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EARLY FEMALE MATURATION AS A FACTOR RELATED
TO EARLY MARRIAGE

by

Arnold Gene Taylor

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

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Marriage and Family Living

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This research is a result of the inspiration and encouragement provided
by Mr. and Mrs. David B. Treat and my wife, Mary Lou.

Arnold Gene Taylor

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INTRODUCTION

Importance of study

While the number of youthful marriages in the United States is increasing, evidence continues to indicate that a significant proportion of these marriages is unstable. The marital failure rate and the extensive problems associated with early marriage have caused widespread concern and have stimulated research and theory formulation in this area.

In addition to the studies related to youthful marriage, public concern regarding this problem becomes even more evident when the number of articles appearing in popular publications is considered. Early marriage is a topic frequently discussed, sometimes at length, in magazines and newspapers.

High school administrators and teachers are also interested in the incidence of youthful marriage. The increasing number of married students enrolled in public schools has excited concern and, in some cases, provoked the origination of policies for meeting the challenges presented by these students. On several occasions, school policies for disposing of the problems created by early marriage, have resulted in court actions. The results of this litigation favored the schools' position in some cases; in other cases, the courts decided the schools acted without authority.

The problems attendant to early marriage are not completely associated with the high schools. Institutions of higher education are likewise involved.

Moreover, the concern of the public and educators is not limited to the current perplexities precipitated by youthful marriages. Evidence suggests that the early marriage trend will continue into the future. Furthermore, it is thought that the interactional patterns established in these young families might have an adverse influence on subsequent generations.

The timing of early marriage and individual development

One of the reasons for the heightened public and professional concern regarding early marriage is the indication that the youth involved have drastically limited their time for growth toward maturity. An early marriage is generally considered to be one in which the husband and/or wife are under 20 years of age at the time of the wedding. While chronological age alone is not believed to be a reliable criterion for evaluating maturity, it does indicate the amount of time expended in the maturational process. The time required to develop the skills for creating a stable family cannot be overlooked and by limiting the time for achieving maturity, some fundamental growth experiences are often sacrificed. Young people are able to contract marriages, but there are serious questions about their maturity to sustain such marriages.

There is also doubt that youth fully comprehend the commitments and responsibilities of marriage. The phase of growth preceding adulthood is characterized by the complex interaction of the glands stimulating bodily development and the changes that occur during this period are dramatic, commonly disturbing the individual's psychological equilibrium. Therefore, their ability

to make intelligent and insightful decisions regarding marriage is questionable.

Public and professional interest in the area of early marriage is not solely restricted to the problems created by these marriages. The youthful marriage trend is also perceived as being symptomatic of problems, for the causes of early marriage can be linked to the social and cultural environment. In addition, it is thought that the factors or problems disposing people to marry early are not resolved by the wedding but often accompany the couple into marriage. The causes and results of the early marriage trend involve the total society and have far-reaching implications.

Although youthful marriages tend to be more vulnerable to difficulties and divorce than are marriages of older people, the majority of the early marriages do not end in separation. Many of these marriages are happy and successful. Some of the married couples, even though young in age, are mature enough to assume the responsibilities of marriage.

Statement of the problem

If the early married youth are limiting a very important period of growth, this situation is occurring at what might well be an inopportune time. According to Cole (17), the greater need for advanced training and education in modern society has lengthened the interval between sexual maturity and social maturity, or the time when a person becomes capable of assuming the responsibilities of a family. In addition, the complex nature of our present culture has made it extremely difficult for young people to project their thoughts to the future and imagine, with any feeling of accuracy, the occupational or vocational role

they will eventually play. Erikson (23) has described the importance of establishing or being able to foresee the establishment of occupational or vocational identity during adolescence. The alternative, Erikson indicates, is role diffusion and instability. Cole (17), however, mentions that the roles upon which young people can focus with meaning are related to marriage and child rearing. The marital roles have become attractive and enticing to youth because of the apparent ease with which they can be achieved. He further reasons that when marriage becomes the chief goal in life for people, it is often accompanied by the desire to rapidly reach this goal.

Cole primarily attributed the lengthening of the time interval between sexual maturity and social maturity to the increasingly complicated task of becoming a productive member of society. Cone (18) has illustrated, however, that since the turn of the century, the age at which males and females mature in our culture has been steadily declining. Therefore, the period of life between sexual maturity and social maturity has become somewhat longer as a result of the earlier sexual maturation trend. As Cole (17) indicated, the greater amount of time needed in order to achieve social maturity has made the marital roles more alluring. Since earlier sexual maturity also lengthens this maturational period, it could also be a factor involved in early marriage.

The early maturing female is suggested by Moss and Gingles (47) as being one type of girl oriented toward early marriage. Since their study did not probe the physical maturity of the subjects, their conclusion was probably related more to psychological and sociological maturity.

Several indices can be used to measure physiological and sexual growth. For females, age at menarche is considered a reliable measure of sexual maturation and it can also be recalled with a reasonable amount of accuracy by women (38, 50). There is no such distinctive maturational event in a boy's life that would facilitate accurate recollection. Furthermore, more girls than boys are involved in early marriages (8). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, it was thought that female subjects would provide the most reliable information.

First hypothesis

Females who married early would have matured sexually earlier than females who married later.

The onset of menstruation, in addition to being an indicator of sexual growth, has psychological implications for young girls. As Kestenberg has stated:

There is general agreement that menarche initiates a critical period in the girl's life; that she will cope with this conspicuous change in her body with a variety of reactions acquired earlier in life and now revived and intensified. (36, p. 19)

The menarche can contribute to the organization of personality if a girl has developed positive attitudes toward this process. A close mother-daughter relationship and an adequate amount of information prior to the onset of menstruation are thought to assist the young girl toward a stable personality. Kestenberg mentioned, however, "There is also a direct correlation between emotional disturbance and proneness to view menarche as a threat or calamity." (36, p. 21)

According to Havighurst (28) and E. M. Duvall (20), one of the developmental tasks to be achieved by the individual during adolescence is the acceptance of the physical and sexual self as it has evolved. S. M. Duvall, in discussing the challenges related to sex and marriage with which adolescents are confronted, points out that youth has to learn, "What to do about new sex interests and drives which have emerged rather suddenly and with which they have little experience." (22, p. 15). Although the task of learning to accept the sexual self is complex, especially in the early period of sexual development, it is considered one of the essential matters involved in preparing for marriage. Consequently, it would be important to evaluate the individual's early attitudes toward the body and the functions of the body associated with reproduction.

Moss and Gingles (47) discovered that the early-married females in their study were less stable emotionally than a matched group of single girls. They also indicated that the emotional instability of the early-married girls was related to difficulties with personal rather than social adjustment. Furthermore, Moss and Gingles noted that the early-married girls had less satisfying relationships with their families. Stone (56) also found that early-married girls frequently cited dissatisfaction with the parental home as their reason for marrying. Moreover, almost one-third of the girls in her study mentioned they could not communicate with their mothers. As Kestenberg (36) has stressed, the mother-daughter relationship and an adequate amount of information regarding sexual growth are of crucial importance in producing personality stability in young girls experiencing the body changes associated with sexual growth. Since

this phase of sexual development is marked by the recurrence of previously unresolved problems as well as the problems concurrent with this period and, since the proximity of this maturational phase to the age at which early marriages are contracted facilitates a subject's recall, the following hypotheses are made:

Second hypothesis

Early-married girls would initially have a more negative attitude toward menstruation than later-married girls.

Third hypothesis

Early-married girls would initially have a more negative attitude toward the development of secondary sexual characteristics than later-married girls.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Although the early marriage trend is viewed with uncertainty by the public and various professions, there is a paucity of diagnostic research in this area. Burchinal stated in 1960 that, "During the past five years a small, yet growing, body of research related to youthful marriage has appeared, but these data are scattered in the literature." (8, p. 6) While there are few reports or research, there are numerous articles written about youthful marriage.

The material will be presented in the following manner: (a) the extent and magnitude of the early marriage trend; (b) characteristics of early marriage; (c) the background and personality characteristics of those who marry early; (d) factors promoting early marriage.

The extent and magnitude of the early marriage trend

One of the problems that has confronted researchers in this area is defining early marriage. There is not a precise common denominator, other than the fact of marriage, with which to view youthful families. For the most part, an early marriage is considered one in which the husband and/or wife are under 20 years of age (8).

