUENCIES REGARDING AGREEMENT WITH THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.5)</td>
<td>(13.5)</td>
<td>(10.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group B</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(6.5)</td>
<td>(13.5)</td>
<td>(10.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ x^2 = .114 \]
\[ p > .05 \]

In summary, the above-discussed results indicate that the two groups of women are highly similar along most of the investigated dimensions. Significant differences between the two groups were found in only two areas, the PARI subscale Ascendancy of the Mother and with regard to their views of the ideal familial situation for an adult woman.
Considered as very positive results in that they challenge Lott's (1973) position discussed in Chapter I, that women with the least desirable characteristics are the ones who plan to become mothers. Both groups being essentially comparable, it might be proposed that the women who strongly want to have children would make the best mothers, as they would have attained and would be fulfilling what they perceive to be a very desirable role.

The groups significantly differed on only one of the 23 subscales of the PARI, Ascendancy of the Mother. Group B, women with little interest in having children, scored significantly higher on this subtest, indicating a greater tendency of this group to dominate the family. Schaefer and Bell (1958) view this tendency as a possible source of marital conflict. It should be cautioned against placing
too much emphasis on this finding, however, as it is very possible that out of 23 subscales, this subtest reached significance by chance.

The only other area in which Groups A and B differed significantly was in their choice of the most desirable familial situation for an adult woman. Out of five alternative situations the great majority of Group A (77%) selected the Married Career Women with Children alternative as most attractive. For Group B, however, two familial situations were selected by a substantial number of subjects. Fifty-three percent of Group B chose the Married Career Woman with Children alternative and 30% of this group selected the Married Career Woman without Children situation. It is surprising that a greater percentage of Group B did not choose the Married Career Woman without Children situation, as this group of women expressed little interest in having children. Why a majority of this group of women having little interest in children selected the Married Career Woman with Children alternative also must be questioned. Perhaps they perceive this situation as desirable for other women. Another possibility is that they believe that they will ultimately have children at some time in the future.

The finding that 65% of both groups of women favor the Married Career Woman with Children familial situation is
congruent with the findings of Epstein and Bronzaft (1972) discussed in Chapter I. However, even though this familial situation was the most selected alternative in the Epstein and Bronzaft study, only 48% of their respondents chose this alternative. In contrast, a strong majority selected this situation in the present study. It is also interesting to note that none of the women picked the unmarried career woman alternative as a preferable life situation. Apparently, despite changing social mores and the fact that the vast majority are preparing for careers, all of these women embrace a lifestyle that includes, if not children, at least the tradition of marriage.

Concerning agreement with the dominant positions of the Woman's Liberation Movement, the similarity between Groups A and B is striking. The frequencies of both groups embracing high, moderate, or low agreement with the Women's Liberation Movement are essentially identical. These results do not support findings previously discussed in Chapter I, that supporters of the Women's Liberation Movement tend to be less interested in having children than non-supporters of the Movement (Lott, 1973).

The fact that the overwhelming majority of the total sample tested was highly interested in having children questions the impact of prevalent anti-natalist literature and such organizations as the National Organization of
Non-Parents which promotes a child-free lifestyle. The media publicizing the merits of remaining childless has apparently had little effect on the sample population, as even the majority of women with little interest in having children selected a situation which included children as the most desirable situation for an adult woman. One explanation for this finding might be that in the face of current national social and economic instability, young women perceive the family as a source of personal stability and fulfillment.

It seems appropriate to examine possible reasons for the strong similarity in personality characteristics, childrearing attitudes, and biographical data between two groups of women with polar views toward having children. A partial explanation concerns the homogeneity of the subjects. The vast majority of the subjects were between 18 and 19 years of age, were from middle-class families, and came from cities over 50,000 population. Only eight subjects in Groups A and B were from cities farther than 300 miles from the university. This background homogeneity of the college women may partially account for the striking similarities between Groups A and B. Further, it must be recognized that the personality characteristics of the women were formed and their attitudes toward childrearing were internalized in earlier years, whereas their desire
to have or not have children probably became defined in recent years as they formulated career and other plans for their futures.

Implications for future research are numerous and interesting, as this paper has supplied only a beginning of the research needed in this area. It is suggested that the present research be expanded to examine additional variables such as intelligence and anxiety level. In addition, it is strongly felt that women highly interested in having children and those with little interest in having children should be isolated by means of behavioral criteria instead of relying on self-reports, which are subject to social influence. This could be accomplished by comparing young mothers with childless married women firmly entrenched in careers or by observer ratings of behavior patterns of young women interacting with children. In the event this study is replicated using a college population, it is suggested that the subjects be upper-level students, such as college seniors. It is believed that by the senior year the women have formulated more definite future plans regarding careers, marriage, and children than have the younger freshmen and sophomore students utilized in the present study.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

INTEREST AND ATTITUDE SURVEY

Name

After reading each question below, circle the number under the question which reflects your feelings regarding that particular item. For example, a score of 1 or 2 would indicate little interest or agreement, a score of 4 or 5 moderate interest or agreement, and a score of 8 or 9 high interest or agreement with a particular question.

1. How much do you enjoy participating in sports, such as swimming, bicycling, tennis, etc.?

very much
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

2. How much importance do your parents place on your pursuing a college education?

very much
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

3. How eagerly do you anticipate having children?

very much
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

4. To what extent do you enjoy a close relationship with your mother?

very much
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

5. To what extent do you enjoy a close relationship with your father?

very much
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

46
6. How much do you agree with the dominant positions taken by the Women's Liberation Movement?

very much [1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9]
very little

7. How much do you enjoy participating in extracurricular activities?

very much [1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9]
very little

8. How much interest do you take in political issues?

very much [1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9]
very little
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

Name __________________________ Age __________________

What is your college major? __________________________

Do you plan to seek a Master's Degree? __________________

If you were married would you work even if it were not an economic necessity? __________________________

How many children do you believe constitute the ideal family size?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 or more

What is your religious preference?

Catholic________ Jewish________

Protestant________ Other--please explain________________________

Which of the following situations do you feel is more desirable for an adult woman?

_____ A housewife with no children

_____ A housewife with one or more children

_____ An unmarried career woman

_____ A married career woman without children

_____ A married career woman with children

Number of children in your family_____

Number of brothers_____ Number of sisters_____

How would you characterize your home atmosphere when you were a child?

_____ very happy

_____ happy

_____ average

_____ unhappy

_____ very unhappy
Marital status of parents

_____ married
_____ divorced
_____ one parent deceased. If so, which parent?_______
_____ both parents deceased

Father's occupation__________________________

Before you were 12 years old did your mother work outside the home?

Does your mother work now?_____ Occupation__________

If your mother works, which of the following is her primary reason for working?

_____ economic reasons
_____ interest in career
_____ other--please explain_______________________
REFERENCES


Brummer, M. A. Relationship between the concept married female college graduates have of homemaking and the satisfaction they manifest with homemaking. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 1970, 30(8-A), 3544.


