

a right to expect consultative service from the clinic personnel. Problems in child training are discussed. It is often less time-consuming to work with an adult who can treat a child under direction than to attempt to help the child gain insight into his own personality problems.

The Program Has Served Atchison

An evaluation of the work of the clinic during the past ten years would be difficult. In some cases the beneficial

effect of clinic treatment has been hampered by limited community resources such as lack of adequate training facilities for the superior or the mentally retarded child, or the dearth of foster homes. However, most persons who have had extensive contacts with the clinic are agreed that it has rendered invaluable community service through its program of mental hygiene education, its advisory service, its work as a referring agency, and by its direct therapy to many emotionally disturbed children.

*Sex Instruction in the Classroom*_____

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Results of recent research and opinion polls answer some questions concerning sex education in the classroom: When should authentic information be given to children? What mediums are most effective in presenting biological facts? How can parents be conditioned to accept classroom instruction in sex for their children? At the time this article was written, Marcille Harris and Berlan Lemon were graduate students in the Department of Psychology at the University of Oregon, Eugene, where Lester F. Beck is associate professor of psychology.

MOST PARENTS readily admit that it is important for children to understand that growing up, getting married, establishing a home, and having offspring are all a natural, normal part of living. But parents have divergent views about the question of how much children should be told concerning sexual aspects of growing up, getting married, and having children.

A survey of 404 Oregon families, representing a 100 percent sample in two school communities, revealed that about a fifth of the parents are in favor of

keeping sex knowledge from children as long as possible. Approximately half feel that nothing should be told about sex until the children raise the question themselves—if they ever do. Nearly a fifth are opposed to the suggestion that children should be allowed to help prepare for the arrival of a new baby and that this event might be used by the parents as an opportunity to teach facts of human reproduction. About two-fifths feel that it is improper for parents to dress or undress in the presence of their children. These results suggest

that in many homes sex instruction is restricted and narrow and possibly ill-adapted to the needs of the child.

An Initial Handicap

The opinions of the parents about the role that the school might play in sex education are equally divergent. About half feel that the classroom teacher, when discussing the importance of the family in our society, should carefully avoid the subject of human mating and reproduction. The same number also think that the school should always obtain written permission before any child is permitted to attend a class in which sex is discussed. About a third feel that sex instruction might best be confined to personal discussions between parent and child at home.

But the home, in many instances, is an inadequate source of sex information for the child. Preliminary results of research now in progress confirm what educators and child psychologists have long suspected, namely, that children with the least information about sexual matters have parents who likewise are poorly informed and are opposed to frank discussions of sex. These youngsters, if they are to obtain authentic information and form wholesome attitudes toward sex, must of necessity turn for help to some outside source such as the school or the church.

The school cannot move ahead in the field of sex education, however, so long as a heavy percentage of parents are opposed to classroom instruction about sex. Ways and means must be found of creating a more favorable parental attitude. An investigation of this problem was recently conducted in Oregon with the film, "Human Growth."¹ This picture is especially designed to serve both as a demonstration film for parents and a classroom aid for teachers.

A Sampling of Parent Reactions

"Human Growth" has three specific objectives: to show parents how sex education can be handled smoothly, intelligently, and in a socially acceptable manner in schools; to show the classroom teacher how the biological facts of sex can be presented effectively as part of a unit on human growth and development; and to establish, through identification, an exemplary teacher-pupil relationship conducive to easy classroom discussion. The film is planned primarily for classroom use in the upper elementary grades.

The film was presented for review and criticism to some six thousand parents and one thousand teachers in seventy-eight Oregon communities before it was released for classroom use. Meetings were arranged under the auspices of the local PTA. At the beginning of

¹ The film "Human Growth" is a joint project of the E. C. Brown Trust (established for social hygiene education in Oregon) and the University of Oregon. It was produced by Eddie Albert Productions, Hollywood. A full review of the film is given in *Life* magazine (May 24, 1948). Vol. 24, No. 21, pp. 55-62. Copies of the film may be borrowed or rented from various sources in the United States, including state universities, state health departments, educational film libraries, and local school systems. Full information concerning procedures in purchasing the film and sources from which it may be borrowed or rented may be had by writing to the E. C. Brown Trust, 508 Education Center Building, 220 S.W. Alder Street, Portland 4, Oregon. A richly illustrated book, *Human Growth*, based on the film will be published shortly by Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York.

each meeting the parents and teachers filled out a ten-item opinion scale pertaining to various modes of sex instruction at home and at school. Sample items are given below.

After the film had been seen each respondent marked a secret film ballot giving his views about the possible use of the picture in school.