In a survey of the San Bernardino County, California, marriage license records for the years 1940, 1950, and 1958, Paget (51) discovered a 231 percent increase in the number of teen-age marriages. Moreover, 49 percent of all the

marriages recorded in 1958 involved at least one person under 20 years of age. For the same year, approximately 33 percent of all the marriages consisted of a teen-age husband and wife. Paget also noticed a downward shift in the age distribution of the youth marrying throughout this period.

A moderate increase was observed in the percentage married in the age ranges of 14 to 17, 18 to 19, and 20 to 24 for the United States during these same years (3); however, the median age at first marriage in 1961 and 1960 was 22.8 for males and 20.3 for females. This represents a slight increase over the figure reported in 1958 and 1959 (29). Paget (51), while recognizing a trend toward early marriage, also observed that the average age of males and females at marriage had not changed significantly.

Sahinkaya and Cannon (52) found that an increase in early marriages accompanied the Korean War. Their study involved Connecticut, Nebraska, and Oregon and while the marriage rate following this war varied among the three states, there was a significant increase in total youthful marriages.

Christopherson (16), on the basis of a nation-wide study of marriage at the college level, reported that early marriage continued to be popular among students. This trend was independent of the veteran enrollment.

Burchinal (8) reasoned that early marriage rates are greater now than before World War II, but have become more stable during the past decade. He also indicated that only a small proportion of the early marriages involved youth of high school age. This small proportion has, however, commanded the attention of researchers, school administrators and, in some cases, the courts.

Burchinal (7) and Cavan and Beling (13) found that most school administrators felt married students created problems. They feared the influence the married students might have with their single classmates. In addition, school officials thought that married students would attend school irregularly and would expect special privileges. The possibility of objections from the parents of single students was also a concern of school officials. Furthermore, the problems created by pregnant students complicated matters.

Although school administrators have been vexed with the problems associated with married students, few constructive steps have been taken to meet the challenges presented by these students. Sperry and Thompson (55), from a survey of high schools in North Carolina, discovered that the majority of the schools did not have an established policy for dealing with married students. In most cases, the principal alone decided upon the action to be taken, but approximately 30 percent of the schools indicated that the board of education participated in policy formulation. The policies reported by these schools ranged from restricting extracurricular activities to expelling married students. The schools adhering to this latter course did so in spite of an attorney general ruling.

Cavan and Beling's study (13) of Illinois high schools illustrated similar findings, although approximately 12 percent of the schools admitted taking no action. Burchinal's report (7) of Iowa high schools indicated that the policies tended to be more permissive than restrictive and married males received more favorable treatment than did nonpregnant females and pregnant females.

Ivins (32), in a follow-up study of the policy New Mexico schools pursued

regarding married students, found that little constructive action resulted from the recommendations contained in his initial study. In 1958, only 10 of the 65 schools reported the existence of provisions for continued education with some limitations for married students. Ivins also mentioned that less than one-third of the married students remained in school.

Kingston and Gentry (37) reported, on the basis of their survey of Georgia high schools, that approximately 71 percent of the schools allowed married students to continue their education while 29 percent would not accept these students. The majority of the schools indicated that either married students behaved as well or in some cases better than the single students. Burchinal (7) and Cavan and Beling (13) discovered in their studies, however, that school administrators generally had negative attitudes toward student marriages, feeling they created many problems.

Garber (25) has reported that few states have enacted special legislation for assisting the schools in formulating policies regarding the treatment of married students. Court decisions appear to be the main source of legal guidance available to the schools; however, there has been very little litigation in this area. In some cases, state courts have decided that students cannot be barred from school; other decisions favored suspending married students temporarily. One significant court ruling in Texas approved the policy of restricting extracurricular activities for married students and it was suggested that this might influence the policy formulation of other groups.

Burchinal (9) has indicated that restrictive policies do not prevent or curtail

early marriage. Moreover, restrictive policies are contrary to the American ethic of equal treatment for all. If care is not exercised with regard to policy formulation, it is conceivable that marriage in general might be perceived by the young as something socially unacceptable. By attacking early marriage we might damage the whole institution of marriage.

Kirkendall (39) and Snowberger (53) have indicated that family life education and counseling programs are necessary if the problems of early marriage are to be resolved. Paget (51) has stressed the need for total community cooperation in this endeavor. Hanson (27) has indicated the need for school officials to exercise care, flexibility, and understanding in dealing with married students. He also mentioned that the pregnant married student of today will be a member of the PTA in the future.

Landis (40) in the following quotation, strikes at the core of the situation:

Youthful marriage is an area in which we need to do a lot of careful rethinking, with open minds. Is it best for society and for the individuals involved, for teen-aged married people to be forced to leave school when they marry or when the wife becomes pregnant? (40, p. 250)

Characteristics of early marriages

Inselberg (31), in a study comparing 40 early-married couples with 40 later-married couples, found differences between these two groups in terms of income, living arrangements, attitudes toward in-laws, and personal feelings regarding marriage. The early-married couples generally had a lower income, lived with others, had greater ambivalence or hostility toward their in-laws, and were less satisfied with their own marriages.

In a subsequent report of this study, Inselbert (30) added that when one partner experienced difficulties with in-laws, little emotional support was given by the spouse. In addition, while financial problems tended to be associated with both groups, the troubles of the early-married couples were related more to obtaining the necessities for living rather than the luxuries. Inselberg discovered that although 43 percent of the early-married females were pregnant at the time of marriage, as compared to 10 percent of the later-married females, sexual adjustment in marriage was not a distinguishing characteristic between the two groups.

A Kansas City study (3) which involved telephone interviews with the mothers of 35 girls who married early, supported the Inselberg research and added an observation that clarified one source of the in-law problems often experienced by early-married couples. Thirty-seven percent of the mothers were unhappy about their daughters' marriages and voiced displeasure with the boys they married.

Blaylock (5), in a study of boys who married early, discovered that many respondents mentioned their marriage was approved by both sets of parents. Subsequent examination, however, indicated it was more a case of parental approval but with reservations. The marriages in this study also suggested immature relationships.

Mudd and Hey (48) proclaimed that early-married couples tend to be less understanding of each other. Moreover, when youth sacrifice opportunities to gain employment skills in order to marry, a lower income for maintaining a family is not the only consequence. Society also suffers the loss of skilled people. Moss and Gingles (45)

also pointed out that early-married couples do not assume much responsibility in civic affairs.

In another article, Moss (46) suggested that early-married couples frequently have difficulty in making future plans because of the demanding pressures of current problems. In addition, there seems to be a lack of leisure time for youthfully married couples. Furthermore, early marital adjustments, Moss added, are also impeded when premarital pregnancies shorten the period between marriage and childbirth.

As Burchinal (8) noted, premarital pregnancy is associated with between 30 to 56 percent of the early marriages. Christensen and Rubinstein, on the basis of a study of marriage and divorce, indicated that, "Premarital pregnancy seems to be a part of the divorce-producing syndrome." (15, p. 122) However, they also pointed out that premarital pregnancy alone is not apparently a basis for divorce, for other important factors are involved.

In addition to the relatively high rate of premarital pregnancies associated with early marriage, the Kansas City study (3) reported that approximately 23 percent of the young wives became pregnant shortly after marriage. Abernethy (1) also indicated that an increase in the birth rate has accompanied the early marriage trend. There is reason to believe that this situation might not be accidental, but planned. The birth rate by the 1970's, according to E. M. Duvall (21), will hit an all-time high.

In the Stone study (56), all but one of the early-married girls mentioned they enjoyed motherhood. Although young mothers might enjoy motherhood,

E. M. Duvall (21) has questioned the capabilities of youth to guide the maturation of children. She mentioned that the attitudes young people display with regard to child-rearing policies, are frequently unrealistic and in some cases, could even be harmful to children. Southard (54) also mentioned that youthful mothers seem to have difficulty in rearing children to have moral and spiritual values. Southard, however, indicated that youthful mothers are apparently enthusiastic for educational assistance to meet their challenges.

Early marriages seem to be more unstable and divorce-prone than do marriages involving older people. Monahan (44), in a study of marriage and divorce in Iowa during the years 1945 through 1947, concluded that youthful marriages tended to break up sooner. Gray's survey (26) of one county in California from 1956 through 1958 supported this conclusion. However, Monahan further mentioned that, "Of itself, age at marriage does not seem to be a major point of difficulty in family life." (44, p. 87) The various personal and social factors acting upon the marriages of young people must also be evaluated and considered.

Barkley and Hartnell (4) mentioned that it is easy to over-generalize the hazards of early marriage even though these marriages do appear less stable. Burchinal (8) supported this point and added the thought that perhaps the factors causing early marriages also contribute to their unhappiness and proneness to divorce.

Moss and Gingles (45) also introduce the point that not all youthful marriages are chaotic and eventually terminate in separation proceedings of one type or another. In addition, Burchinal (8) reported that although early marriages tend

to be more vulnerable to difficulties and divorce than are marriages involving older people, the majority of the youthful marriages do not end in separation. To believe contrarily, he stated, results in a failure to view the situation objectively. It seems, therefore, that some married couples, while young in age, are mature enough to assume the responsibilities of marriage.

The background and personality characteristics of those who marry early

Moss and Gingles (47), in a study of early marriage, discovered the emergence of several factors related to the personality and background characteristics of early-married females. Their initial sample was composed of 3,456 females in grades 9 through 12. This group was representative of "smalltown" Nebraska. The Minnesota Personality Scale, the Mooney Problem Check List, a questionnaire and an opinionnaire, were administered to these subjects in 1955. In 1957, the girls who had married were matched with those who were single and comparisons were made on the basis of the original testing program. One hundred and ten early-married females were also interviewed as were their mothers.

The Mooney Problem Check List, with 297 matched pairs for comparison, did not distinguish between the early-married and single group; however, the Minnesota Personality Scale did indicate significant differences between these two groups. The early-married females were not as well adjusted emotionally and their family relationships were less satisfactory. There were 296 matched pairs in this latter comparison.

The questionnaire revealed that socio-economic level was not a factor

differentiating the two groups. Moss and Gingles based this conclusion on the educational levels of the parents and the girls' estimation of the financial resources of their parents. Early and steady dating were also found to be associated with the early-married group.

Interview data indicated that in general, the early-married girls tended to consider marriage as their basic objective in life, a goal for which they felt prepared. However, Moss and Gingles stated that, "If judged by indices from marriage success studies, they were not ready for marriage; by their own criteria for readiness, 95 percent were very ready." (47, p. 376) In summary, Moss and Gingles mentioned:

These findings and the interview data point to the emergence of two types of girls with an orientation toward early marriage. First, a type who is emotionally insecure and feels pushed toward marriage as an escape from an unhappy environment into something which gives promise of being more satisfactory. Second, a type who is early in maturing, and whose aspiration level and expectation of marital happiness are comparatively low. These types are not exclusive of each other, but their existence indicates that they must be taken into consideration in any assessment of marital success at a later date. (47, p. 377)

In another report by Moss (46), additional instabilities of early-married females were discussed. Youthful wives tended to identify their readiness for marriage on the basis of their homemaking skills and abilities but for many, this was not a reliable indication of their preparedness. Furthermore, many of the young wives naively glamorized marriage and viewed it as an important status symbol. In most cases, the husband was older than the wife, and it was suggested that the stability of the marriage might ultimately depend upon the husband's maturity.

The Burchinal study (10) attempted to determine if dissatisfaction with the roles associated with single life for young girls would impel them toward early marriage. In addition, he investigated the parent-daughter relationships and the heterosexual involvement of early-married girls. The Edwards Personal Preference Schedule and a questionnaire were administered to a sample composed of 60 matched pairs of married and unmarried females.

The results of the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule did not distinguish between the two groups in terms of dissatisfaction with parental relations and role deprivation as a motive for marriage. The questionnaire substantiated that the married females dated and went steady earlier than did the single girls. The early-married females also had more friends who were married than the control group. In addition, a lower socio-economic background was associated with early marriage, but a broken home background did not differentiate between the groups. Burchinal's findings regarding socio-economic status conflicted with the Moss and Gingles study (47) but Burchinal (10) attributed this to the different criteria used for selecting the samples in these two studies.

Inselberg (31), in a study involving 40 couples and 18 wives who married early and 40 couples and 11 wives who married later, discovered that the youthfully-married group tended to disagree with their parents more than did those marrying later. The husbands and wives who married early also indicated less attachment for their fathers. Inselberg's information regarding the dating histories of the youthfully-married supported the studies by Burchinal (10) and Moss and Gingles (47).

Out of the 13 early-married female subjects Stone (56) studied, 5 mentioned they could not communicate with their mothers. In addition, dissatisfaction with parents and school tended to be reasons given by the subjects for their early marriages.

Martinson's studies (41, 42), while not particularly involved with early marriage, did illuminate several differences between single and married subjects in terms of background and personality characteristics. Love, Martinson postulated, stems from the individual's needs. The existence of these needs results in feelings of "ego deficiency," which must be satisfied if the individual is to feel secure and complete. His hypothesis was that people who marry have greater feelings of "ego deficiency" than those people who are unmarried.

Martinson (42) discovered that for the 59 matched pairs in the female sample, the results of the Bell Adjustment Inventory favored the single girl. The California Test of Personality was used with 28 matched pairs and these results also supported his hypothesis. In general, the married females were less well adjusted than the single girls. In addition, the single girls tended to receive higher grades in high school and participated more actively in school activities.

In Martinson's study (41) of males, his hypothesis was also supported but not as distinctly as in the female study. The test results did indicate that males who married within 4 years after graduating from high school showed greater signs of personal and social maladjustment.

Factors promoting early marriage

Many of the previously mentioned factors that described early marriages and the people who tended to be involved are also viewed, by researchers and writers in this area, as agents promoting early marriage. These factors are briefly summarized as follows:

1. Poor parent-child relationship and the strong desire to escape this situation in order to establish a stable home.
2. Premarital pregnancy.
3. Emotional instability.
4. Marriage as a major objective in life.
5. The feeling that status can be achieved through marriage.
6. A strong feeling that one is prepared for marriage.
7. Low level of aspiration.
8. Low socio-economic background.
9. Early heterosexual involvement.
10. Influence of married friends--early marriage is contagious.
11. Social needs that can only be met in marriage.
12. Dissatisfaction with school.

The reasons for marriage are complex. The above factors do not operate singly nor do they exist at the same level of intensity in all cases, but these are thought to be involved in the early marriage trend.

There are other conditions which seem to contribute to the early marriage rate. All of these factors, however, have not been measured, but in some cases,

do have "face validity" as Burchinal (8) has stated. These conditions are similar to the previously mentioned factors in that they cannot be isolated from the complex of reasons which motivate people to marry.

The economic risks once associated with marriage are not as great at the present as they were formerly. Burchinal (8) indicated that while the early marriage trend and level of prosperity appear to be associated, other factors are undoubtedly involved.

Burt (12) has advanced the idea that the various communications media have stimulated the romantic and sexual interests of young people. Christensen (14) added that this situation has also made marriage appear unrealistically glamorous.

Burt (12) also suggested that laxity and diversity of marriage regulations are involved in the early marriage trend.

The Korean War, according to Sahinkaya and Cannon (52) contributed to the early marriage rate; however, the trend also continued after the war. Christensen (14) has indicated the insecurities of the modern times as a factor promoting early marriage.

Early maturation

Cole (17) has attributed the early marriage trend to the longer period of time it takes to acquire social maturity, the ability to assume the responsibilities involved in raising a family. This longer maturational period has stemmed from the need for advanced training and education in order to become a productive member of

modern society. Cole has suggested that the increased length of time needed to achieve social maturity has made it difficult for youth to imagine their vocational roles of the future.

It is during adolescence, Erikson (23) has indicated, that young people begin to envision the occupational or vocational identity they will eventually assume. It is important that youth at least be able to foresee this occasion, for the alternative is varying degrees of role diffusion and instability. Cole (17) added, however, that the marital roles have somewhat replaced the occupational roles as objectives for youth. When marriage becomes a basic goal, he postulated, there is an increased desire to achieve this goal within a short time.

Cole also mentioned other factors which he thought were related to the early marriage trend. As a result of the failures of previous generations, he indicated, youth has strived for security. Marriage offers security to young people and helps them escape competitive life.

Cole related the trend toward early marriage to the expansion of the time interval between sexual maturity and social maturity as a result of the need for more training to compete in modern society. Cone (18), however, has indicated that the age at which sexual maturation commences, has been declining rather steadily and it appears that this trend will continue. This would seem to add a new dimension to the situation outlined by Cole (17) previously.