The opinion scale is scored by assigning numerical weights from 0 to 4 to each of the ten items, depending upon the degree of agreement or disagreement expressed by the respondent. Actual scores obtained with the scale range from 0, the lowest possible value, to 40, the maximum score. A high score signifies a favorable attitude toward sex education. The average scores earned by parents and teachers are given here.

Table I
Means and Standard Deviations of Opinion Scores for Parents and Teachers

		Mean	Sigma
<i>Parents</i>			
Mothers	(N = 4506)	28.2	5.3
Fathers	(N = 1331)	27.5	5.7
<i>Teachers</i>			
Women	(N = 846)	29.2	5.1
Men	(N = 240)	30.3	4.8
Total	(N = 6923)	28.3	5.4

Teachers and Parents Think Alike

Although the teachers as a group earn somewhat higher scores than parents, signifying a more liberal attitude, the magnitude of the difference is not large enough to permit teachers to brand themselves as liberal or parents as reactionary. Nor can parents charge teachers, without indicting themselves, of being old-fashioned in their attitudes toward sex teaching. The fact is that parents and teachers look at sex education in very much the same light. This group finding is supported by results obtained with the film ballot. The pattern of response to the statements is at the end of the article, page 524.

Statement 1 requires the respondent to go on record as either approving or disapproving the film for classroom use. Less than two percent of the parents and teachers say they would not want their children to see the film. Somewhat less than three percent are undecided. A few of those with reservations about the film are more concerned about the qualifications of the teacher than with the film itself. The pattern of response to statement 2 brings out even more

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- Parents should not dress or undress in the presence of their children

strongly approve	approve	undecided	disapprove	strongly disapprove
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 - Any information about sex for young boys and girls, given outside the home, should be presented by the doctor or minister rather than a school teacher

strongly approve	approve	undecided	disapprove	strongly disapprove
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 - A child caught masturbating should be punished

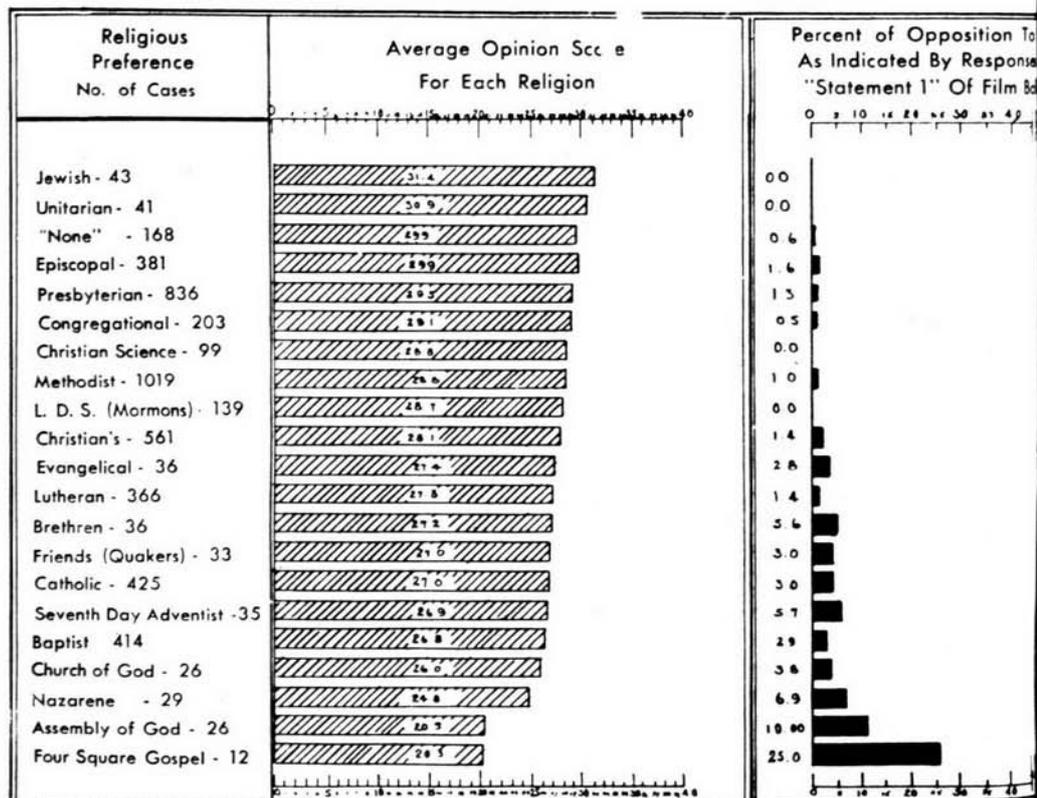
strongly approve	approve	undecided	disapprove	strongly disapprove
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clearly the importance of the teacher. Only a very few respondents feel that the picture would be successful in the hands of an incompetent teacher.