Moss and Gingles (47) cited early maturity as a factor related to early marriage but their definition was related more to psychological and sociological maturity. Physical maturation, however, has psychological and sociological

implications in our culture (49). With the onset of puberty, the individual's endocrine and psychological equilibrium is commonly upset. In a study of female feelings toward sexual and physical maturation, Angelino and Mech (2) discovered their subjects were somewhat disturbed about the changes associated with this phase of life. They indicated, however, that:

One of the major tasks of the growing individual is to come to terms with his own developing body, which means learning to adjust to the often very dramatic changes in his physical appearance. (2, p. 195)

Havighurst (28) and Duvall (20), have indicated that the acceptance of the physical and sexual self is an essential developmental task to be achieved prior to marriage.

H. E. Jones (35) indicated that the time of life at which puberty begins is of significant importance and that early maturing girls are at a decided disadvantage as a result of being out of phase with their peer group. M. C. Jones (34) also reported that early maturation was a drawback to girls in terms of their personal prestige and socialization patterns at the high school level. These studies were reported in the late 1950's, but were based on data accumulated in the 1930's.

A research article by Jones and Mussen (33) utilized data collected at the same approximate time as the aforementioned reports; however, their findings conflicted with the results of H. E. Jones (35). Interpretations of the Thematic Apperception Test administered to early and late maturing girls indicated that the early maturing girls had more adequate self-concepts (33).

The conflict between these studies seemed to be associated with the methodology used for comparing the early and late maturing groups. According to the TAT and the self-report inventory, the early maturing girls had the more favorable self-concept. The adult and peer group ratings favored the later maturing girl. Jones and Mussen(33) mentioned that the data must be interpreted with care and that other psychological and sociological factors must be considered.

In a recent study, Davidson and Gottlieb (19) found post-menarcheal girls displayed more maturity both socially and personally than did a group of pre-menarcheal girls. The groups were matched socio-economically and according to chronological age. The sample was not representative, however, as the subjects were from a rather high socio-economic group. Davidson and Gottlieb concluded that:

Such a finding should be of interest to workers with adolescents for, in general, the increasing concern with psychological manifestations has tended to obscure physiological factors which may be of significance for maturity and for adjustment. (19, p. 265)

A recent study by Faust (24) indicated that the girls who were more mature sexually tended to receive higher scores on the prestige lending traits on the Guess Who Test. Early maturity was not considered a disadvantage for girls in this study.

As previously mentioned, Moss and Gingles (47) associated early maturity with early marriage; however, their study considered the psychological and sociological maturity of early married female subjects. The previously mentioned early maturity studies indicated the relationship between early physical

maturation and early personal and social maturity. While there was conflict among these studies, cultural factors could have caused the disagreement. As Burt (12) suggested, the emphasis upon sex and romance evident in modern society might well have distorted and glamorized youth's perception of marriage and maturity.

Burchinal (11), in a study of the development of female sex-role identification, indicated that between 13 and 14 years of age, young girls tended to become interested in using the appearance symbols associated with female sexual attractiveness. In addition, they showed an increased interest in boys at this time. Burchinal concluded that:

Perhaps this is earlier than some would have expected for girls to develop strong interests in boys and to begin to use more of the symbols associated with femininity in our society. However, in view of the speeded-up socialization process which we are witnessing and the reflection of this acceleration in the ages at which boys and girls begin to go steady, and marry, these data should not come as a surprise. (11, p. 710)

Zuk (59) discovered that sex appropriate behavior for girls was more stable during adolescence than for boys. Furthermore, sex appropriateness of behavior was positively associated with early maturation for both boys and girls. This study was reported in 1958, but the data were collected between 1936 and 1938.

As Burchinal (11) and Zuk (59) found, early sex-role identification and sex appropriate behavior are characteristics associated with adolescent females. Zubrack (58), in a study of the personality traits 713 adolescents considered important in mate selection, concluded that emotional maturity was not thought by his subjects to be the result of a developmental process but a state to be

achieved as quickly as possible. In addition to the desire to reach emotional maturity quickly, however, the factor most frequently listed as the primary characteristic in selecting a mate was emotional love. On the basis of interviews with 50 students, Zubrack discovered that this factor meant physical and sexual love.

In the Kinsey research (38), a relationship was discovered between the age at which sexual maturation commenced for females and intimacy of heterosexual involvement. According to Kinsey:

Those who had reached adolescence at earlier ages (by 11 or 12) **had** been the first to begin petting and petting to the point of orgasm, and those who had turned adolescent last were the last to begin petting and petting or orgasm. (38, p. 246)

He also mentioned that:

The females who married at earlier ages had had premarital coitus when they were younger; the females who married at later ages had not begun coitus until much later. (38, p. 287)

Kinsey added, however, that premarital coitus was rather rare during the early teen years.

Summary

The increasingly complex modern society has lengthened the period of time necessary for acquiring social maturity. This factor is thought to make marriage more enticing and attractive since the marital roles can be achieved in less time and with less difficulty than the occupational roles.

Earlier sexual maturation is also a trend that has lengthened the maturational phase. Therefore, this would seem to be a factor related to early marriage.

The characteristics associated with early female maturation also seem to be associated with early marriage.

The recent studies linking early female maturation with personal stability were based on self-conceptualization and peer group evaluations. The premium modern society has placed on sexual development could mislead the early maturing girl into feeling adequate and prepared for a marital role. With the assumption of a marital role, however, individual maturity and readiness for marriage are put to an extreme test. Considering evaluations of marital success and the divorce rate, early marriages tend to be unstable.

METHOD OF STUDY

Sample

The people involved in this study were residents of the northern Utah and southern Idaho area. Specifically, this region includes Franklin County, Idaho, and Box Elder and Cache Counties, Utah. For the most part, the population in this area is homogeneous insofar as religion is concerned (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). The employment opportunities in this region are mainly associated with agriculture, ranching, small business and some industry.

The method of selecting subjects for this study involved obtaining names from the marriage license records located in the County Clerk's offices in Preston, Idaho, and Brigham City, and Logan, Utah. Only those people for whom a recent address could be ascertained were sent a questionnaire. The current addresses were obtained from the city directories for Brigham City and Logan, Utah. Reference was also made to the telephone directories for this region.

The technique of selecting only those subjects for whom current addresses could be obtained most likely biased the study. While it was not difficult to obtain the names of early-married subjects, it was difficult to locate many of these people. Stone (56) and Blaylock (5), in their studies of early marriage in Utah, also experienced the problem of finding the current addresses of early-married couples. These experiences seem to support the evidence provided

by the Kansas City study (3) regarding the mobility of early-married couples. Locating later-married subjects did not tend to be a problem. Before rejecting anyone for lack of a recent address, the directories of all three counties were searched.

One of the original objectives of this study was to select both groups from essentially a population of peers according to chronological age. In order to obtain two groups of sufficient size, however, the original objective had to be altered.

The early-married group was composed of those females who married for the first time at the age of 17 or under during the years 1954 through 1960. The later-married group was made up of those women marrying for the first time between the ages of 21 and 25 during the years 1958 through 1962. It was thought that if the age differential between the two groups were increased beyond these limits, variables other than those studied might have become involved.

Since these two groups were composed of all the subjects who married within the specified age and time range and for whom current addresses could be obtained, no background information was requested other than age at marriage. Considering the personal nature of the questionnaire and the sparse population of this area, it was thought that a request for additional information might have caused the subjects to dispute the anonymity of the questionnaire.

Table 1 illustrates the range of ages of the early-married group to whom the questionnaires were sent. Information regarding the number of subjects who married within each year and the estimated ages of the early-married group in 1961 and 1962 are also provided.

Table 1. Early-married group who received questionnaires

Year of marriage	Age at marriage	Number marrying	Estimated age in 1961	Estimated age in 1962
1954	15	1	22	23
	16	4	23	24
1955	15	1	21	22
	16	8	22	23
	17	15	23	24
1956	15	2	20	21
	16	4	21	22
	17	10	22	23
1957	14	2	18	19
	15	2	19	20
	16	5	20	21
	17	16	21	22
1958	15	5	18	19
	16	5	19	20
	17	8	20	21
1959	15	2	17	18
	16	4	18	19
	17	4	19	20
1960	17	2	18	19

Mean age = 16.38 N = 100

Table 2 illustrates the range of ages of the later-married group to whom the questionnaires were sent. Information regarding the number of subjects who married within each year and the estimated ages of the later-married group in 1961 and 1962 are also provided for the women who married prior to 1961.

On the basis of the information in Table 1, 74 percent of the early-married subjects who received questionnaires were within the age range of 21 to 24 in 1961 and 1962. Table 2 reveals that 93 percent of the later-married subjects who received questionnaires were within this same age range in 1961 and 1962. While these two groups were not selected from the same peer population according to chronological age, they were quite similar in terms of age range in 1961 and 1962.

Table 3 illustrates the number of questionnaires sent to subjects at the various age levels within the early-married group and the number of questionnaires returned at each age level. Information regarding the estimated number of people within the age range 21 through 24 is also included.

Table 4 illustrates the number of questionnaires sent to subjects at the various age levels within the later-married group and the number of questionnaires returned at each age level. Information regarding the estimated number of people within the age range 21 through 24 is also included.

As mentioned earlier, the objective of selecting subjects from a peer population had to be altered in order to increase the size of the two groups for comparison purposes. This was thought to be essential for testing the hypotheses. While the subjects were thought to be initially similar according to estimates of

Table 2. Later-married group who received questionnaires

Year of marriage	Age at marriage	Number marrying	Estimated age in 1961	Estimated age in 1962
1958	21	1	24	25
	22	2	25	26
	23	1	26	27
	24	1	27	28
1959	21	2	23	24
	22	2	24	25
	23	1	25	26
1960	21	10	22	23
	22	5	23	24
	23	5	24	25
	24	1	25	26
1961	21	14		
	22	7		
	23	4		
	24	2		
1962	21	18		
	22	14		
	23	4		
	24	5		
	25	1		

Mean age = 21.91

N = 100

Table 3. Early-married group who returned questionnaires

Age at marriage	Number of questionnaires sent	Number of females within the age range 21 to 24	Number of questionnaires returned
17	55	48	34
16	30	22	16
15	13	4	5
14	2	0	0
	N = 100 ^a (adjusted N = 97)	N = 74	N = 55 ^b (adjusted N = 54)

^a 100 questionnaires were initially mailed; however, 3 subjects had moved without leaving a forwarding address and their questionnaires were returned. Two of these subjects were 17 when married and one was 15.

^b One questionnaire was returned too late to be incorporated in the study. The subject was 17 years of age when married.

Table 4. Later-married group who returned questionnaires

Age at marriage	Number of questionnaires sent	Number of females within the age range 21 to 24	Number of questionnaires returned
25	1	0	1
24	9	7	5
23	15	13	10
22	30	28	23
21	45	45	26
N = 100 (adjusted N = 98)		N = 93	N = 65 ^b (adjusted N = 62)

^a100 questionnaires were initially mailed; however, 2 subjects moved without leaving a forwarding address and their questionnaires were returned. One subject was 24 when married and the other was 21.

^bOne questionnaire was returned too late to be incorporated in the study. This subject was 21 years of age when married. Two questionnaires were rejected because they were incompletely answered. One subject was 21 years of age when married and one was 24 when married.

their ages in 1961 and 1962, the information contained in Tables 3 and 4 indicates substantial dissimilarities between the profiles of the two groups that provided the data for comparison and evaluation.

Although there were dissimilarities in age range of the two groups finally compared, a consideration of the mean ages indicated some similarity. The mean age at marriage for the early-married group who were sent questionnaires was 16.38. This figure was calculated from the data contained in the marriage license records, which listed age at marriage in years only. The precise mean age at marriage for the early-married group who returned their questionnaires was 17.08. This figure was calculated from information the subjects provided in the returned questionnaires and is considered precise since the respondents were asked to state their ages at marriage in years and months. Considering only the age in years of the early-married group who returned their questionnaires, the mean was 16.51. The mean age at marriage of the later-married group who were sent questionnaires was 21.91. The precise mean age at marriage for the group who returned their questionnaires was 22.35. Considering only the age in years when married, the mean was 21.95.

Of the questionnaires sent to the early-married group, 56 percent were returned, while 66 percent of the questionnaires sent to the later-married group were returned. Ten days after the questionnaires were mailed, a second request for cooperation was sent to the subjects.

Technique of questionnaire construction

In order to compare the early- and later-married groups on the the basis of time in life sexual maturation commenced, the subjects were asked to indicate the age at which they first menstruated. While other indices of sexual maturation are more accurate, age of menarche is considered reliable according to Nicolson and Hanley (50). Age of first menstruation was also thought to be a more suitable criterion for this study since, as Kinsey (38) found, it can be recalled by female subjects with an accuracy that somewhat parallels direct observational research.

For evaluating early feelings toward sexual maturation, two attitude scales were used. One scale, for measuring attitudes toward menstruation, was developed by Dr. Gelolo McHugh, Duke University, and Judith K. Wasser, formerly of Barnard College (43). Since menstruation is not the only factor associated with sexual development, a companion scale was created to measure early attitudes toward the growth of secondary sexual characteristics. Both scales were constructed on the basis of the Thurstone technique; however, certain modifications were made.

According to Thurstone, the following steps are to be observed in creating an attitude scale:

1. Specification of the attitude variable to be measured.
2. Collection of a wide variety of opinions relating to the specified attitude variable.
3. Editing this material for a list of about one hundred brief statements of opinion.
4. Sorting the statements into an imaginary scale representing the attitude variable. This should be done by about three hundred readers.
5. Calculation of the scale value of each statement.

6. Elimination of some statements by the criterion of ambiguity.
7. Elimination of some statements by the criteria of irrelevance.
8. Selection of a shorter list of about twenty statements evenly graduated along the scale. (57, p. 232)

As previously mentioned, the scale created for this study was specifically designed to measure attitudes toward secondary sexual development. The McHugh-Wasser scale measured attitudes toward menstruation.

McHugh and Wasser (43) polled that attitudes of 200 female college students in obtaining their initial list. After editing the original list of attitudes toward menstruation, 58 female judges, graduate students in the area of mental hygiene, were asked to evaluate the 48 statements and rate each one on the basis of an 11-point scale according to the degree of mental health indicated by each item. If a judge rated an item 1, it meant she considered the statement to be very negatively associated with good mental health. If an item were rated 11, it was considered a very positive indication of good mental health. In addition to having the graduate students rate the statements, McHugh and Wasser also had 11 professional women in the area of mental hygiene evaluate the list of items.

The initial list of attitudes for the second scale was obtained from 97 freshman female students who were enrolled in a class in Marriage and the American Family at Utah State University. This represents a 96 percent return. Anonymity was assured and those students who did not wish to participate were allowed to leave class. Other than the instructor, no males were present when the questionnaire was completed. The girls were asked to respond to the following questions:

1. How did you feel when you discovered that your feminine figure was beginning to develop?

2. When you discovered that your feminine figure was beginning to develop, what did it mean to you?
3. How did you feel about the length of time your feminine figure development lasted?
4. As you recall, how did you feel about your feminine figure development as compared with other girls?

Before the students answered these questions, feminine figure development was briefly defined in order to minimize confusion of secondary sexual growth with menstruation.

After editing the initial list of attitudes, 95 statements were submitted to 13 judges for evaluation. The panel of judges was composed of women whose professional abilities were thought to be especially suited to the task of rating these items. Four of the judges were public health nurses with experience in teaching hygiene classes at the high school level; three were counselors representing the junior high school level, a university counseling center, and a mental health clinic; three family life educators were judges, as were a professor of sociology and two instructors of physical education. While the number of judges involved in rating this second attitude scale is much fewer than the total number of judges McHugh and Wasser utilized, it is similar to the number of professional women involved in their study. Though the number of judges participating in the development of the second scale is considerably less than Thurstone (57) specified, it was thought that women professionally educated and experienced in areas related to psychosexual development would have the insight necessary for rating these statements.

Women with these qualifications are not noticeably numerous. The second attitude scale is considered a crude device.

When the judges returned the rated list of statements, the ratings for each statement were ranked. The median rating for each statement became the weight assigned that statement. The statements were then grouped according to weight.

The interquartile range was also calculated for each item as a method of eliminating ambiguous and irrelevant statements. The two statements with the lowest interquartile range in each weight category were selected to be included in the attitude scale. This amounted to 20 statements since the weights for the second scale ranged from 2 to 11. If any of the statements initially selected on the basis of the interquartile range were similar in content to other items, the statement with the next lowest interquartile range was substituted.

In the McHugh-Wasser report (43) regarding the development of their scale for measuring attitudes toward menstruation, the weights for each statement were listed separately according to the two groups evaluating the items. Information regarding the interquartile range for each item was not provided. Although the graduate student judges were more numerous than the professional mental hygienists, each of these groups was thought to possess perspectives of equal importance. Therefore, the difference between the weights listed for the student judges and the professional women was the criterion used in selecting 20 statements, from the 48 McHugh and Wasser provided, to be included in this study. The weights assigned each statement by these two groups were averaged and the items were then categorized according to average weight and ranked within each weight interval

on the basis of the differences between the two groups who rated the statements. The averaged weights were not whole numbers; however, for scoring the scales, whole numbers were desirable since they would be as differentiating as fractions and much more convenient for grading. Therefore, the intervals were arranged so that the midpoint of each would be a whole number. The midpoints of the intervals became the weights for the statements. The two statements with the smallest differences were selected from each of the 10 intervals. If two statements were similar in content, one was rejected and substitution was made on the basis of the next lowest difference. The statements were then put in the past tense to remind the subjects of the time of life they were to recall in responding to the statements (see Appendix A).