The majority of parents and teachers believe that the film should be shown in mixed classes in the 7th, 8th, or 9th grades. A few respondents think that it would be useful earlier—perhaps in the 5th or 6th grades.

Statement 5 pertaining to the moral issue is worded in such a way as to suggest a defect in the film. This is done deliberately to encourage persons with concealed prejudices against sex education to attack the film. Even with this inducement, however, only four percent of teachers and a slightly smaller percent of parents express concern about the moral risks of showing the

RELATION OF RELIGIOUS OPINION SCORE AND REACTION



picture to children. A somewhat higher percent of respondents are undecided. Several of those in the undecided category went on to explain that they think the film should be shown to children even though they themselves are uncertain about the way some youngsters might react.

Data pertaining to the attitudes of various religious groups are presented

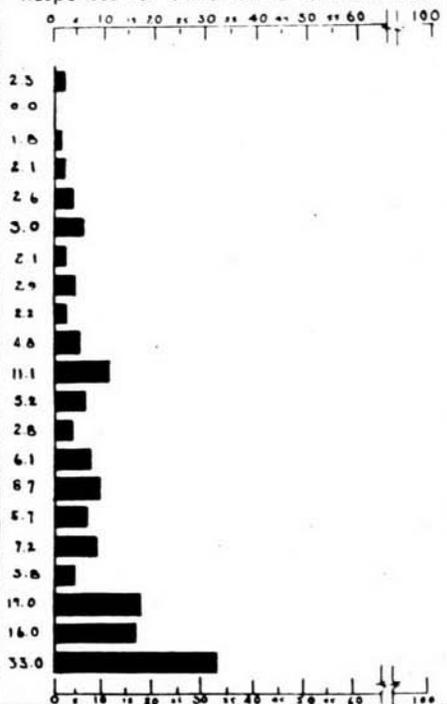
in a chart below. The results show that as opinions about sex education become more conservative (decreases in average opinion score), the level of opposition to the film tends to rise. This trend is accompanied by a corresponding rise in the percent of respondents favoring instruction for boys and girls in separate classes, and also by an increased concern over the possible moral dangers

O U S P R E F E R E N C E T O
I O N T O ' H U M A N G R O W T H '

Percent of Religious Groups Favoring Segregated Classes As Indicated By Responses To "Statement 3" of Film Ballot



Percent of Religious Groups Concerned With The Moral Issue as Indicated By Responses To "Statement 5" of Film Ballot



of the film. Except for three small sects listed at the bottom of the chart, no religious group offers more than token opposition to the film. Even those religious groups that commonly are thought to be vigorously opposed to sex teaching react favorably to the film.

There Is a Way

In summary it can be said that the use of properly prepared motion pictures offers one way of overcoming a major barrier to classroom instruction about sex, namely, parental opposition. After seeing the film, "Human Growth," nearly all parents are willing to concede that the school has an important part to play in the sex education of the child. They recognize that the classroom teacher, with the aid of mo-

tion pictures, can do the kind of calm, impersonal, forthright instruction which usually is not possible at home.

They further recognize the psychological values that come from group discussions among boys and girls in mixed classes at school. Such discussions help both sexes to get along better in a world where they must live together, day by day.

Additional films in the field of sex education are now in production. Scheduled for early release are two pictures for use in the primary grades. Like "Human Growth," these films are designed primarily as classroom aids, but they can be used equally well to demonstrate for parents the importance of the school in a well-rounded program of sex education.

			Percent		
			<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>?</i>
1. I would want a child of mine to see this film some time during his school career.	Parents	N:5837	97.2	1.6	1.2
	Teachers	N:1086	95.7	1.6	2.7
2. The success of this film will depend in large measure upon the competence of the person who uses it.	Parents	N:5837	96.6	1.6	1.8
	Teachers	N:1086	97.5	1.0	1.5
3. I feel that this film, if it is used in school, should be shown to boys and girls in separate classes.	Parents	N:5837	29.4	57.1	13.5
	Teachers	N:1086	28.6	52.4	19.0
4. I think that this film should be seen by all boys and girls at the beginning of adolescence, that is, in the 7th, 8th, or 9th grades.	Parents	N:5837	93.4	3.4	3.2
	Teachers	N:1086	90.1	3.1	6.8
5. Inasmuch as this film does not stress the moral side of sex, I think it would be dangerous to show in school.	Parents	N:5837	4.0	88.1	7.9
	Teachers	N:1086	3.4	88.7	7.9

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