Provisions were also made for split-half reliability correlations of the scales. The ABBA technique was used to divide the McHugh-Wasser scale for this purpose. Since the weights they reported were not whole numbers, this was thought to be a more precise method of dividing the scale into two somewhat equal parts with the items ranging from 1 to 10 according to weight. The second scale was divided by taking the first statement from each weight interval after the items were organized within the intervals according to the order in which they were presented to the judges for evaluation. These weights were whole numbers so the ABBA technique was not used. Each part of the second scale contained a range of statements from 2 to 11 (see Appendix B).

The questionnaires were then mailed to the subjects, along with a stamped envelope for returning the questionnaires, and the groups were asked to respond to

the statements by recalling their early attitudes toward menstruation and secondary sexual development. The instructions included with the scales specified the time of life the subjects were to consider and, in addition the organization of the questionnaires was thought to facilitate their recall. Since menstruation is considered a significant event in a girl's life, the subjects were first asked to recall their age when menstruation commenced. This was followed by the attitude toward menstruation scale. Attitudes toward secondary sexual development were measured last.

Scoring

According to the Thurstone (57) technique of scoring, only those items with which a respondent agreed are tabulated. The individual's score is based on the sum of the weights of those statements where there is agreement. However, as one proceeds from positive to negative statements along a Thurstone continuum, a point is reached where agreement with a negative item is indicative of a negative attitude. Disagreement with the same statement would be an example of a positive attitude. Similarly, disagreement with a positive item would be illustrative of a negative attitude while agreement with this statement would be indicative of a positive attitude. Therefore, it is thought that a system for scoring disagreements would add an important dimension for discriminating between groups. In addition, Brim (6) has indicated the importance of considering the intensity of an attitude as well as the content. Therefore, the intensity with which a person responds to the individual statements would also seem to improve the discriminatory power of a scale based on the Thurstone technique.

The two groups selected for this study were asked to reply to the statements by selecting the most appropriate response from a five-stage continuum (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree). It was thought that this provision would enable measurement of the intensity of the attitude.

Table 5 on page 44 illustrates the scoring system for the attitude scales utilized in this study. The agreement column contains the weights assigned each statement in rank order. However, the statements were mixed in the questionnaire sent to the subjects (Appendix B). The figures in Table 5 are the same as those used in scoring the McHugh-Wasser scale. The scoring of the attitudes toward secondary sexual development scale was somewhat different. Instead of the weights ranging from 1 to 10, the weight range in the second scale extended from 2 to 11. Both scales, however, have a 10-point range.

The scoring of the agreement column was treated the same way Thurstone specified, i.e., when a subject agreed with a statement, the weight assigned that item (the median value for the statement after the judges' ratings were rank ordered) contributed to the individual's total score. With one exception, the scoring procedure for the rest of the columns was based on the weights in the agreement column. If a subject indicated she was undecided about a statement, this was not considered an attitude. Therefore, responses in the undecided column were not scored.

As indicated in Table 5, the scoring procedure for the disagreement column represents a reversal of the weights in the agreement column. In other words, a subject who disagreed with a 10-weight item received the same score as she would have if she agreed with a 1-weight statement. The differences between the

scoring of the agreement and disagreement columns are not as exaggerated in the middle-weight range of statements.

The method of scoring the strongly agree and strongly disagree columns involves a slight artificial dichotomy at the midpoint of these columns. If a subject strongly agreed with any of the statements in the positive half (6 through 10 in the agreement column), they received 1 point plus the weight of that statement in the agreement column. Strong agreement with any statement in the negative half, resulted in the subtraction of 1 point from the weight for that item in the agreement column.

Strong disagreement scores were based on the disagreement column weights. Since strong disagreement with the positive half of the statements would be indicative of a negative attitude, the weight for that item in the disagreement column minus 1 point became the individual's score. A strong disagreement with a statement in the negative half was scored by adding 1 point to the weight for that item in the disagreement column. The scoring of the strongly disagree or agree columns was thought to measure the intensity of the attitude.

Table 5. Weights for scoring attitude scales

<u>Strongly agree</u> Agree plus 1	<u>Agree</u> According to Thurston	<u>Undecided</u>	<u>Disagree</u> Reversed continuum	<u>Strongly disagree</u> Disagree minus 1
11	10	0	1	0
10	9	0	2	1
9	8	0	3	2
8	7	0	4	3
7	6	0	5	4
(Agree minus 1)				(Disagree plus 1)
4	5	0	6	7
3	4	0	7	8
2	3	0	8	9
1	2	0	9	10
0	1	0	10	11

FINDINGS

As Table 6 indicates, the first hypothesis was supported. The female subjects who married early tended to mature sexually significantly earlier than females who married later.

The t' test was used to test this hypothesis since the variances were found to be unequal.

Table 6. Age at menarche

Group	N	Mean	Variance (standard deviation ²)	Degrees of freedom	t'	Level of significance
Early married	54	12.278	1.1950	114	3.640	.001
Later married	62	13.154	2.2193			

Table 7 illustrates the percentage of early- and later-married females whose sexual maturation commenced at each age level. As can be noted, 72 percent of the early-married females had matured by age 12.5; 40 percent of the later-married females had matured sexually by this same age.

Table 8 indicates that the second hypothesis was not supported. The initial attitudes of early-married girls toward menstruation did not differ significantly from the attitudes of the later-married girls. The t test was used to test hypotheses two and three since the variances were found not to be significantly different.

Table 7. Ages at sexual menarche for early- and later-married females

Early-married		Later-married	
Age at menarche	Percentage	Age at menarche	Percentage
17.0	0	17.0	3
16.5	0	16.5	0
16.0	0	16.0	2
15.5	0	15.5	2
15.0	2	15.0	9.6
14.5	2	14.5	5
14.0	5.5	14.0	13
13.5	5.5	13.5	9.6
13.0	13	13.0	16
12.5	26	12.5	14
12.0	24	12.0	11
11.5	5.5	11.5	8
11.0	5.5	11.0	3
10.5	7	10.5	2
10.0	2	10.0	2
9.5	2	9.5	0
	100	100.2 ^a	

^aThis figure exceeds 100 percent since the percentages for each age were rounded.

Table 8. Attitudes toward menstruation

Group	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Degrees of freedom	t	Level of significance ^a
Early-married	54	122.019	26.8648	114	0.003	N.S.
Later-married	62	122.000	33.1029			

^aSplit-half reliability, $r = .71$; .01 level of significance.

In addition, the distribution of scores as illustrated in Figure 1, showed a preponderance of positive scores for both groups. Therefore, the early- and later-married females tended to have similar attitudes toward menstruation and these attitudes tended to be positive.

According to Table 9, the initial attitudes of the early-married girls toward the development of secondary sexual characteristics were not significantly different from the attitudes of the later-married girls.

Table 9. Attitudes toward secondary sexual development

Group	N	Mean	Standard deviation	Degrees of freedom	t	Level of significance ^a
Early-married	54	137.963	28.4326	114	0.233	N.S.
Later-married	62	136.629	31.8785			

^aSplit-half reliability, $r = .67$; .01 level of significance.

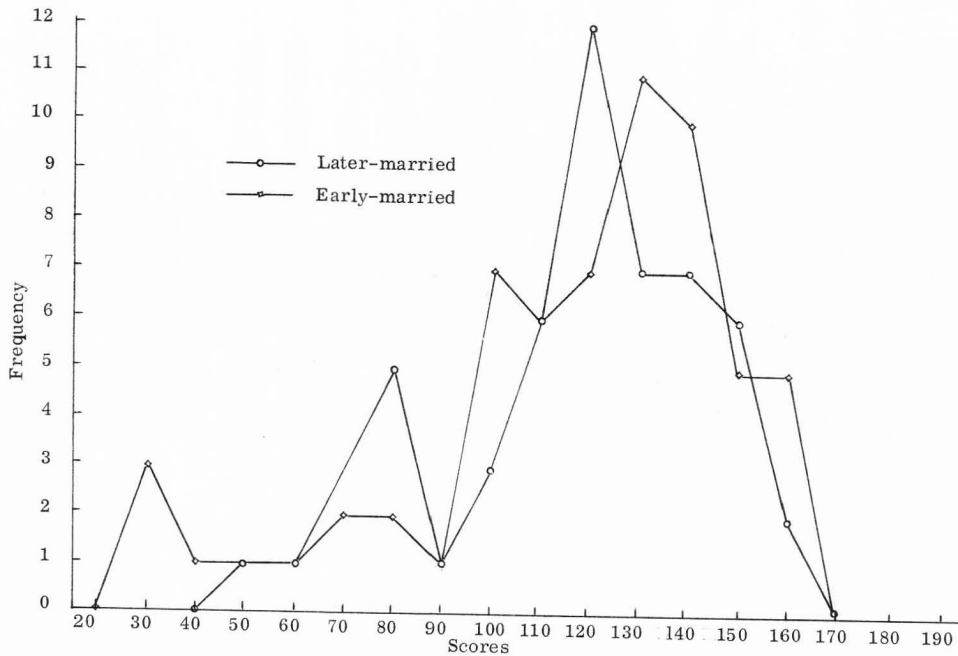


Figure 1. Scores of 54 early- and 62 later-married females as measured by an attitudes towards menstruation scale.

The distribution of scores for both groups, as illustrated in Figure 2, revealed a skew suggestive of a predominance of positive scores. Therefore, the early-married females and later-married females had similar attitudes toward the development of secondary sexual characteristics and these attitudes tended to be positive.

Appendix B contains information regarding the distribution of responses for each statement by the early- and later-married groups.

The attitudes toward menstruation scale was correlated to the scale for measuring attitudes toward secondary sexual development. The correlation coefficient was $r = .70$; .01 level of significance.

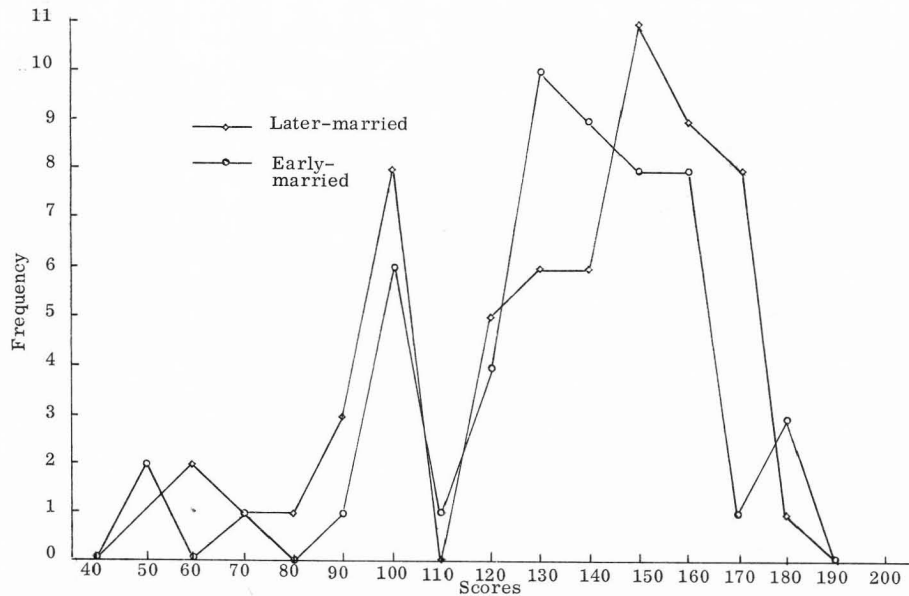


Figure 2. Scores of 54 early- and 62 later-married females as measured by an attitudes toward secondary sexual development scale.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The evidence provided by this study indicated an association between the trends of early marriage and early sexual maturation. While early sexual maturation alone would not account for the rate of early marriage, it appears to contribute in some way to the phenomenon of early marriage.

The association of physical and social development is recognized. Therefore, an early and steady dating pattern for a girl would seem somewhat dependent upon her level of physical maturity. A girl who is immature sexually might not even be viewed as an attractive dating partner. Perhaps the personal and social traits associated with early maturity contribute to the attractiveness of a girl and in turn influence her desirability as a dating partner.

The findings regarding early attitudes toward sexual development, of course, have strict application only to the groups involved in this study. A discussion of those variables thought to be of sufficient magnitude to bias the results would perhaps facilitate subsequent research in the area of early marriage.

The predominant religion in this area, as previously mentioned, is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Latter-day Saints place a great deal of emphasis on the family, for marriage and child rearing are of signal importance. In addition, this importance is not restricted to present life for marital and family relationships are thought to play a great role in life after death. Through parental instruction, example, and church affiliated organizations, the young people learn to

accept and even esteem their individual sex roles as being a part of life's plan with a special significance even beyond life. Therefore, the rather positive attitudes these groups had toward their early sexual growth might well have been the result of religious variables. If this study had been done in another area, perhaps differences would have been discovered between the early- and later-married groups regarding early attitudes toward sexual development. The rather high positive correlation between the scales measuring attitudes toward menstruation and attitudes toward secondary sexual characteristics ($r = .70$) would appear to support the contention that the dominating religious values of the area influenced the results of this study. Positive attitudes toward the development of secondary sexual characteristics might be thought of as a manifestation of social variables since these traits are related to the attractiveness of females to others. Menstruation, however, is a more personal characteristic associated with sexual maturation and has little, if any, social value. The similarity between these two groups and their tendency to view both aspects of sexual development in a positive manner could be interpreted on the basis of the religious indoctrination young Mormon children receive regarding their future sex roles.

It is also thought that the groups cooperating with this project differed significantly from the total group initially involved in the study. Those people who were relatively comfortable with their physical and sexual self during the early part of their development might well have felt more at ease and had greater motivation to participate in this study than would females who were less comfortable with their early sexual self. This might account for the rather positive results for

both groups as measured by the two attitude scales. In addition, if this were the case, the percentage of questionnaires returned by each group would seem to indicate that the early-married group not responding contained more people less comfortable with their early sexual self than the later-married subjects who did not cooperate with this research project. If more subjects had returned their questionnaires, especially those who married early, the attitude scales might have revealed important differences between the two groups.

The early-married females involved in this research project represented a group at least somewhat settled in an area near the site of their weddings. If this situation could be interpreted as an indication of personal stability, it would account for the tendency of the early-married group to view their early sexual growth as positively as the later-married females. However, many early-married and some later-married subjects were excluded from this study because their current addresses could not be obtained. Since these people constituted a sizeable group not involved in this research project, the present data must be interpreted with caution.

The ability of the subjects to recall their early attitudes toward menstruation and secondary sexual development might be questioned. Instead of measuring early attitudes toward sexual growth, perhaps currently held attitudes were evaluated. This might account for the similarity of attitudes between the two groups. However, the components of the questionnaire were arranged in such an order as to minimize this possibility.

Another conclusion that might be drawn from the findings in this study is

that early marriages do not necessarily involve people who are unready for marital responsibilities. If early maturation is associated with early marriage, the readiness of some who marry early might be greater than has been anticipated. Perhaps early sexual maturation combined with positive attitudes toward sexual development adds stability to the personality.

Suggested research

1. Replication of this study in other locations is recommended in order to determine whether or not the present findings were influenced to any extent by the culture and the subjects involved.

2. There is also a need for further research of similar design to the present study, but also including a request for current and background information that would enable controlled exploration of other factors possibly associated with early marriage.

3. A longitudinal study beginning with premenarcheal girls would provide valuable data for understanding early marriage. Personality tests, attitude scales, knowledge inventories and questionnaires could be administered at appropriate intervals and followed much later by marital success inventories.

4. Attitude scales can provide useful information regarding the maturational process. While the scales used in this study were not standardized, further research and testing could improve the validity and reliability of these devices.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

PRESENT MARITAL STATUS:

- a. Married at present time? _____
(yes or no)
- b. Your age at marriage: _____
(in years and months)
- c. Previously married? _____
(yes or no)
- d. Your age (or ages) when previously married: _____
(in years and months)
- e. Marriage (or marriages) broken by (check): Separation _____; Divorce _____; Death _____.

* * * *

This is a questionnaire not a test. It is simply a means of gaining information about the various reactions people might have had toward their physical development. Please select those answers you believe are **MOST DESCRIPTIVE OF YOUR FEELINGS**.

This questionnaire will be mainly about a particular time in your life, early adolescence, or when you first began to mature sexually and physically. Therefore, the questionnaire will be based to a large extent on your recall of your thoughts and feelings centering around your feminine development.

* * * *

1. At what age did you have your first period (menstrual period)? Place an "X" in the box to the right of the age YOU FEEL IS THE BEST ANSWER.

9 years or younger

--

13 year, 6 months

--

9 years, 6 months

--

14 years

--

10 years

--

14 year, 6 months

--

10 years, 6 months

--

15 years

--

11 years

--

15 years, 6 months

--

11 years, 6 months

--

16 years

--

12 years

--

16 years, 6 months

--

12 years, 6 months

--

17 years

--

13 years

--

Older than 17 years

--

Please reply to the following statements by placing an "X" in the column that best describes your feelings about each particular statement. REPLY TO THESE ITEMS AS YOU THINK YOU WOULD HAVE AT THE TIME OF YOUR FIRST FEW MENSTRUAL PERIODS. *

If you find some statements difficult to understand, please do the best you can. PLEASE REPLY TO ALL STATEMENTS.

Key: SA--Strongly Agree, A--Agree, UN--Undecided, D--Disagree, SD--Strongly disagree

SA	A	UN	D	SD

1. Menstruation gave me a kind of thrill.
2. Menstruation made me resent being a girl.
3. Menstruation made me feel important.
4. Menstruation made me feel a kinship with other women.
5. Menstruation frightened me a little.
6. I did not resent menstruation in the least.
7. Menstruation gave me a feeling of pride.
8. Menstruation revolted me.
9. I always considered menstruation a terrible nuisance.
10. Menstruation was a normal biological function to me.
11. I felt older and more serious when I menstruated.
12. I felt that menstruation had an essential purpose.
13. When I menstruated, I was happy that I was normal and healthy.
14. I resented menstruation because of the pain.
15. I was annoyed because menstruation was something I could not control.
16. I objected to the interruption of my activities by menstruation.
17. I was anxious about menstruation each time.
18. Pampering and special care during menstruation seemed like a regression (a falling back) to me.
19. Menstruation as a function made me feel grown up.
20. I felt abnormal and peculiar when I menstruated.

*See McHugh and Wasser (43).

APPENDIX B

Statements:

Weights assigned the responses for each statement

Distribution of early-married responses for each statement

Distribution of later-married responses for each statement

1. Menstruation gave me a kind of thrill.
2. Menstruation made me resent being a girl.
3. Menstruation made me feel important.
4. Menstruation made me feel a kinship with other women.
5. Menstruation frightened me a little.
6. I did not resent menstruation in the least.
7. Menstruation gave me a feeling of pride.
8. Menstruation revolted me.
9. I always considered menstruation a terrible nuisance.
10. Menstruation was a normal biological function to me.
11. I felt older and more serious when I menstruated.
12. I felt that menstruation had an essential purpose.
13. When I menstruated, I was happy that I was normal and healthy.
14. I resented menstruation because of the pain.
15. I was annoyed because menstruation was something I could not control
16. I objected to the interruption of my activities by menstruation.
17. I was anxious about menstruation each time.
18. Pampering and special care during menstruation seemed like a regression (a falling back) to me

SA	A	UN	D	SD
4	5	0	6	7
1	2	0	9	10
7	6	0	5	4
10	9	0	2	1
2	3	0	8	9
9	8	0	3	2
8	7	0	4	3
0	1	0	10	11
3	4	0	7	8
11	10	0	1	0
8	7	0	4	3
11	10	0	1	0
10	9	0	2	1
3	4	0	7	8
2	3	0	8	9
4	5	0	6	7
1	2	0	9	10
7	6	0	5	4

SA	A	UN	D	SD
2	16	13	21	2
1	8	2	22	21
3	18	12	19	2
4	27	8	15	0
7	23	4	16	4
7	27	4	12	4
3	19	15	16	1
0	5	3	30	16
3	14	2	21	9
11	29	9	5	0
6	18	13	17	0
16	33	4	1	0
11	29	12	2	0
2	10	5	26	11
2	6	4	32	10
2	13	5	30	4
0	7	14	25	8
1	7	11	29	6

SA	A	UN	D	SD
9	14	14	19	6
3	5	8	22	24
7	23	7	19	6
10	33	11	7	1
2	32	6	13	9
11	22	6	20	3
5	18	24	12	3
3	4	7	25	23
2	12	10	28	10
12	39	4	6	1
5	27	16	13	1
14	36	7	5	0
13	34	10	4	1
2	9	10	27	14
0	8	4	37	13
3	12	4	31	12
1	8	14	32	7
0	9	12	34	7

Statements: (cont'd)

Weights assigned the responses for each statement

	SA	A	UN	D	SD
19. Menstruation as a function made me feel grown up.	9	8	0	3	2
20. I felt abnormal and peculiar when I menstruated.	0	1	0	10	11
1a. I was thrilled in a way and also a little proud.	11	10	0	3	2
1b. I was a little worried because I didn't know what to expect.	5	6	0	7	8
1c. I often wished I could have been a boy without all this bother.	2	3	0	10	11
1d. I felt wonderful and happy that I was becoming a young woman.	12	11	0	2	1
1e. I developed more confidence and it made me feel more grown up.	10	9	0	4	3
1f. I felt like I was right in between--too old to do some things and too young to do other things.	9	8	0	5	4
1g. I felt self-conscious when not in the company of a group of girls.	4	5	0	8	9
1h. I really didn't care that my figure was beginning to develop.	3	4	0	9	10
1i. I felt like it was something I wish I didn't have to go through.	1	2	0	11	12
1j. I felt good inside with a small amount of excitement and anxiety.	11	10	0	3	2
1k. It meant a time of closer confidence with mother.	12	11	0	2	1
1l. It meant just a big bother.	2	3	0	10	11
1m. It just meant something was happening and it wasn't terrible or wonderful.	5	6	0	7	8
1n. It meant that I would have to put up with certain things I found distasteful.	3	4	0	9	10

Distribution of early-married responses for each statement

	SA	A	UN	D	SD
	6	25	12	11	0
	1	5	2	30	16
	10	34	2	6	2
	1	15	9	25	4
	0	6	3	25	20
	9	32	11	2	0
	7	22	15	8	2
	5	22	12	13	2
	2	15	6	25	6
	3	10	4	32	5
	2	2	4	35	11
	3	39	9	3	0
	7	15	13	10	9
	1	2	9	33	9
	1	18	9	20	6
	1	6	5	30	12

Distribution of later-married responses for each statement

	SA	A	UN	D	SD
	4	42	8	7	1
	1	6	4	33	18
	10	36	11	3	2
	1	15	5	33	8
	2	7	2	31	20
	18	29	10	4	1
	6	28	14	11	3
	3	23	16	16	4
	1	20	10	22	9
	1	5	8	35	13
	2	7	3	35	15
	5	38	12	4	3
	8	24	12	15	3
	0	3	3	40	16
	2	13	13	31	3
	0	7	9	31	15

Statements: (cont'd)

Weights assigned the responses for each statement

Distribution of early-married responses for each statement

Distribution of later-married responses for each statement

- 2a. I only recall being curious and wondering about the length of time it would last.
- 2b. I was in no hurry and I just let it happen normally without worrying.
- 2c. It seemed to go slow and then suddenly I was there.
- 2d. It seemed to take forever and I was anxious to look like some of the older girls.
- 2e. I liked it because it was fun to see yourself grow and mature.
- 2f. I became depressed about the whole thing.

	SA	A	UN	D	SD
2a.	8	7	0	6	5
2b.	10	9	0	4	3
2c.	8	7	0	6	5
2d.	4	5	0	8	9
2e.	9	8	0	5	4
2f.	1	2	0	11	12

	SA	A	UN	D	SD
2a.	0	18	14	20	2
2b.	7	31	5	9	2
2c.	1	26	16	11	0
2d.	3	14	10	24	3
2e.	3	23	19	7	2
2f.	2	2	1	33	16

	SA	A	UN	D	SD
2a.	3	13	25	19	2
2b.	7	27	7	19	2
2c.	3	30	13	12	4
2d.	6	18	9	25	4
2e.	2	28	19	8	5
2f.	2	4	6	29	21

For split-half reliability correlations, responses to the first 10 statements of the attitudes toward menstruation scale were correlated with responses to the last 10 statements. On the attitudes toward secondary sexual development, responses to the first 9 statements and item 2a. were correlated with statements 1j. through 1n. and 2b. through 2f.